

New perspectives on public governance: challenging issues and emerging solutions

Public sector is worldwide constantly seeking for improving effectiveness and performance (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Hood, 1991; Noordegraaf and Abma, 2003). The aim of reaching these results is strictly related to the need of offering high-quality services to citizens and to be accountable for their actions (Hood, 1991).

Main critics moved to the public sector, often reported by literature, practitioners and public employees, are related to bureaucracy, alienation, turnover, work to rule, low motivation, etc., leading to the failure under many points of view (economic, social, organizational, institutional) (Knott and Miller, 2006; Magone, 2011; Meyer *et al.*, 2014; Rothstein and Downer, 2012).

In order to overcome these hurdles, academics, policy makers and public managers are always in search for new solutions. These solutions should necessarily take into account two key concepts (Tomo, 2018). First, public organizations, as any other organization, rely on individuals and groups, whose actions are highly influenced by affective relations and by their motivation (e.g. Houston, 2000). Second, public organizations act in complex and high institutionalized contexts, where other public organizations, private organizations and citizens, at same time, represent a source of resources, interactions and pressures on their actions (Meek, 2010).

To develop a new and more accountable model for public organizations, academics, policy makers and public managers should (re)discover the prominent role of leading, not only managing, people inside the (public) organizations toward an enhanced performance and a high-quality service for the public.

The purpose of this special issue was to focus on new challenges and solutions within the public sector. More in detail, the question raised is related to those still unsolved issues that limit an effective administrative action within public organizations.

We invited papers challenging the following areas:

- interactions and relations inside and outside the public organization;
- public employees and managers' motivation;
- performance measurement systems and their impact on individuals; and
- change management in public organizations.

In more detail, we proposed some research questions tackling prominent issues in the public sector, such as the following:

- RQ1. How do relations, interactions and conflicts influence organizational performance?
- RQ2. Which kind of relation exists between motivation and performance measurement systems?
- RQ3. What are possible models for an effective change management in a public organization?
- RQ4. How are possible motivating public employees in the process of organizational change?

We received many papers responding to the call and accepted the four most interesting papers, providing both theoretical and empirical insights into the different aspects of the



public sector, considering not only classic public administrations, such as local governments, but also healthcare and higher education systems.

In “Transformational leadership for public service motivation,” de Gennaro (2019) proposes a theoretical analysis to understand the behavior of public leaders working in changeable and uncertain contexts. Drawing on public administration and organizational behavior literature, the study by de Gennaro examines whether the lack of continuity and long-term planning is significantly associated to public service motivation for public management. The paper also considers prominent issues such as the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of public servants in carrying out their job in a constantly changing scenario. In doing so, the study has interesting implications for those who are in charge of governing public structures. From a theoretical point of view, it suggests that is important to consider new methods to increase public service motivation and thus make public administrations more efficient. Instead, from a practical point of view, it suggests the importance of implementing concrete actions to address the inefficiencies of the public sector due to the strong discontinuity of the political system.

Spanò *et al.* (2019), in “Performance measurement design: a contingency perspective from the Italian regional healthcare services,” analyze key design characteristics of the performance management system (PMS) that may be effectively adopted and deployed by management to enable assessment for a health system improvement. The paper aims, through a qualitative approach across the case study method, at understanding the role of different contextual factors and their impact upon the design of PMS. The findings put the emphasis over two key aspects: the need for improving the information systems within the healthcare organizations and increasing transparency about the assessment procedures. In doing so, the paper contributes to the debate on factors that can influence the design of PMS in healthcare. Relying on a contingent approach, the authors put forward the need of a more comprehensive and integrated framework encompassing organic conception of PMSs, as well as of the interdependencies among their components.

In “Contextual and individual characteristics effects on students’ corruption perception and behaviors in higher education,” Tomo *et al.* (2019) provide an analysis of the effects that the perceived corruption has on students’ behaviors and explain how individual and contextual variables in the higher education influence students’ behaviors and corruption perception. The study advances a framework explaining this influence and presents interesting implications for academics, practitioners and policy makers on the impact that students’ corruption perception has on the whole higher education system. In doing so, the paper takes the context of higher education as an example of how the pressures on the public sector may lead to different responses and reactions to change.

In “Analysis of oscillations in continuous expenditures and their multiple causalities: a case study,” Telles *et al.* (2019) tackle the question concerning the need for research and monitoring the causes that generate continuous expenditures in the complex chain of events involving the State Government of Paraná (Brasil), as a way for better understanding the control over the allocation of public money and the return of productivity in the form of better public services to the population. The article has interesting implications for policy makers and public managers as it deepens issues concerning the management of public administrations and public utilities.

We think that this special issue could be of support for better understanding specific issues and dynamics useful for reducing deficiencies and improving the management of public administrations.

This special issue would not have been possible without the contribution and support from many individuals. We thank all the authors who submitted papers to this special issue. We thank the reviewers for their effort and time in reviewing each manuscript in a timely and professional way. We thank all the administrative staff for their valuable assistance.

Last, but not the least, we would thank the Editor-in-Chief, Professor Hassan Selim Ahmed, for making this special issue possible.

Andrea Tomo

Department of Economics, Management and Institutions, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy

Ernesto De Nito

Department of Economics and Statistics, University of Salerno, Fisciano, Italy, and

Paolo Canonico

Department of Economics, Management and Institutions, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy

References

- de Gennaro, D. (2019), "Transformational leadership for public service motivation", *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 5-15, doi: 10.1108/JEAS-06-2018-0075.
- Dunleavy, P. and Hood, C. (1994), "From old public administration to new public management", *Public Money and Management*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 9-16.
- Hood, C. (1991), "A public management for all seasons?", *Public Administration*, Vol. 69, pp. 3-39.
- Houston, D.J. (2000), "Public-service motivation: a multivariate test", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 713-728.
- Knott, J.H. and Miller, G.J. (2006), "Social welfare, corruption and credibility", *Public Management Review*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 227-252, doi: 10.1080/14719030600587455.
- Magone, J.M. (2011), "The difficult transformation of state and public administration in Portugal: Europeanization and the persistence of neo-patrimonialism", *Public Administration*, Vol. 89 No. 3, pp. 756-782.
- Meek, J.W. (2010), "Complexity theory for public administration and policy", *Emergence: Complexity & Organization*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 1-4.
- Meyer, R.E., Egger-Peitler, I., Höllerer, M.A. and Hammerschmid, G. (2014), "Of bureaucrats and passionate public managers: institutional logics, executive identities, and public service motivation", *Public Administration*, Vol. 92 No. 4, pp. 861-885.
- Noordegraaf, M. and Abma, T. (2003), "Management by measurement? Public management practices amidst ambiguity", *Public Administration*, Vol. 81 No. 4, pp. 853-871.
- Rothstein, H. and Downer, J. (2012), "'Renewing Defra': exploring the emergence of risk-based policymaking in UK central government", *Public Administration*, Vol. 90 No. 3, pp. 781-799.
- Spanò, R., Cicellin, M. and Scuotto, A. (2019), "Performance measurement design: a contingency perspective from the Italian regional healthcare services", *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 16-27, doi: 10.1108/JEAS-06-2018-0076.
- Telles, C., Burakoski da Cunha, A.R., Sawaya Chueiri, A.M. and Kuromiya, K. (2019), "Analysis of oscillations in continuous expenditures and their multiple causalities: a case study", *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 44-64, doi: 10.1108/JEAS-06-2018-0073.
- Tomo, A. (2018), "Advancing a behavioral approach for studying public administration", *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 13 No. 6, pp. 25-42.
- Tomo, A., Todisco, L. and Mangia, G. (2019), "Contextual and individual characteristics effects on students' corruption perception and behaviours in higher education", *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 28-43, doi: 10.1108/JEAS-06-2018-0070.