

Innovative competences in public administration: The key to sustainable development, increasing financial efficiency and ensuring national security

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Abstract: The definition and analysis of innovation in this article focus on how it may be interpreted as a dramatic shift in public administration that results in new goods, new technology, new procedures, and the introduction of new ideals. Novel paradigms, novel approaches to management, and novel kinds of innovation characterize modern public management models. A paradigm shift and the emergence of a new public management model built on innovative competences are discussed when innovation in public administration results in new operational approaches. The research is carried out within the paradigm of 'hybridity' as a key characteristic of today world and, accordingly, challenges for public administration. Ecosystem model, implying innovative competence in public administration, based on the pillars of hybrid- thinking and foresight paradigm, is suggested as the most corresponding to realities of today.

Keywords: *Competence, Finances, Innovative competences, National Security, Public administration, Sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

Public administration is presented as a tool for achieving societal goals. Public administration is unquestionably about providing effective government and services to ensure the welfare of society. Donham [1] made the observation that public administration plays a crucial role in ensuring that individuals and society survive. He said that the ability of public administration to carry out its duties is essential to the survival of any society and the future of civilized governance. Beard [2] further supported the latter by stating that the collapse of public administration is a sign of a society's disintegration of civilization. In this regard, a significant step toward a greater level of public administration professionalization is the establishment of a competence framework for staff members. Therefore, a model of innovative competencies in public administration should be developed by designing the competency framework, setting preconditions for the establishment of new qualification standards, and establishing conditions for the development of occupational standards for specific jobs in public administration.

It should also be noted that there is now a significant disconnect between public administration and the new security landscape of the twenty-first century. There is a dark aspect to the new internationalized environment of this century that presents security difficulties for public administration in the twenty-first century. The preservation of the nation, which public administration was able to stifle during the 20th century, is now clearly its security mandate [3]. The strategy for internal security has become a primary concern for public administration in the twenty-first century due to new dangers. Public administration experts of the 20th century were inspired by public choice, pluralism, and progressivism. As a result, the discipline came to assume that it could create and implement domestic security policy without the need for a cogent state theory. It is necessary to mend the rift between state theory and security strategy. Reviving this connection will be necessary to ensure the field's relevance to urgent security concerns of the twenty-first century and public safety.

All significant players in society must engage widely and persistently in order to address the current complex spectrum of challenges to the state and state interests. Clearly, the public administration strategy should be based on the following guiding principles: international collaboration; robustness and flexibility; capability to act and make choices; urgency and pragmatism; and engagement of the entire population.

The concept of sustainable development, which has been incorporated into global discourse in recent decades, poses a serious challenge to public management. One of the keys to redefining sustainable development is to expand its implications in the public sector and to assess its influence on the public organizations and entities that make up the public administration system. As a result, PA is an essential step in supporting development paradigms that are distinguished by long-term sustainability [4]. The UN 2030 Agenda [5], which lists PA as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, further supports this link.

Public administrators will now be expected to lead not just change but also in the face of uncertainty, since they may experience rapid changes. Public administrators will need to have exceptional social, emotional, and communication skills in order to lead and manage both internal and external audiences while navigating through uncertainty and attaining organizational development and successes. When interacting and networking with staff and partners, public administrators must exhibit a high level of emotional intelligence. Creating alliances is now expected and required rather than only a nice idea. The future of management in public-private partnerships is expected to reach unprecedented heights, involving collaboration on strategy, execution, oversight, and foresight.

2. Literature Review

The overbearing role of the Public Administration and its seeming incompetence in management have been blamed for the financial disaster that befell the "State" in the late 1970s. The initial steps essentially involved the privatization of state-owned enterprises, with the understanding that citizens would pay less this way. It is now shown that this is untrue, excluding regulations that guarantee pricing transparency and competition for these privatized businesses. Portugal now has 17 regulatory organizations, ranging from the Health Regulatory Authority to Banco de Portugal. The second set of ideas, which marked a revolution in public administration, included the introduction of business management models and techniques, such as cost accounting, performance evaluation, and placing a greater emphasis on results than on formalities. It also included the division of large administrative units with a focus on autonomy, as evidenced by the rise in public corporation hospitals and university foundations.

The individual labor contract, which is the same as or comparable to the company's labor contract, replaced the employment contract from the perspective of labor relations. Three main elements emerged from the New Public Management in practical terms [6]:

- Market supremacy. The use of market mechanisms include the use of vouchers, outsourcing, user fees, and their counterparts;

- Adopting agency models while doing away with hierarchical arrangements. An executive unit that receives funding to deliver a service to the state is referred to as an agency. These units are not subject to administrative oversight and are instead judged based on their output (public corporate hospitals are one example of such an entity); and

- Metrics of performance, with a focus on outcomes rather than following legal requirements.

These changes replaced the legal paradigm in the majority of OECD nations with a new paradigm. But unlike in the nations of Southern Europe, the changes were drastic and not always occurring [7].

Indeed, the New Public Management model improved public services by aiding in cost reduction and workforce rationalization. Although the new paradigm brought about advances, a crisis in public administration occurred in the middle of the 1990s, prompting many to wonder if the new management model was to blame. It was really discovered that governments found it more difficult to maintain control over their administrations when they abdicated their accountability for the smooth operation of public services; in addition, competition and autonomy automatically lowered coordination. These inconsistencies and constraints prompted consideration of altering public management, which gave rise to network governance. This was an attempt to counteract the negative effects of New Public Management, particularly in Anglophile countries. It was characterized by constant change, citizen participation, decisions made by various actors, partnerships between the public and the private sector, and the dominant role of the State [8].

The global financial crisis altered this novel methodology, which for many individuals only entailed rephrasing the New Public Management. The inadequate execution of the New Public Management model resulted in the outsourcing of public services, the indiscriminate adoption of public-private partnerships, the laxity of the State's regulatory role, and the use of high-risk financial instruments like swaps. Consequently, albeit under different conditions, a new public administration model known as Neo Weberian was embraced, particularly in continental and central Europe.

Practically speaking, the theory incorporates Weberian components that are associated with conventional administration, such as maintaining the notion of public service and reaffirming the role of the State as a facilitator of solutions. It also reinforces the significance of Administrative Law. The Neo Weberian model also incorporates elements of the New Public Management model, such as the professionalization of public management so that the manager is not just an expert in laws but is also focused on the needs of their citizens; the importance of citizens over rules and regulations; the overcoming of representative democracy through the inclusion of consultation mechanisms; and the ongoing insistence on achieving results [9].

But customary procedures do not necessarily have to be broken in order for change to occur. Many times, processes have been resistant to change, and when they are, the changes are usually small-scale and not very innovative. Moreover, each nation's culture frequently absorbs major advances. As a result, Anglo-Saxon nations have fundamentally altered conventional administration by demanding accountability and the growth of autonomous entities. To keep the welfare state intact, the Nordic nations imported business management tools. Countries in continental Europe have adapted the new regulations to a Weberian custom. Conversely, in the southern European nations, innovation has resulted in legislative language that actually inhibits change, therefore the pace of change has been extremely sluggish [10].

However, new challenges of the need to maintain security and sustainable development in frames of ESG paradigm and arising of crucial necessity of balancing between security and sustainability needs (in particular, regarding human rights and energy resources) put public administration of practically every country in the face of new threats, uncertainties and challenges, requiring public administrations to develop new excellence, innovative competencies.

In a special Public Administration Review edition honoring public servants killed on September 11, 2001, Comptroller General David Walker noted that the area of public administration faced hitherto unseen security problems. He stated that it is necessary to think about the right role for the federal government in the twenty-first century and the future administration of government. Every federal

program or activity should be regularly reviewed to ensure it still makes sense in the modern environment and into the future. We must ask significant but occasionally difficult questions as part of this process [11]. Public administration researchers and practitioners can promote homeland security policy suggestions in the first ten years of the twenty-first century.

For the sake of public administration and the sustainability of domestic security policy, it is best to return the state to its original position as the primary authority on security issues in the twenty-first century. Should public administration adopt the model outlined by the realism approach to international relations, it would endorse additional security measures that are oriented upon the state.

Furthermore, it appears from recent studies that the fields of public administration are using the ideas of sustainability and sustainable development more and more [12]. In the literature, there is a growing emphasis on the role that sustainable public administration plays in promoting sustainable development. One notion that is helping to make this happen is collaborative administration [13]. A contemporary administrative model's key tenet is the sustainability of public organizations and the public interventions these institutions carry out; this is a requirement of any government program. According to some studies, for instance, the idea of sustainable development broadly is based on public administration principles. Large-scale sustainable development would also need a growing, healthy economy that is open to structural change, a higher standard of living, an economy that allows for the equitable distribution of benefits, the protection of human rights, a civil society that is democratic and civilized, etc. [14]. It is believed that indicators of unsustainability can be found everywhere, including in greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, ozone depletion, atmospheric acidification, toxic pollution, deforestation, biological species extinction, desertification, land degradation, depletion of non-renewable resources, and pollution from solid waste or urban air. All of this adds up to a sustainable landscape that public administration should address by developing and putting into practice relevant creative capabilities.

Studies conducted recently [15, 16, 17] show that the field of public administration (PA) is starting to adopt ideas related to sustainability and sustainable development more frequently. The result is a logical byproduct of the discipline's emphasis on boosting public institutions' capability in order to increase the beneficial effects of interventions on society.

Through innovation and data-driven decision-making, governments can build a future that is more resilient, responsive, and focused on the needs of its citizens. To effectively navigate the possibilities and challenges of the twenty-first century, public administration must embrace innovation as time goes on.

3. Research Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study is formed by the following general scientific principles and methods of cognition: systems approach, comparative analysis, logical-theoretical method, complex approach (interdisciplinary synthesis). Phenomenological analysis was chosen as the basic methodological approach.

The methodological basis of the study is also formed by general methodological and scientific principles and methods of cognition of social phenomena, primarily, systemicity, institutional and structural-functional analysis, synergetics, diagnostics and forecasting of socio-political processes. The entire work is based on the principles of dialectical logic, which requires the researcher to consider the phenomena under study in their development and connection with other factors.

The use of systems, political comparative, and specific historical methods in the process of work made it possible to study the problem under consideration in a complex, taking into account its interdisciplinary nature.

4. Results and Discussion

A growing body of research suggests that the current state of affairs is shaped by political, social, economic, and environmental uncertainty as well as the spread of information and communication technologies, which have the potential to disrupt development and usher in a new era of social progress

known as “digital civilization” [18–26]. The dynamic and ever-changing nature of modern society has made the need for innovation in public administration even more apparent. Governments need to take advantage of emerging technology, adapt to the shifting needs of their constituents, and solve complex issues in novel ways. Only creative methods have been able to bring about all these improvements. Therefore, one of the top tasks for every government should be to develop a dedicated unit for innovation in public administration.

In addition, the globe entered the “hybridity” age. The contrast between local forms of agency and identity and global norms and interests is embodied in hybrid forms of peace [27]. Although studies of violence and violent behaviors are fundamental to the field of peacebuilding, it seems that issues concerning the hazy distinctions between war and peace need further attention.

Civil conflicts in the modern era are more common, more dangerous for civilians, and more difficult to end. Academics posed this question: Why are results of durable peace becoming harder to achieve? [28]. A plausible explanation for these patterns might be the growing deployment of pro-government militias (PGMs) in times of armed conflict.

Governments have relied heavily on auxiliary soldiers to retake territory, disarm insurgent groups, or bolster their military might. They can provide special local expertise and information, which might help them gain more traction with disputed groups or constituencies. They are also an efficient and affordable way to mobilize force. States may use PGMs in some circumstances to contract out the “dirty work” of war while retaining plausible deniability for abuses of human rights. However, the employment of PGMs involves substantial dangers in terms of post-conflict peace and stability. Studies have indicated that the employment of PGMs as counter-insurgents might prolong conflicts, leading to increased levels of violence and relapse risks. PGMs may undermine any peace process that would limit their advantages by taking advantage of crisis conditions for their own political and economic gain. This is particularly likely to happen if they are left out of political negotiations and integration agreements. In general, the use of PGMs may strengthen specific types of violence, corruption, and impunity that may persist beyond a peace agreement, weakening attempts to achieve longer-term peace and raising the risk of violent conflict resuming. In fact, PGMs frequently involve nations in intra- and interregional rivalries, posing even bigger threats to stability, due to the close ties that exist between militias and other regional powerbrokers [29]. In this landscape, public administration’ competence becomes a crucial factor of stability or instability. The turbulent environment pushes public administration to its limits, resulting in revolutionary changes.

Even while security duties are essential to public administration, it should be emphasized that the political climate has a direct impact on whether public administration is successful or unsuccessful in carrying out its national security role. According to Oikhala [30], the people and their ideals, as well as the processes, structure, and tools that are accessible, all have a role in the political environment of public administration. “Public administration takes place within a political environment”, as stated by Dibia [31].

Liberal peacebuilding has repeatedly resulted in a situation where political and social institutions exist but are only ostensibly democratic, accountable, and effective; those who experience these institutions view them as illegitimate, restrictive, and unsuccessful. This is in contrast to liberal and democratic political, economic, and social orders. International and domestic players’ policies have come together to create a scenario that just appears to be changing while really maintaining the political, economic, and social circumstances that were in place before. Intervention has created a hybrid state where liberal and illiberal, democratic and undemocratic aspects coexist and the lack of a full-scale conflict is more akin to a ceasefire than a meaningful kind of peace, as opposed to constructing a liberal and democratic peace [32]. In turn, the created landscape of ‘hybridity’ complicates making efforts to achieve sustainable development and UN’ SDGs.

Thus, today public administration needs indeed innovative competencies, the key ones among which are systemic and prospective vision, as well as the ability of balancing opposing and conflicting goals

and interests. In the context of hybrid threats, there is a need for innovative competencies of public administration.

Both military and non-military threats, such as cyberattacks, harm to vital infrastructure, disinformation campaigns, radicalization of the political narrative, or the instrumentalization of migration, can be considered hybrid threats. These threats are getting more and more sophisticated and are frequently used to target national weaknesses. Complex hybrid risks include difficulties related to migration, economic and social policies, climate change, and integration. These are challenges to sustainable development.

To effectively tackle novel and intricate security risks, a comprehensive strategy is necessary. For this reason, public administration should endeavor to create a true boost to national security and stability by bringing physical, digital, and external security up to par.

To combat hybrid threats, resilience is essential and requires a systemic design. It is not ideal to build resilience in domains separately since hybrid threats try to take advantage of linkages and produce cascade consequences. Taking into account societal interdependencies and current dependencies, a comprehensive approach is required. A complete resilience ecosystem (CORE) model was presented by Jungwirth et al. [33] as a systemic representation of democratic society overall. It is employed to assess and eventually neutralize hybrid threats that aim to sabotage democratic institutions, alter the process of making decisions, and have a domino effect. Figure 1 depicts its structure.

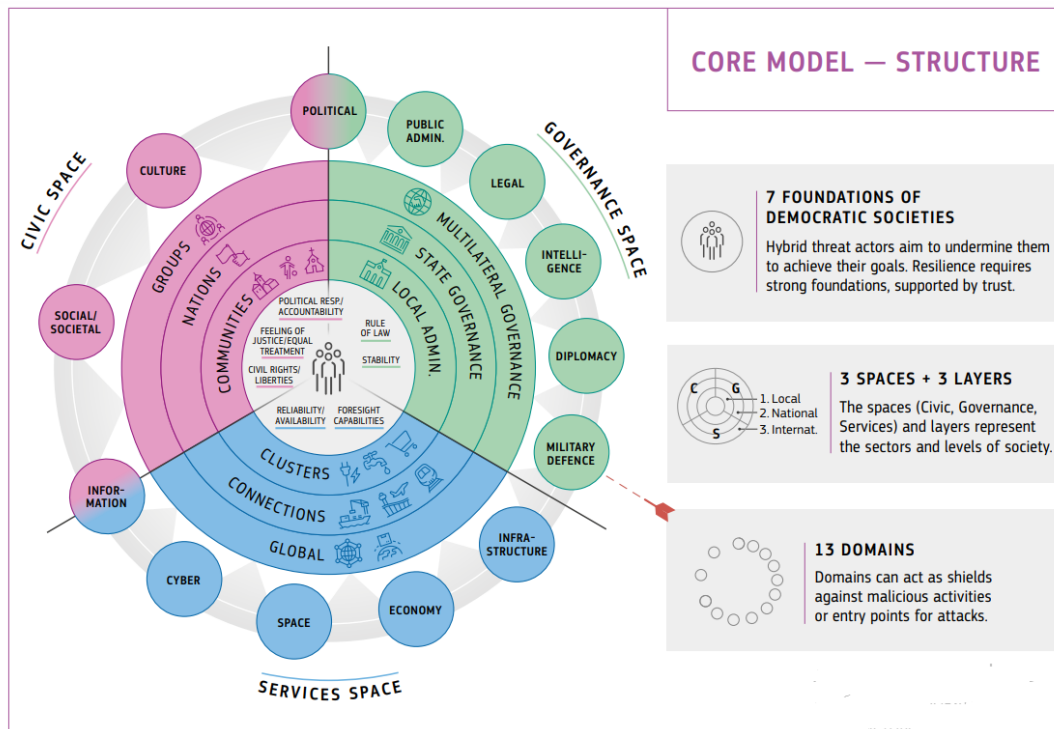


Figure 1. Resilience ecosystem (CORE) model for public administration [33].

The three places that make up the ecosystem—Civic, Governance, and Services—represent the three societal sectors. The CORE model is unusual in that it enables policymakers to assess the ways in which adversaries use hybrid threats to modify democratic decision-making capacities. It demonstrates how the hybrid threat activity gradually undermines democratic regimes by bringing forth various forms of stress. Additionally, it permits the observation of dependencies and potential domino effects. This holds significance in identifying hybrid threats. In this procedure, foresight is essential. This

ecosystem method facilitates the identification of possible reaction paths, supports the study of early signals, and may be shown in Figure 2. It may be used to three areas: 1) create a cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to resilience; 2) establish the appropriate countermeasures to the primary and higher-order impacts in all places and layers of the ecosystem; and 3) act as the conceptual basis to assist policymakers against hybrid threats.

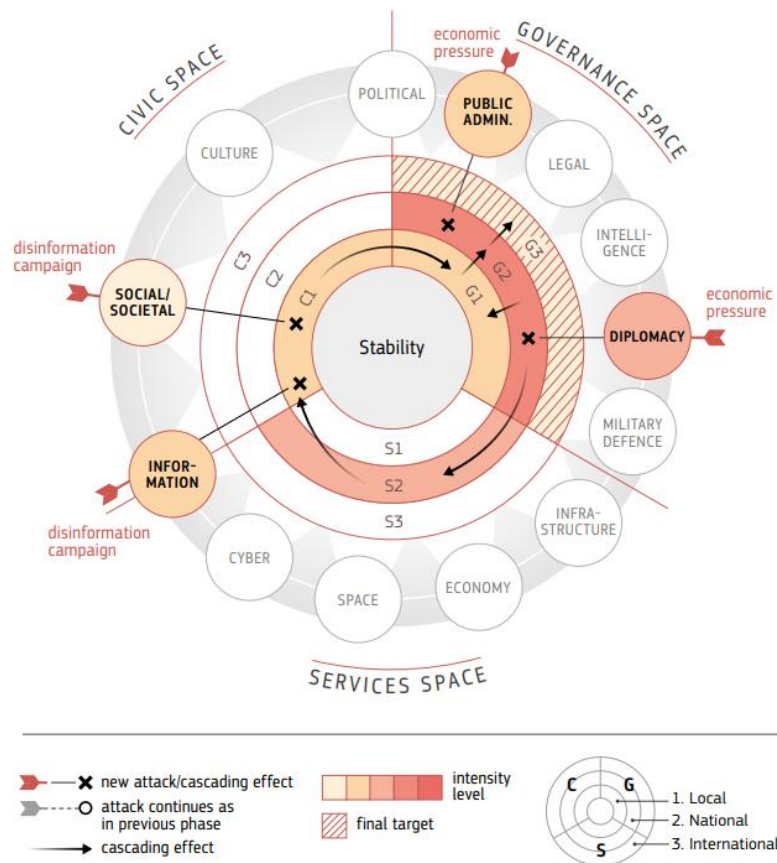


Figure 2.
Functional model of ecosystem approach in public administration [33].

Thus, evidently, innovative competences in public administration in the era of hybridity should be based on situational awareness, resilience, response, and cooperation. Accordingly, competence framework for all levels of public administration should be designed and implemented. Traditional roles of government and public administration need to adjust to emerging and future needs of societies:

1. Technology has the potential to stimulate innovation in the public sector, facilitate transparent government, and enhance citizen-government relations by streamlining administrative processes. Political institutions might be made more participatory and effective by redesigning them and by rethinking governance in general.

2. Clear plans could be developed, and open government practices might be further improved. For democratic governments to function, accountability, openness, and justice must be fundamental ideas.

3. When used in conjunction with a wide range of stakeholders and constituents, creative ways to governance may be brought about via the use of tools like participative, service design, and foresight.

4. People with unique and creative solutions might be drawn to a new organizational architecture that is less hierarchical and creatively co-designs initiatives with citizens. This would make public administrations more inventive and competitive when compared to the private sector.

5. Acquiring new competencies in public administration might enhance its efficiency and future readiness while also stimulating innovation to recognize novel problems and take creative action.

6. Public administrations should think about updating their hiring procedures in order to draw in talent capable of creating innovative policy.

In this context, preserving financial efficiency is one of public administration's primary concerns. A crucial idea in the context of the public sector, financial sustainability is a field of research that is only getting started [34]. To identify potential contributing elements to this state of affairs, academics first concentrated primarily on the financial difficulties faced by public-sector organizations [35; 36]. Additional research focused on ways to strengthen public administrations' financial standing [37; 38]. On the other hand, more recent studies have looked at government programs and the factors that determine financial sustainability [39; 40]. In contemporary public administration, financial sustainability is viewed as a complex idea that is dependent on a number of factors, including service, revenue, and debt dimensions, and is projected from a long-term perspective [41; 42].

The adoption of a long-term viewpoint suggests that public administrations now see financial sustainability differently. The main concern is not only the entity's solvency now but also the potential consequences of its programs and policies, which could impact its ability to instill public values in the future, impede economic growth, raise taxes, or shift costs to future generations. This public administration capability, in turn, is closely related to the ability to anticipate and handle both present and future hybrid risks. Thus, ecosystem approach, hybrid- thinking and foresight paradigm should be the pillars of innovative competence in public administration in the 21st century, enabling to maintain the process of achieving SDGs, increasing financial efficiency and ensuring national security.

5. Conclusion

We are in a new period that presents both tremendous uncertainty and new risks, but it also offers a wealth of exciting potential to advance public administration. Today, governments all over the globe struggle to balance providing the services that the public expects and trusts with finding the time and resources to invest in the future. As part of their required cultural shift and as a means of rethinking or developing new tools and tactics for an unmapped future, public administrations still struggle to incorporate innovation into their current structures and operational procedures. The current 'era of hybridity' requires innovations in public administration competence, to ensure sustainable development and national security, simultaneously increasing financial efficiency, which can be implemented, in particular, through the ecosystem approach and foresight paradigm.

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