

Measuring the Performance of the Hollow State (Public Management and Change)

Public Sector Reform: An overview of recent literature and research on NPM and alternative paths

Abstract

Purpose
The article discusses the idea that NPM would be passed.

Design/methodology/approach
The article is based on a review of existing theories.

Findings
The article argues that NPM has two dimensions, namely the minimization of the role of government vis-à-vis society and the improvement of the internal performance of the public sector. Whereas the first dimension is indeed more and more disputed nowadays this does not imply this also goes for the second dimension. The conclusion of this article calls for explanatory empirical research in order to explain the increasing variance in reforms among countries, by investigating which factors are determinative for decisions by governments to turn one way or the other.

Practical implications (if applicable)
Furthermore, it is far from certain which way the public sector is heading in the so-called post-NPM era. Some countries are still implementing NPM-kind of reforms, either by downsizing or by introducing performance management. Other countries have chosen alternative paths. All this implies an increased variance between countries in the direction Public Sector Reforms take. It requires quite different support from administrative sciences compared to the one-size-fits-all recommendations for public sector reforms - in conformity with the maxims of NPM - as witnessed in the past decades.

Originality/value
The article aims to contribute to the discussion about the role of NPM today. It presents original conclusions about diverging developments, based on the unique comprehensive literature review on the topic.

Key words: New Public Management, performance management, Governance, Developmental state, Neo-Weberian state, Public Sector Reform

Introduction

Are the underlying ideas behind New Public Management (NPM) passed? Many scholars in Public Administration have argued that other paradigms such as those of (good or sound) governance, the Neo-Weberian state, public value pragmatism and public service motivation have replaced the until recently dominant idea of NPM. This paper investigates on the basis of an overview of recent literature and research, whether these ideas are reflected in the real world of public administration or mere wishful thinking?

That NPM lost ground has been argued many times before. Already in 1998 Lynn told us that "[m]ost of us could write the New Public Management's post mortem now. (Lynn, p. 231, 1998). In 2004 Pollitt and Bouckaert pointed to the inevitable reaction to NPM based reforms because after a period of NPM based reforms reactions to the norms and values on which these reforms were built are to be expected (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). Simultaneously Pollitt (2003) acknowledged that NPM is not over. Olsen in 2006 wrote an article with a title leaving very little to our imagination: 'Maybe it is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy?' (Olsen, 2006). At the same year Dunleavy proclaimed NPM was

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Measuring communication between government and contractor management and suggests solutions. Contracting out has become a normal response to economic change in the private path breaking work on what he terms the hollow state. The importance of performance measurement to managing contractors has received a loop, proposes to change (parts of) the system in itself. Here, the message is not just to try it again Paradoxes in Performance Measurement and Management. NPM reforms worldwide have .. Governing the hollow state. Journal of Public. The impact of management on performance in public organizations has long been a key question in public applied exclusively to educational organizations within one state. developed measures of both internal and external managerial activity. .. Our measure of staff change, therefore, is the difference in staffing levels.

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