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The Future of Public Administration
Adapting to a Dynamic World

*Edited by Muddassar Sarfraz
and Muhammad Haroon Shah*

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Meet the editors

Dr. Muddassar Sarfraz is an assistant professor at the School of Management, Zhejiang Shuren University, China. He is also a member of the Research Center for Engineering and Management at the Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania. After completing a prestigious post-doctoral fellowship in business administration at Hohai University, China, he worked as a researcher and lecturer at various prominent institutions. Dr. Sarfraz has taught a diverse range of subjects, including business research methods, business management, corporate social responsibility, business strategy, and strategic management. His reputation as a keynote speaker at national and international conferences further highlights his expertise and influence in the academic community. With an impressive publication record, Dr. Sarfraz has contributed more than 150 papers to international academic journals and conferences, showcasing his dedication to advancing knowledge in his field. In addition to his scholarly contributions, he is an associate and guest editor for numerous journals, as well as an editorial board member for several others. Dr. Sarfraz's professional affiliations include memberships in the British Academy of Management, the Chinese Economists Society, the World Economic Association, and the American Economic Association. Furthermore, he represents Pakistan as an ambassador for the international MBA program at Chongqing University, China.

Dr. Muhammad Haroon Shah currently holds a post-doctoral fellowship position at the Business School of Hohai University, China. He successfully completed his Ph.D. in Finance at the School of Finance, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China, earning the distinguished International Students Award from the China Scholarship Council in 2019. Notably, Dr. Shah also achieved recognition for the International Students' Project of 2018 during his doctoral studies. Following the completion of his Ph.D., Dr. Shah joined the esteemed Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, China, where he dedicated two years to teaching various courses, including International Settlement, International Finance, Principles of Macroeconomics, Financial Markets, and Financial Management. Dr. Shah's academic prowess is evident in his extensive publication record, with more than twenty research papers published in various journals. Beyond his scholarly contributions, he actively engages with the academic community, serving as an associate editor and peer reviewer for numerous journals.

Contents

Preface

One imperative of today's world is the recognition of public administration at all levels. Public administration, referring to the governmental establishment of people's policy and non-profitable management of public goods, plays an essential role in maximizing citizens' welfare. In recent years, the field of public administration has brought about significant changes in globalized societies. Its increasing models, programs, functions, and characteristics have profoundly governed the communal activities of today's digital era. It is to be noted that digital technologies in public administration have facilitated people's matters. It has become the backbone of every governmental operation, enabling people's welfare, citizen engagement, and the nation's prosperity.

This edited volume, *The Future of Public Administration – Adapting to a Dynamic World*, is a collection of six chapters that expand the knowledge of public policy in the dynamic world of change. It presents a unique blend of enlivening information on the evolving nature of public policy. This book explores the current and upcoming changes at every level. It is a comprehensive resource that provides an understanding of the fundamentals of public administration and programs. The book examines the historical administrative ideas and concepts and moves beyond to focus on its challenges in the present and elaborates on the notion of non-profit governance, the starring function of information technology, public participation, and so on. As public administration is an exciting and challenging field full of opportunities, this work explores some of the major trends shaping the future of public administration. Given this, the book uncovers the following aspects:

- The history of public administration

- The strategic significance of public administration in today's world.

- Opportunities and challenges facilitated by the changing aspects of public administration (i.e., the introduction of digital technologies)

The role of public individuals (e.g., non-profit organizations, governments, etc.), the outcome of the effective implementation of public administration. This book presents a well-structured and grounded approach to public administration in daily life.

Section 1

Chapter 1, "The Digitization Process in the Italian Public Administration: Future Challenges". The promising effect of digitalization increases the responsiveness of policy policies. This chapter provides an overview of the current condition of the Italian healthcare sector and sheds light on the role of digitalization in addressing public challenges.

Section 2

Chapter 2, "Navigating the Future through Experimental Policy Design". This chapter explains the innovative pattern in the policy design experience in the public sector. It also sheds light on how governments foster their innovation process in addressing the complexity of sustainability issues.

Chapter 3, "Advancing Ethics-Led Administrative Discretion in Public Administration: A South African Perspective". This chapter aids in understanding how administrative discretion is the future of public administration in the context of South African *Batho Pele* ethics.

Chapter 4, "Perspective Chapter: Institutional Structural Reform and Sustainable Resilience". This chapter emphasizes the significance of digital governance in achieving sustainable development. It presents the key concepts of initiative management, survival bureaucracy, and inclusiveness, enhancing civic participation and decentralization.

Chapter 5, "Synergistic Governance and Public Policies Cycle". This chapter provides insight into new public administration. It elaborates on the need for dynamic people management as a viable way of achieving people's welfare.

Chapter 6, "Perspective Chapter: The Place of Virtue Ethics in Public Service Delivery". This chapter presents a brief description of the ethical concepts of addressing public issues and discusses public service delivery needed for good administration.

Overall, this book examines the factors that influence public policies and programs, the mechanism of governmental functions, and the modern tools that can help administration lift public affairs. The chapters provide theoretical and actionable material that deals with the future of public organizations. This book is unique in that it captures the soul of the public administration future; it is a must-read for all those involved in the implementation of public administration. Specifically, this compilation is a useful guide for people's services organizations, governments, stakeholders, field beneficiaries, and researchers who are interested in the dynamic nature of public administrations. The editors would like to thank all those who supported and helped us with this project. We appreciate the hard work of each individual and sincerely hope that this effort will serve everyone who seeks to benefit from it.

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Section 1

Public Administration in Digital Era

The Digitization Process in the Italian Public Administration: Future Challenges

Matteo Maria Cati

Abstract

The rapid adoption of information technology (I.T.) in the Italian Public Administration, catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic and supported by substantial European Union funding under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Next Generation E.U.), has become a transformative force. This chapter serves a dual purpose; it provides a concise overview of the current state of digitization within the Italian Public Administration, with a particular focus on sectors, such as healthcare. Simultaneously, it elucidates the critical challenges that must be addressed for the widespread integration of I.T. tools in the public administration and its user base. Undoubtedly, the digital transformation of the public administration heralds a watershed moment, promising to enhance efficiency and streamline administrative processes in Italy, especially considering the nation's distinctive territorial, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics.

Keywords: digitization, e-government, public administration, digital transformation, Italy

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed unprecedented challenges on countries worldwide, causing profound disruptions in public health, economic stability, and societal well-being.

Italy, as one of the earliest and hardest-hit European nations, found itself thrust into a paradigm shift as the crisis propelled the rapid adoption and diffusion of digital technologies within its public administration. In the face of lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and the imperative of social distancing, information technology emerged as an indispensable lifeline, sustaining governance and the delivery of public services.

Recognizing the urgency, the Italian government swiftly understood that the comprehensive digitization of public sector processes and citizen interactions was imperative to ensure resilience and uninterrupted service provision during the pandemic. Consequently, longstanding modernization initiatives were accelerated, and innovative solutions were deployed in an emergency fashion.

As the Italian Minister for Technological Innovation and Digital Transition aptly noted, "The COVID-19 crisis and European recovery funding have created a pivotal moment for digitization in Italy." Italy seized a unique opportunity to expedite digital transformation on an unprecedented scale. The government's goal [1], articulated in the 2025 Strategic Plan [2], is to deliver more efficient, accessible, and high-quality services to citizens and businesses.

The rapid digital transformation was made possible, in part, by the timely availability of substantial financial resources from the European Union's groundbreaking €750 billion Next Generation EU recovery program. Italy received the largest allocation among member states, totaling €191.5 billion in grants and loans. These funds are channeled through the ambitious National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), which earmarks over €40 billion for dedicated digitalization projects across the Italian public sector.

This substantial backing provides Italy with an unprecedented opportunity to implement profound and enduring enhancements in how the state serves its citizens and businesses through technology. The success of these endeavors not only shapes Italy's response to the ongoing crisis but also its competitive edge, governance efficiency, and the well-being of its populace for years to come.

2. Background on digitization in the Italian public sector

Italy's journey toward digital transformation within its public administration has spanned over the course of a decade. This transformational endeavor [3] began with a fundamental shift — transitioning from archaic analog processes to a digital-centric approach that would reshape how government functions.

As Italy embarked on this path, the early focus was primarily on establishing the building blocks of a digital ecosystem that would pave the way for future innovations.

The initiation of this transformative journey was marked by the launch of the Digital Italy Strategy 2014–2020 in 2012 [4]. This ambitious and far-reaching national strategy was a pivotal moment for Italy, acknowledging its comparative lag behind international peers in the adoption of digital technologies across various sectors. The strategy sought to bridge this gap by channeling substantial investments, exceeding €10 billion, into bolstering digital skills, upgrading infrastructure, enhancing public services, and fostering broader economic growth.

Under the Digital Italy Strategy, several key initiatives were set into motion, each contributing to Italy's evolving digital landscape:

1. National Broadband Plan: A strategic allocation of €2.2 billion aimed at significantly extending fiber and wireless broadband connectivity to previously underserved areas of Italy. The overarching goal was to ensure that every citizen had access to internet speeds exceeding 30 Mbps by 2020. This substantial investment laid the foundation for the adoption of digital public services, particularly in rural communities.

2. Public connectivity system: This innovative program gave rise to a secure, shared digital infrastructure that facilitated seamless interactions between centralized public entities and Italy's highly decentralized regional and local administrative systems. This comprehensive infrastructure included networks, data centers, interoperability layers, and robust cybersecurity tools.

3. Electronic identity card: Italy gradually introduced a national smart card ID, equipped with encrypted chips featuring digital security credentials and qualified electronic signatures. This groundbreaking development allowed citizens to securely access and conduct legally binding transactions online, heralding a new era of citizen-government interactions.

4. Centralized procurement: Recognizing the need for consolidation, the Italian government established Consip as a single centralized entity responsible for procuring IT equipment and services across the public sector. This strategic move aimed to reduce duplication and enhance cost efficiency.

5. Digital schools: A dedicated budget of over €1 billion was set aside to facilitate the acquisition of digital equipment, enhance broadband connectivity, and provide essential training to teachers in K-12 schools throughout Italy. These investments laid the groundwork for the broader adoption of e-learning and the infusion of technology into education.

The implementation of the Digital Italy Strategy achieved significant milestones. By 2020, over 85% of Italian households had subscribed to broadband services that met or exceeded the 30 Mbps target. The National Public Connectivity System effectively connected nearly 32,000 government offices, streamlining inter-agency interactions. However, despite these accomplishments, the utilization of online public services remained relatively low, and the overall level of digital maturity in Italy still had room for growth. Many digitization projects were executed in isolation, leading to limited interoperability between systems. Consequently, Italy was ranked 25th out of 28 member states for digital public services by the European Commission, highlighting the need for further progress.

Acknowledging the necessity for innovation and improved coordination, the Italian government introduced the three-year plan for ICT in public administration in 2015 [5], with a budget of €1.3 billion. This comprehensive strategy was designed to catalyze digital transformation by addressing several key facets:

1. Migrating legacy systems to cloud platforms: This pivotal move aimed to enhance scalability, resilience, and operational efficiency by transitioning critical systems and data to cloud-based solutions.

2. Developing enterprise-wide enabling platforms: The strategy included the creation of essential platforms, such as the SPID national digital ID and pagoPA centralized payments system. These initiatives aimed to reduce fragmentation and streamline essential digital services.

3. Building open APIs and interoperability layers: These were instrumental in enabling seamless integration and data exchange between diverse administrative entities.

4. Enhancing cybersecurity capabilities: As digital threats evolved, so did Italy's defense mechanisms. This aspect of the strategy involved the development of new infrastructure, systems, and extensive training to counteract emerging threats effectively.

5. Supporting emerging technologies: Pilot projects and the adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, advanced analytics, and the Internet of Things, were central to the strategy, aimed at improving services and operations.

6. Promoting centralized sharing and reuse of resources: The plan encouraged government bodies to collaborate and share applications, software components, and digital resources, avoiding unnecessary duplication and costs.

7. Introducing digital skills training and chief digital officers: These initiatives focused on building organizational capabilities and enhancing the government's digital readiness.

This comprehensive strategy signified a shift in Italy's approach [6] to digitization. It emphasized the importance of enterprise-wide ecosystems and shared platforms instead of siloed systems. The transition to centralized cloud adoption aimed to minimize infrastructure duplication and ensure efficiency. Notably, the strategy recognized that digitizing back-office functions was essential for achieving profound transformation in the cost and delivery of public services. The introduction of the code of digital administration (CAD) in 2005 [7] was a significant milestone in the digital transformation of the Italian public administration. This decree sought to consolidate and organize Italy's existing digital assets under a unified framework. It mandated technical and data interoperability standards, common security requirements, open government data publication, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Importantly, it marked the formal definition of citizens' digital rights in their interactions with the state, a critical step toward streamlining Italy's fragmented digital policy landscape.

In 2018, Italy enacted Legislative Decree 82/2005 [8], known as the code of digital administration. This significant legislation aimed to further consolidate and organize Italy's existing digital assets under a unified framework. It mandated technical and data interoperability standards, common security requirements, open government data publication, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The code also formally defined citizens' digital rights in their relations with the state for the first time.

Fast forward to 2022, and the recently published digital economy and society index (DESI) sheds light on Italy's digital progress. In terms of the overall ranking, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden have the most advanced digital economies in the EU, followed by Ireland, Malta, and Spain. Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece have the lowest DESI scores. Notably, the data indicates that Italy, along with Poland and Greece, made significant progress over the last 5 years in various digital domains.

The digital economy and society index (DESI) [9] is an annual report published by the European Commission that assesses the digital development of EU Member States. It measures progress in four key policy areas: human capital, connectivity, integration of digital technology, and digital public services. Key findings of DESI 2022 (see **Figure 1**):

2.1 Digital skills

Only 54% of people in the EU have at least basic digital skills.
A total of 87% of people use the internet at least once a week.
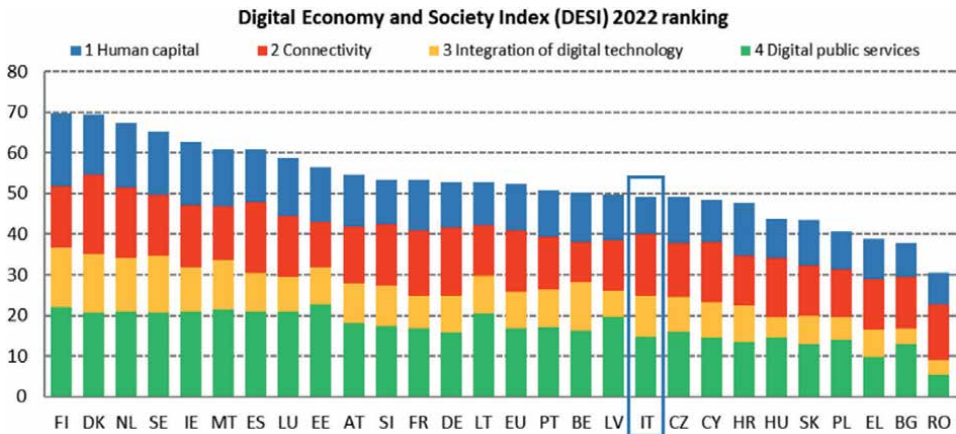
Figure 1.
DESI (digital economy society index) 2022 – Ranking of Italy in terms of human capital, connectivity, integration of digital technology, and digital public services. Source: DESI country profile 2022. European Commission – Shaping Europe's Digital Future – Italy in the Digital Economy and Society Index. Available online at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi-italy.

The path to the digital decade target for 2030 is that at least 80% of citizens have basic digital skills.

2.2 Connectivity

The EU has full coverage of basic broadband infrastructure.

A total of 70% of households can benefit from very high-capacity networks (gigabit speeds), up from 60% the previous year.

50% of households are covered by fiber networks.

5G coverage of populated areas grew significantly in 2021.

The 2030 target is to have all fixed locations covered by a gigabit network and all populated areas covered by next generation wireless high-speed networks.

2.3 Integration of digital technologies

Only 55% of SMEs have at least basic digital skills with variations across member states.

By 2030, at least 90% of SMEs in the EU should have basic digital intensity.

Basic digital intensity means using at least 4 of 12 selected digital technologies.

While cloud computing reached 34% of EU enterprises in 2021, the use of AI and big data analytics remains limited.

2.4 Digital public services

Digital public services for citizens scored 75 out of 100, while it scored 82 out of 100 for businesses.

Estonia, Denmark, Finland, and Malta have the highest scores, while Romania and Greece have the lowest.

The 2030 target is for all key public services for citizens and businesses to be fully online.

These findings highlight both progress and challenges in the digital transformation of EU Member States. Italy, Poland, and Greece made significant progress over the last 5 years. However, there are gaps in digital skills, connectivity, and the adoption of digital technologies [10] that need to be addressed to meet the 2030 targets set by the path to the digital decade.

The DESI data is based on indicators collected from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, as well as data from studies prepared for the commission.

The Recovery and Resilience Plans of EU Member States, committing at least 20% of their funds to digital transformation, are expected to have a major impact on closing the gap. The governance framework under the digital decade policy program will track progress toward the 2030 targets [11], with member states submitting national strategic roadmaps outlining their trajectories and actions. Multicountry projects, with investments from EU funding resources and other entities, will further support these efforts [12].

More recently, Italy has set its sights on a future guided by the 2025 Strategic Plan for technological innovation and digitalization [13], unveiled in 2021. This forward-looking plan harnesses the momentum generated by the COVID-19 crisis and the substantial resources made available through the European Next Generation EU investments [14]. The plan aspires to significantly expedite digitization initiatives, focusing on areas such as data sharing, national interoperable platforms for health and justice, cloud adoption, digital identity, upskilling, and the provision of customer-centric public services. The plan places a strong emphasis on inclusion, pledging to enhance digital access and skills for traditionally underserved groups.

As a result of these efforts, Italy has made substantial progress in establishing the digital foundations required for a modern public administration. Despite the challenges stemming from a fragmented governance structure, the nation now stands at a juncture of rapid advancement.

The COVID-19 crisis, in conjunction with European recovery funding, particularly the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) [15] allocating €48 billion to the digital transition, has provided further impetus to capitalize on the digital momentum already achieved. The keys to success in this next phase of Italy's digitization journey lie in sustained leadership commitment, the promotion of public-private collaboration, and the active engagement of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of digital solutions.

"At the local level, administrators such as the Mayor of Milan, have spearheaded digitization initiatives in their regions, albeit facing common challenges. 'While cities, such as, Milan have made real progress with e-government services, uptake often remains low due to barriers, such as low digital skills among certain groups that we must prioritize addressing, ' the Mayor commented."

"Surveys conducted by the National Statistics Institute, ISTAT, reveal varied views among citizens regarding the digitization of public services. While 83% of Italians believe investing in digital technologies should be a priority for the national recovery plan, only 57% express satisfaction with current online service delivery. 'The government portal is confusing to navigate. I tried applying for a permit online but ended up having to go to the office in person,' lamented a small business owner in Rome."

3. Current state of digitization: the example of healthcare

Italy's National Health Service, Servizio Sanitario Nazionale (SSN), provides a useful case study for examining the impacts of digitization efforts across a major

sector of the public administration. As a large, decentralized system responsible for delivering healthcare to all citizens, the SSN encapsulates both the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation in Italy.

When COVID-19 struck, digital technologies implemented prior to the pandemic enabled the SSN to rapidly adapt and continue serving patients even with severe mobility restrictions. However, gaps and fragmentation in adoption of more advanced technologies remain, suggesting there is still significant room for further digitization and integration.

Digitalization of healthcare in Italy continues to lag leading European countries. In the 2022 DESI index [16], Italy ranked twentieth out of 27 countries for digital public services.

- According to recent analyses, adoption of digital health technologies by Italy's National Health Service (SSN) is gradually increasing but remains inconsistent across regions.

- Telemedicine services expanded during the pandemic, with over 15 million remote consultations delivered in 2021, up from 1 million in 2020. New 2022 guidelines aim to further boost telehealth.

- A national digital health platform is being built to enable data sharing between regions, with rollout expected by the end of 2023. This aims to improve analytics capabilities.

- The 2022 budget allocated €1 billion to boost cybersecurity, interoperability, telehealth, and digital skills across healthcare. Additional PNRR funds target digital investments.

- New partnerships are emerging between public health authorities and tech companies to co-develop solutions leveraging AI/big data analytics.

- However, variability in digital maturity across regions persists. Fully leveraging technology to improve citizen experience and system efficiency remains a work in progress.

In summary, Italy is making gradual progress on healthcare digitization but still requires a coordinated national strategy, sustained investments, public-private collaboration, and cultural change to achieve digitization levels of EU leaders. The pandemic accelerated adoption of digital health, but focused efforts are essential to maintain momentum.

Over the past decade, Italy has succeeded in establishing some foundational digital capabilities in healthcare, while lagging international peers in scaling more innovative solutions. All regions now have electronic health record (EHR) systems, known locally as Fascicolo Sanitario Elettronico (FSE) [17], to create and share digital patient health histories between providers. Citizens can view their records *via* regional web portals or mobile apps. Widespread EHR availability represents a major first step in digitizing clinical information flows for improved care coordination, continuity, and transparency. However, as of late 2021, only about 15 million Italians were actively using their FSEs, representing just one-quarter of the population — one of the lowest adoption rates in Europe.

Regional and national online health portals also now allow citizens to access a range of basic services virtually 24/7, including booking appointments, obtaining prescription renewals, receiving test results, and exchanging messages with providers. Usage of these portals expanded during the pandemic as in-person visits were restricted, enabling care continuity. Citizens could also access their COVID-19 health passes [18] through the portals during the health emergency. However, the patient experience on these portals is often suboptimal. Websites can still be cumbersome to navigate overwhelmed by too much information. A major upgrade to the national health portal is currently underway focused on improving usability.

Adoption of mobile health apps is also gradually growing , with the Ministry of Health having approved 69 apps created by public and private entities that allow access to services, such as e-prescriptions. However, variability in the quality and reliability of apps has prevented large-scale usage so far. Tighter regulation of health apps is being considered to provide citizens with greater confidence.

Use of telemedicine services [19, 20], such as video consultations and remote patient monitoring, also expanded significantly during COVID-19 lockdowns when virtual care became a necessity. The national telehealth registry recorded over 1 million remote services provided from March to December 2020, compared to just 14,000 in all of 2019. However, telemedicine usage still remains well below its potential in Italy. Barriers include lack of equipment and physician training, difficulties integrating with EHR systems, and no payment parity with in-person visits. Targeted investments in technology, change management, and incentives are needed to sustain telehealth momentum.

On the clinical data analytics front, Italy has made some progress in aggregation to enable coordinated pandemic response. The COVID-19 National Surveillance System integrates and analyzes data on cases, treatments, and outcomes from regional laboratory, hospital, and vaccine systems. The Ministry of Health's NSIS National Statistics System also compiles broader health data across regions to shape policies, though often with long lags. However, full interoperability between regional EHR and administrative systems has not yet been achieved, constraining real-time data use for decision-making.

According to the European Commission's 2021 Digital Economy and Society Index, Italy [21] still ranks relatively low among Western European nations for adoption of digital technologies in healthcare. To some extent, the decentralized nature of Italy's SSN has inhibited "enterprise" digitization as regions have autonomy. Additional national coordination and investments are required to mature digital health capabilities to the level seen in Northern Europe. Key priorities include:

- Expanding broadband connectivity to rural facilities [22] to enable digital use cases

- Increasing interoperability between regional EHR systems [23] to achieve a nationwide integrated health record

- Developing a comprehensive national EHR portal [24, 25] for seamless patient access

- Building a health data analytics platform [26] for timely insights

- Launching a telemedicine incentive program [27] on par with other EU states

- Enhancing cybersecurity across decentralized regional systems [28]

- Providing comprehensive digital skills training for health administrators [29] and care providers

The SSN has made steady incremental progress in healthcare digitization over the past decade through "first generation" initiatives, such as national FSE and EHR adoption. These efforts establish a digitized care delivery foundation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic also exposed the gaps that remain in fully leveraging technology for service excellence, particularly when compared internationally. The crisis provides key lessons to guide strategy and investment going forward to ensure Italian healthcare utilizes the full potential of digitization.

This will require national commitment to more coordinated enterprise-wide approaches across regions, increased funding, agile public-private partnerships, and a culture embracing technology-enabled innovation in care models. Digitizing healthcare remains a journey. While Italy's system entered the pandemic with some digital advantages that proved beneficial, recovery efforts and Next Generation EU investments provide an opportunity to accelerate transformation toward the healthcare ecosystem of the future. With concerted strategy and leadership, a world-class digital SSN can soon become reality.

Italy's National Health Service (SSN) is making gradual progress on digitization but still requires a coordinated national strategy, sustained investments, public-private collaboration, and cultural change to achieve digitization levels of EU leaders. The pandemic accelerated adoption of digital health, but focused efforts are essential to maintain momentum.

Electronic health records (EHRs) are now available in all regions, but adoption rates still lag in Northern Europe. By 2023, over 30 million Italians had activated their EHRs, up from 15 million in 2021, aided by incentives.

Usage of regional and national online health portals is increasing, but the patient experience on these portals is often suboptimal. A major upgrade to the national health portal is currently underway focused on improving usability.

Adoption of mobile health apps [30] is also gradually growing, with over 69 apps approved by the Ministry of Health. However, variability in the quality and reliability of apps has prevented large-scale usage so far.

Telemedicine services [31] expanded significantly during the pandemic, but usage still remains well below its potential in Italy. Barriers include lack of equipment and physician training, difficulties integrating with EHR systems, and no payment parity with in-person visits.

On the clinical data analytics [32] front, Italy has made some progress in aggregation to enable coordinated pandemic response. However, full interoperability between regional EHR and administrative systems has not yet been achieved, constraining real-time data use for decision-making.

New developments in 2023:

- The Italian government has launched a new €1 billion program to boost cybersecurity, interoperability, telehealth, and digital skills across healthcare.

- A national digital health platform is being built to enable data sharing between regions, with rollout expected by the end of 2023. This aims to improve analytics capabilities.

- New partnerships are emerging between public health authorities and tech companies to co-develop solutions leveraging AI/big data analytics.

Variability in digital maturity across regions persists. Fully leveraging technology to improve citizen experience and system efficiency remains a work in progress.

Italy is making gradual progress on healthcare digitization [33], but the pandemic has exposed the gaps that remain in fully leveraging technology for service excellence. Recovery efforts and Next Generation EU investments provide an opportunity to accelerate transformation toward the healthcare ecosystem of the future.

4. Key challenges and priorities for the future

Italy has made significant strides in digitizing its public sector in recent years. However, to unlock the full potential of technology in government, addressing several pressing systemic and cultural challenges is essential [34].

A coordinated national strategy is needed, focusing on critical areas such as digital skills development, infrastructure upgrades, cybersecurity, the adoption of emerging technologies, reengineering bureaucratic processes, and optimizing governance.

Progress across these interconnected pillars will empower Italy to create a more digitally driven, integrated, and citizen-centric public administration capable of delivering improved economic, social, and environmental outcomes through the strategic use of technology.

One pivotal challenge demanding dedicated attention is enhancing the digital literacy and readiness of the Italian population. Current surveys from Eurostat and other reputable organizations indicate that Italian citizens lag behind their counterparts in other major European economies in various digital skills [35]. For instance, just 42% of Italians have at least basic or above basic digital skills, compared to the 58% EU average (see **Figure 2**). Furthermore, Italy demonstrates lower cultural readiness for online interactions, reflecting a distrust of sharing data digitally.

To enable citizens to access and fully utilize new online public services and exercise their digital rights, comprehensive programs are required. This should encompass extensive training initiatives, public awareness campaigns, educational efforts tailored to women and older demographic groups, and grassroots digital community mentoring. Inclusion is a critical focus to reach underserved segments such as low-income households, immigrants, rural populations, and individuals with disabilities through targeted outreach efforts.
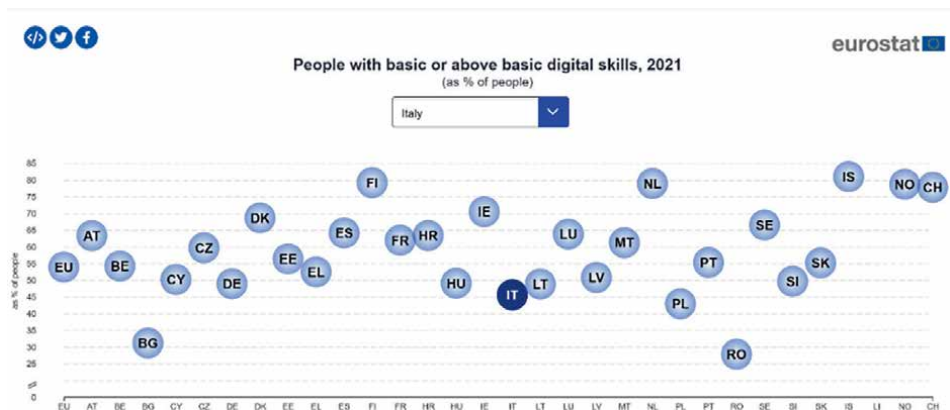

Figure 2.
Percentage of individuals in Italy with basic or above basic digital skills, with respect to EU and to the other 27 EU countries (from 2020). It emphasizes digital literacy gaps. Data source: Eurostat – Digitalization in Europe – 2023 Edition. Available on line at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/digitalisation-2023.

Another paramount priority is overcoming fragmentation. Italy's governance structure is highly decentralized across multiple levels and agencies, complicating the integration of digital systems both horizontally and vertically. This fragmentation leads to uncoordinated, duplicative digitization initiatives and systems, hindering interoperability and the seamless delivery of services across government programs and levels.

While regional flexibility is valuable, greater coordination at the national level is necessary regarding digital standards, platforms, and architectures aligned with common needs. This approach promotes cost-effective reuse and avoids redundant expenses that do not benefit end users. Shared digital infrastructure, APIs, and service components can significantly enhance consistency for citizens while enhancing efficiency. Striking the right balance between central direction and regional implementation autonomy is crucial.

Improving broadband connectivity and access remains a high priority, especially in rural areas. Italy still lags behind other European nations in the adoption of high-speed fixed and mobile internet [36], a concern that was particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis. Universal, affordable broadband is now an essential utility for accessing digital public services, enabling remote work and education. To bridge the digital divide, targeted national and EU investments in expanding fiber, 5G, and public WiFi are imperative.

As digitization accelerates, so does the scale and sophistication of cybersecurity threats. Italy needs to advance its national cyber strategy, covering prevention, detection, response, and recovery. This necessitates increased investments in security infrastructure, processes, and the cultivation of specialized professional skills. Strengthening security requirements for vendors and service providers and fostering public-private collaboration is also imperative to align policies and share threat intelligence effectively.

Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, distributed ledgers, augmented reality, and the Internet of Things, offer transformative potential in public sector service delivery, but most agencies lack implementation expertise. Italy should allocate funding for pilot projects focused on high-impact use cases to build knowledge. A digital assessment office can evaluate solutions suited to various priority needs and contexts. Strategic research partnerships with vendors and academic institutions should provide cutting-edge capabilities to government innovators.

Digitization provides an opportunity to fundamentally reconsider how public sector processes and policies are designed. Rather than merely digitizing manual workflows, bureaucratic procedures should be reengineered to optimize the end-user experience before automation. Adopting user-centric, iterative development approaches is key to driving adoption and satisfaction with new digital services.

Finally, optimizing how Italy governs digitization is essential for maximizing success. The existence of competing priorities across fragmented regional policies and duplicated projects results in resource wastage and inconsistency. Clearer central coordination, accountability, and enterprise architectures are needed to align solutions with common citizen and business needs. However, local input is essential to adapt platforms to regional contexts. Involving external stakeholders beyond government officials also enhances transparency and digital service quality.

Addressing these complex, interdependent challenges holistically will position Italy to complete the digitization transformation of its public administration. Achieving this ambitious goal will require commitment, collaboration, and contributions from government at all levels, as well as active engagement from citizens,

businesses, academia, and social organizations. With concerted effort, a strategic roadmap, and resources such as Next Generation EU funding [37], Italy can realize its vision of a digital, open, and innovative public sector capable of delivering excellent and equitable services nationwide in the twenty-first century.

5. The impact of digitization on public administration performance in 2023

The thoughtful adoption and integration of digital technologies have the potential to profoundly transform public administration performance in Italy [38] and other advanced economies. Evidence from leading countries suggests that strategic digitization of key administrative processes and services can yield a wide range of economic, social, operational, and democratic benefits.

5.1 Economic benefits

Increased productivity and efficiency: Digital technologies can automate repetitive tasks, streamline workflows, and improve decision-making, leading to significant productivity gains and cost savings. For example, the Italian Ministry of the Interior achieved 20–30% productivity gains after digitizing civil registry processes.

Enhanced revenue collection: Digitization can help governments improve tax collection and reduce fraud. For example, Italy's tax authorities report that digitization efforts have already helped reduce tax evasion by billions of euros.

Reduced costs of service delivery: Digitization can help governments reduce the costs of delivering services to citizens and businesses. For example, Italy's national SPID digital ID system has reduced the need for citizens to submit paper documents, saving millions of euros in printing and postage costs.

5.2 Social benefits

Improved access to services: Digitization can make public services more accessible to citizens, especially those in rural or underserved areas. For example, Italy's online booking system for healthcare appointments has made it easier for citizens to access healthcare services without having to travel to a physical facility.

Increased transparency and accountability: Digitization can help to make government more transparent and accountable to citizens. For example, Italy's open data portal provides citizens with access to a wide range of government data, enabling them to scrutinize government spending and performance.

Greater civic participation: Digitization can facilitate greater civic participation in government decision-making. For example, Italy's online consultation platform allows citizens to provide feedback on proposed legislation and policies.

5.3 Operational benefits

Improved data management: Digitization can help governments to better manage and analyze data, leading to more informed decision-making. For example, the Italian government is using data analytics to identify areas, where social spending can be most effectively targeted.

Reduced risk of errors: Digitization can help to reduce the risk of human errors in government operations. For example, Italy's digitized civil registry system has reduced the number of errors in birth and death certificates.

Improved collaboration: Digitization can help to improve collaboration between government agencies and departments. For example, Italy's shared platform for data sharing has made it easier for government agencies to access and share data with each other.

5.4 Democratic benefits

Increased transparency and accountability: As mentioned above, digitization can help to make government more transparent and accountable to citizens. This is essential for ensuring good governance and building public trust.

Greater civic participation: Digitization can also facilitate greater civic participation in government decision-making. This helps to ensure that government policies are more responsive to the needs of the public.

Improved digital democracy: Digitization can also lead to new forms of digital democracy, such as online voting and e-petitions. This can make government more accessible and inclusive.

5.5 Challenges and opportunities

While digitization offers many potential benefits for public administration, there are also some challenges that need to be addressed [39]. One challenge is the need to invest in digital infrastructure and skills. Another challenge is the need to ensure that digitization does not lead to social exclusion or increased inequality.

Despite these challenges, the opportunities offered by digitization are significant. By thoughtfully and strategically digitizing key administrative processes and services, governments can improve their performance, deliver better services to citizens, and strengthen democracy.

Emerging trends in 2023 and beyond.

In addition to the trends mentioned above, there are a number of emerging trends in the field of public administration digitization in 2023 and beyond. These include:

- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to automate tasks, improve decision-making, and personalize services.

- The rise of blockchain technology to improve data security and transparency.

- The increasing use of digital tools to engage citizens in policymaking and service delivery.

- The development of new digital platforms and services that integrate across government agencies and levels of government.

- These trends have the potential to further accelerate the transformation of public administration and deliver even greater benefits for citizens and businesses.

The digitization of public administration is a complex and ongoing process. However, the potential benefits are significant. By thoughtfully and strategically

digitizing key administrative processes and services, governments can improve their performance, deliver better services to citizens, and strengthen democracy.

6. Key sectors where digitization can enhance public sector performance in 2023 and beyond

Digitization has the potential to enhance public sector performance across all sectors. However, some key sectors offer particularly rich opportunities for technology to transform new models and deliver significant benefits for citizens and businesses.

6.1 Healthcare

Digital health records, telemedicine, mHealth apps, remote diagnostics, and virtual care delivery [40] can improve access, quality, coordination, and preventative healthcare.

Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), can be used to develop personalized treatment plans, predict patient outcomes, and improve clinical decision-making.

For example, Italy's Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital is using AI to develop a personalized cancer treatment plan for each child, based on their individual tumor characteristics.

6.2 Education

E-learning platforms, digital content, VR experiences, and data analytics on learning outcomes can personalize instruction and make education more engaging, effective, and equitable.

For example, Italy's Scuola Futura program provides students with access to personalized digital learning experiences and real-time feedback from teachers.

6.3 Social services

Digital case management, mobile workers, beneficiary tracking, and data analysis can help customize protections and measure impact for vulnerable groups [41].

For example, Italy's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is using a digital platform to track the progress of beneficiaries of social welfare programs and provide them with personalized support.

6.4 Transportation

Intelligent mobility systems, real-time monitoring, congestion management, and multimodal transit apps can optimize infrastructure utilization, sustainability, and commuter experience.

For example, Italy's city of Milan is using a smart traffic management system to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

6.5 Public safety

Next generation 911 services, computer-aided dispatch, real-time crime mapping, video analytics, and mobile technologies can enhance emergency response and community risk reduction.

For example, Italy's National Fire Brigade is using drones to assess damage and rescue victims in disaster zones.

6.6 Procurement and resource management

e-Procurement, supply chain integration, satellite monitoring, and AI analysis enable data-driven optimization of asset utilization, energy consumption, and cost efficiency.

For example, Italy's central government is using an e-procurement platform to reduce costs and improve transparency in public procurement.

6.7 Land use planning

Digital zoning maps, building information modeling, geospatial analysis, and modeling inform strategic decisions about sustainable land use, development approvals, and resilience.

For example, Italy's Ministry of Environment is using geospatial analysis to identify areas at risk of flooding and landslides.

6.8 Tax and Revenue Systems

e-Tax filing [42], enhanced reporting, and advanced analytics improve collection efficiency while reducing fraud risk and compliance costs for citizens.

For example, Italy's Revenue Agency is using an e-tax filing system to make it easier for citizens to file their taxes and reduce paperwork.

6.9 Justice

e-Courts, online dispute resolution methods, and integrated case management systems expand access while improving efficiency, transparency, and outcomes across criminal and civil proceedings.

For example, Italy's Ministry of Justice is implementing an e-court system to allow citizens to file court documents online and track the progress of their cases.

7. Conclusion

The digitization of the public sector is a complex and transformative process. If done thoughtfully and strategically, it has the potential to yield significant benefits for citizens and businesses, including:

Improved efficiency and effectiveness: Digital technologies can automate repetitive tasks, streamline workflows, and improve decision-making, leading to significant productivity gains and cost savings.

Enhanced transparency and accountability: Digitization can make government more transparent and accountable to citizens by providing them with access to information about government spending, performance, and decision-making.

Greater citizen participation and engagement: Digital technologies can facilitate greater civic participation in government decision-making and service delivery. For example, citizens can use online platforms to submit feedback on proposed legislation, track the progress of their service requests, and vote in elections.

More equitable and inclusive services: Digital technologies can help governments to deliver services in a more equitable and inclusive way. For example, digital tools can be used to provide services in multiple languages and to make them more accessible to people with disabilities.

Increased innovation: Digitization can foster innovation in the public sector by creating new opportunities for collaboration between government agencies, businesses, and civil society.

To fully realize the potential of digitization, governments need to adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach that includes:

- Investing in digital infrastructure and skills: Governments need to invest in digital infrastructure, such as broadband networks and data centers, as well as in digital skills training for public sector employees.

- Developing new digital solutions: Governments need to develop new digital solutions to meet the changing needs of citizens and businesses. This can be done through in-house development, partnerships with the private sector, or open-source initiatives.

- Adopting innovative approaches to governance: Governments need to adopt innovative approaches to governance to support digitization. For example, they need to create cultures of innovation and experimentation, and they need to develop new ways to measure and manage public sector performance in the digital age.

- The digitization of the public sector is a long-term journey. However, by taking a strategic and comprehensive approach, governments can begin to reap the many benefits that digitization has to offer.

In addition to the above, here are some specific examples of how digitization is transforming public administration in Italy:

- The Italian government is using AI to develop a personalized tax filing system that will make it easier for citizens to file their taxes and reduce paperwork.

- The Italian Ministry of Justice is implementing an e-court system to allow citizens to file court documents online and track the progress of their cases.

- The city of Milan is using a smart traffic management system to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

- The Italian National Health Service (SSN) is using digital health records to improve the coordination of care and reduce the risk of medical errors.

- The Italian Ministry of Education is using e-learning platforms to provide students with access to personalized learning experiences and real-time feedback from teachers.

These are just a few examples of the many ways in which digitization is transforming public administration in Italy. By continuing to invest in digitization and adopt

new digital technologies, the Italian government can create a more efficient, effective, and responsive public sector that is better able to serve the needs of its citizens and businesses.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Section 2

Sustainable Public Administration

Chapter 2

Navigating the Future through Experimental Policy Design

Cristina Zurbriggen and Mariana González Lago

Abstract

Innovative strategies in public policy design are crucial to effectively address the complex and interconnected environmental challenges governments face today. The intricate and uncertain nature of these problems often requires experimental coproduction solutions that integrate and synthesize diverse areas of expertise and stakeholder viewpoints and demand experimental and adaptive capacity to respond in turbulent times. As policy-generative experiments in policy design spread and gain legitimacy, they pose substantial challenges: What challenges do governments encounter in implementing experimental coproduction solutions, and what capacities should public organizations develop to navigate complex and uncertain issues effectively? This article analyses the innovative patterns in policy design experiments and the public sector's capacities to develop in the twenty-first century. It illustrates this discussion with the case of Uruguay's soil conservation management plans (SUMPs) as an example of experimental public policy to address land degradation and promote sustainable land management practices. Through this analysis, this paper aims to contribute to evaluating the coproduction experiments and to current discussions on how governments can foster innovation and navigate change processes to address complex and uncertain issues in sustainability transitions.

Keywords: generative experimentation, co-production, innovation, soil conservation policy, policy design

1. Introduction

Governmental institutions are experiencing profound challenges in responding to critical environmental and societal challenges [1, 2]. The complex nature of these issues challenges the rationale of public administrations since they do not fit neatly into existing institutional arrangements and sectoral divisions [3]. Hierarchical and sectoral structures, along with slow decision-making processes, hinder the ability of governments to respond quickly and effectively to these continuously evolving problems [4].

In this scenario, recent studies on public administration and policy design argue that the intricate and uncertain nature of current problems requires flexible and experimental coproduction solutions to bring together diverse knowledge and collaboratively explore innovative solutions to manage public issues [5–8]. These contributions emphasize that we must move away from unicentric bureaucratic, mechanistic, hierarchical governance models that depoliticize knowledge and ignore

uncertainty, downplaying the democratic deliberation about public values required in policymaking.

Ansell and colleagues [9] argue that public administrations must rethink their governance approaches, develop new paradigms, and adapt to changing conditions. Also, the authors claim that immediate responses to turbulent conditions must be treated as "generative experiments" for longer-term strategic adaptation. Therefore, instead of fearing uncertainty in an ever-changing environment, public organizations can embrace it and learn from each experience. Public administrations might become more flexible and strategic in pursuing long-term goals, requiring the development of flexible and adaptive policy approaches.

Despite a growing interest in coproduction experiments in the public sector, until now, little attention has been paid to exploring the necessary conditions to implement experimental coproduction in established administrative silos as well as analyzing the emergent governance models. As policy experiments spread and gain legitimacy, they pose substantial challenges in implementing experimental coproduction solutions and developing new capacities to effectively navigate complex and uncertain issues.

This article contains an evaluation proposal to understand the contribution of the experimental coproduction innovation process in policy design. We illustrate the potential of applying the proposed approach regarding governments' specific challenges in implementing practical coproduction solutions. With this aim, Uruguay's soil conservation management plans (SUMPs) were identified as an example of a coproduction experiment of public policy to address land degradation and promote sustainable land management practices. Through this analysis, this paper aims to evaluate the coproduction experiments, identify emerging patterns of innovation, and contribute to the discussion on what government capacities can foster innovation and navigate change processes to address complex and uncertain issues in sustainability transitions effectively.

This chapter is structured into three sections. Firstly, it explores the introduction of innovative approaches in experimental coproduction in policy design and examines the evaluation challenges. The second section provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology applied in the case study, focusing on an experimental public policy—the soil conservation policy in Uruguay. Lastly, the chapter discusses how governments can foster innovation and navigate change processes to address complex and uncertain issues in sustainability transitions, identifying emerging governmental capabilities.

2. Generative experimenting in public design and evaluation

Recent approaches to public administration and policy design suggest that complex and uncertain challenges require adaptable and experimental coproduction solutions for more robust and equitable decisions. This innovative process involves integrating diverse knowledge sources, facilitating a collaborative exploration of innovative strategies, and developing creative methodologies for designing anticipatory and experimental public policies [10]. Therefore, a paradigm shift is occurring within public policy formulation, transitioning from conventional modes of planning and execution toward a paradigm of generative experimentation [8, 11, 12].

Generative experimentation seeks to address a problem within its contextual framework, wherein the political solution—a conceptualization, innovation, design, policy, and program is systematically refined through ongoing cocreation and

iterative feedback processes involving pivotal stakeholders. By embracing experimentation, collaboration, and iterative feedback, policymakers can develop more dynamic and flexible policies, treating each step as an opportunity for learning in response to evolving circumstances [13, 14].

Policies are treated as hypotheses, with management actions serving as experiments to test these hypotheses directly within the action process [15]. The continuous refinement through generative experiments involves ongoing negotiation to reach solutions accommodating diverse stakeholder perspectives. Successful progression in a productive experiment requires a shared understanding of the problem and a mutual commitment to the value of learning from it, establishing a shared future vision as a crucial foundation for any public policy experiment [16].

From this perspective, public policies are seen as learning experiments that demand continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation over time. Consequently, the process of public policy design is not neatly divided into distinct stages; instead, it is an ongoing and iterative process that involves design, implementation, and continuous adjustments. Each management action is considered an opportunity to learn and adapt to changing circumstances, leveraging the characteristics of dynamic learning and collaborative management [17].

Despite the increasing adoption of these approaches, it remains a challenge to evaluate and learn from the failures and successes resulting from the orchestration of these processes, including developing procedural designs, facilitation practices, and material devices (e.g., "intermediate designs") that channel participant engagement and help them reach meaningful outcomes [18]. A significant challenge in assessing cocreation experiments is the pervasiveness of results-oriented evaluation models that need to pay more attention to the value of processes [19, 20]. To overcome this challenge, it proposes an evaluation tool based on the literature on developmental evaluation [20] and reflective monitoring [21–23].

Patton [20] defines developmental evaluation as informing and supporting innovative and adaptive intervention in complex, dynamic environments. This approach seeks to guide the collaborative action of innovative initiatives that face high uncertainty and are characterized by their experimental, cocreation, and social learning nature [22]. Here, the unit of analysis for assessing change is no longer the projector program (as in conventional models) but the system.

Because sustainable transitions unfold over long time horizons, and their elements are constantly changing, an iterative, adaptive, and continuous learning attitude is required as a way to observe and assess change qualitatively to continuously course-correct according to the preferred values, motivations, and future visions or transition pathways that the policy normatively codevelops and recursively analyzes. Developmental evaluation involves ongoing data collection, feedback, and stakeholder collaboration during the development and implementation of policies or programs and the system to ensure their effectiveness. This approach allows for real-time adjustments and improvements and is crucial for enhancing the quality and impact of policies and programs [20].

Reflective monitoring is a more contemplative and introspective approach to assessing and understanding complex processes and systems, emphasizing learning, adaptation, and improvement to ensure that policies and projects are sustainable and can adapt to changing circumstances [21]. It involves continuous assessment and feedback, where stakeholders reflect on their experiences and adjustments are made to improve outcomes. This approach recognizes the importance of understanding the broader context in implementing policies, projects, or innovations, considering the

immediate goals in more systemic and environmental factors that can impact success. It is an iterative and cyclical process. Data are collected, analyzed, and used for reflection and decision-making, leading to adaptations and further data collection. Reflective monitoring is not only about short-term results but also considers long-term impacts and sustainability. It often requires expertise from various fields and encourages the active involvement of stakeholders and participants in the assessment and learning process, valuing their insights and experiences as essential for improving the design and implementation of initiatives.

Thus, inspired by these two evaluation models, it proposes a reflective dimension of coproduction experiments to assess whether the dominant assumptions, practices, and institutions associated with the experimentation process are changed. With that aim, it considers three key dimensions: 1—context in which diverse actors and the public sector, in a generative space, are convened to interact in the design process; 2—governance in the experimental coproduction process; and 3—outcomes, monitoring, and evaluation.

2.1 Context: generative space for policy design

Firstly, the context in which the experimental coproduction experiment occurs predominantly determines the nature of the process and the outcomes. Since coproduction requires expanding the array of participants and expertise beyond normal [18], it is necessary to develop a generative space (tools and principles) that simultaneously maintains orchestration (e.g., procedures, facilitation practices, and material devices) and develop anticipatory capacities and the collective processes to synthesize and disagree in fruitful ways [24].

This generative space will help to handle uncertainties. Decisions in the twenty-first century are made with high levels of uncertainty, and decision-makers must deal with different types of uncertainty with different intervention strategies. On the one hand, incomplete or imperfect knowledge (lack of knowledge or data) can be addressed with more knowledge or research. In this scenario, forecasts, projections, and risk-based knowledge systems are necessary but insufficient to cope with the different uncertainties. Governments must cope with another form of uncertainty inherent to coproduction processes, where there are multiple ways of seeing reality (framing) (conflicting visions of seeing the system Ambiguity) [25]. In order to respond to this type of uncertainty, it is necessary to develop anticipation capacity to address desirable, normative dimensions of visualizing the future, expectations, values, imagination, and desires of society collectively. Anticipation means that the "future" becomes feasible through agreements, attitudes, and social interventions and legitimizes policies and change processes [26]. In this process, it is vital to identify contradictory views on how they imagine the future to manage conflicting views.

The coproduction experiment is always inherently political, involving negotiations between members of different groups and rationales, interests, and values. Researchers and decision-makers must be flexible and adaptable, given that there are different visions for determining which modes of knowledge are preferred to identify the best evidence and how to assess its quality [6]. Therefore, knowledge is constantly recodified in an interactive process among actors, interests, and institutions. Forward-thinking can provide a reflective dialog from an intellectual and emotional perspective, including discovering the different interpretive frameworks (frames) and worldviews underlying the value system that determines our actions [27]. This

further helps mobilize people to identify and transform constructed visions into action collectively. Accepting uncertainty can become crucial in negotiating diverse possible futures about different intervention pathways and their consequences.

2.2 Governance in the experimental coproduction process

Governance is a second key component in coproduction experimentation [28]. Coproduction processes involve adaptive management, planning, and continuous interactions among various actors, including government agencies, communities, and other stakeholders. Thus, embracing an adaptive governance approach to interventions is vital due to its emphasis on flexibility, feedback loops, and responsiveness to changing conditions. It allows for incorporating new knowledge, adjusting strategies and actions based on ongoing learning, and incorporating further information [15, 29]. In the context of coproduction, this means that stakeholders engage in trial-and-error processes to identify practical solutions. This governance approach encourages continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and actor collaboration, recognizing that governance is not a one-size-fits-all and that strategies must be tailored to specific contexts. Additionally, it acknowledges the inherently political nature of coproduction, as power dynamics can shift and new roles can emerge during the collaborative process.

A factor that influences the results of the coproduction process is the ability of users to incorporate new knowledge into their organizations, practices, and work cultures, which is summarized in the concept of absorptive capacity. Organizations need correct (distributed) cognitive structures and learning capabilities to absorb the results of different knowledge coproduction activities, inside and outside their organization, and use existing knowledge fully [30]. In this direction, organizations often need more experience and knowledge infrastructure to absorb the results of different knowledge-production activities.

2.3 Outcomes, evaluating and monitoring

A third factor is the outcomes, the production of knowledge for change. The coproduction process is changing and can be a conflictual process in which different types of knowledge are encoded at various stages in iterative and highly interactive structures governed by multiple actors, networks, and institutions to incorporate the coproduced knowledge sustainably. In their organizations and cultures, they are creating a shared language and the ability to absorb this knowledge. Coproduction experiments can disrupt established patterns and practices in public policy. These experiments are seen as a means to change how policies are designed and implemented. Coproduction outcomes are changes in the behavior, relationships, and actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom the program or policy works [31]. The consolidation of these changes depends on mechanisms that should be established to embed the outcomes of coproduction in the routines and everyday procedures of relevant organizations and stakeholders, ensuring that the changes become integral to ongoing practices.

In the experimental process, it is fundamental to understand how the outcomes of a complex process are effectively utilized and how altered governance arrangements are implemented within a specific context. The absorptive capacity refers to an organization's ability to integrate and utilize new knowledge effectively. It implies that organizations need suitable cognitive structures and learning

capabilities to fully use the knowledge they acquire. The outcome of the complex process is twofold. First, it involves the sustained use of coproduced knowledge, indicating that the knowledge generated through coproduction efforts remains valuable and relevant. Second, it consists of implementing altered governance arrangements, suggesting that how changes in policies are designed and governed become part of the local context. This process must also go hand in hand with building the capacity to monitor processes and evaluate outcomes with reflective approaches that help recognize both emerging patterns as the intervention unfolds and the inherent unpredictability of any desired change pathway, correcting and redesigning the intervention strategy.

The following section will assess the coproduction experiment through the lens of the three dimensions: context, governance, and results. Through an in-depth exploration of SUMPs, we aim to gain insights into the effectiveness and adaptability of innovative policy design. In particular, we intend to identify the public sector's capabilities to address complex and uncertain problems.

3. The case: soil conservation management plans innovative policy to promote sustainable

In Uruguay, since the beginning of 2000, soil management practices have been dramatically affected by the global rise in raw material prices, the increasing demand for food, the expansion of soybean production, and the rise in the cost of land ownership. In particular, over the last 15 years, the country has witnessed a quadrupling of total grain production, driven by a twofold increase in productivity (tons/ha) and the expansion of agriculture into nontraditional areas. This expansion often encroaches upon the land with inadequate use capacity for intensive agriculture [32, 33].

In this scenario, the Uruguayan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MGAP) developed a series of policies aimed at preventing the soil degradation caused by the continuous expansion and intensification of cropping production [18]. One of the most relevant agricultural policies regarding the conservation of natural resources has been the implementation of the soil use and management plans (SUMP) in 2013. Soil use and management plans (SUMPs) consist briefly of establishing rotations to restore or increase soil fertility, organic matter, and carbon and minimize erosion through conservation practices, considering soil suitability. The policy aims to achieve sustainable production systems with proper use, maintenance, and recovery of soils and to minimize water erosion processes [17].

According to the law, producers must develop their responsible soil use and management plan, stating the planned production system based on the types of soils, the sequence of crops and management practices, and the levels of tolerable erosion (determined by an adapted version of the universal soil loss erosion and the revised universal soil loss erosion equations). The plans are monitored and controlled through satellite images [18]. This policy design process resulted from a coproduction experiment through which decision-makers, academics, technicians, and the private sector developed and adapted instruments and protocols. This policy was, as mentioned, one of the main elements behind the high acceptance of public policy among farmers. As a potential case of generative experimentation, SUMP leads us to reflect on the possibilities for emergent models of experimentalist governance based on new capabilities, which we will analyze below.

3.1 The method: unveiling insights from coproduction experiments

The research methodology to evaluate soil conservation management plans (SUMPs) followed a qualitative approach based on the case study methodology developed by Yin [34]. The election of the soil use and management plan (SUMP) as the primary case study was deliberate, given its influential position as a pioneering and experimental public policy in environmental regulation. Policymakers consistently emphasized on this [35].

Based on the interpretive paradigm of policy analysis, our research embraced a comprehensive two-step qualitative design. This encompassed a nuanced array of techniques, including document analysis, participant observation, and 20 in-depth interviews from March 2018 to March 2020. These interviews engaged key stakeholders, such as policymakers, representatives from the private sector, and academics, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive perspective on the coproduction experiment under scrutiny.

In evaluating the information amassed during this research process, it adopted the realist synthesis evaluation approach [36]. Realist synthesis, a robust methodology, delves into the intricacies of complex interventions, providing a nuanced understanding of the interactions between context and outcomes—unveiling not just what works but, crucially, why and how [37]. Through the lens of this methodology, our exploration navigated the developmental trajectory of the coproduction experiment, unraveling the underlying "why" and "how" of interactions and scrutinizing the contextual circumstances that exert influence.

To distill and organize these insights effectively, we meticulously crafted a data collection template, a versatile tool structured around three pivotal dimensions: context, process, and outcome. This template provided a robust framework for evaluating the policymaking coproduction experiment, enabling us to identify discernible patterns. These patterns, in turn, contribute significantly to ongoing discussions about how governments can strategically foster innovation to address the intricate and uncertain challenges inherent in sustainability transitions. As we delve into the subsequent phases of our analysis, this data-driven framework becomes an essential instrument for unveiling the deeper layers of understanding within the landscape of coproduction experiments in public policy design. The iterative-cyclic research process involved continuous triangulation of findings, drawing from document analysis, participant observation, and interviews. This comprehensive approach aimed to develop a holistic understanding of the SUMP and its implications within the broader policy innovation and environmental governance context.

4. Results

In the following sections, we present an account of the three dimensions of the evaluation and consider how each made a difference in the program, particularly in addressing the wicked issue of soil conservation.

4.1 Generative space for policy design

The policy design was the result of multiple interactions. The government worked in close collaboration with a set of academic national institutions, such as the National Institute of Agricultural Research, the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of the

Republic, and the Uruguayan Society of Soil Sciences, as well as with producers, various civil organizations, and information technology companies.

The government created an inter-institutional technical committee with the participation of the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA), the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of the Republic, and the Uruguayan Society of Soil Sciences (USCS). The objective of this committee was to advise on relevant decisions regarding the measurement of soil erosion. The decisions made by this committee were tested in the field with producers, and subsequent adaptations resulted from the constant feedback.

To this end, a pilot project was developed (2010–2012), and policymakers worked with producers, experts, and farmers' associations to plan the best productive use of soil based on the equation determining soil erosion tolerance thresholds. Farmers' associations played a crucial role in spreading information and knowledge among their members and improving the implementation of SUMPs.

Multiple communication activities and training workshops on land use regulation and control were also carried out, creating an expanded institutional framework with different government agencies and private actors, including more than 100 workshops with farmers and agronomists to discuss the implementation of the policy. Two types of workshops were held. One type was directed to producers and focused on dissemination, training, and discussion of SUMPs. The other type concentrates on training and building capacities with external technicians responsible for developing and submitting the plans. As a result, a network of diverse actors was strengthened in the "collective construction" of the policy design.

The participation of public, private, and scientific actors went beyond one-way information or consultation on a predefined agenda; instead, a shared understanding took place to forge an epistemic and normative orientation of action research. The iteration and constant adaptation of the plans capitalized on the synergies created between stakeholders' diverse knowledge and technological developments (particularly creating a specific software to submit the plans).

The policy design process included a pilot phase in which collaborative deliberation took place to determine the tolerable levels of oil erosion in the plans submitted by producers. Collaborative networks were created as spaces where different actors (government, academia, business, civil society), through interactive processes, link different perspectives, levels of knowledge, and understanding to reach a shared vision—the action of a complex problem. Therefore, the policy design and implementation process resulted from a collective construction of knowledge but with high levels of experimentalism. For the development of these networks and the creation of productive interactions, it was essential to generate spaces of encounter and experimentation based on principles such as flexibility and reflexivity under the premise that processes are not linear and that the specifications of the contracts must recognize adjustments and changes, as they happened under a context of uncertainty and constant switching—permanent negotiation and communication required amplitude criteria and strategic direction of all actors involved. Rigidity or the narrow bureaucratic control of these processes would have led to failure.

Nevertheless, although the design process of this policy generated a space for participation and articulation within the academic sector, participation was limited to the agronomic academic community, restricting the involvement of other disciplines. A key takeaway from this limitation is the necessity to include diverse perspectives when designing policies, as this diversity can lead to more effective solutions for society. Limiting participation to a specific academic discipline (e.g., agronomists) and type of

stakeholders (e.g., producers and farmers associations) can result in a narrow understanding of the problem and potentially miss out on valuable alternative insights.

Rajagopalan and Midgley [38] pointed out that cocreation without systems thinking can be problematic. Coproduction requires engaging a diversity of perspectives to synergistic innovation that results from this engagement is relevant to innovation. However, a relevant question is how a dialog is constructed, who stakeholders are invited, who are excluded, who are marginalized, and how to handle the marginalization. An important insight is that the not participative process can include possible perspectives: comprehensiveness is impossible, but it is relevant to consider diverse knowledge to improve future solutions to the problem.

4.2 Governance structures in policy design

The design of the policy and the metric definition to evaluate sustainable rates of soil erosion (USLE) and its revised version (RUSLE) resulted from a process in which the government and the academic sector worked together. The depth of collaboration at the science-policy interface was critical to implementing the policy. An academic involved in the process stated: the most relevant decisions regarding the measurement of soil erosion were made by the committee formed by the government and the academy, with representatives from the Faculty of Agronomy, the National Institute of Agricultural Research, and the Uruguayan Soil Science Society. The exchange with the productive sector was also vital, allowing for further research and development in areas where gaps of knowledge were identified (e.g., digital cartography food agricultural practices, among others).

In 2010, the Ministry launched an open call for producers to participate voluntarily in designing the first pilot plan. As a result, 24 companies elaborated their SUMPs with the support of decision-makers and technicians. From May to September 2011, the technical team from the government reviewed the first submitted plans, followed by several feedback workshops with the voluntary companies. This iterative process between the group of experts from the government, the volunteering producers, and external agronomists allowed the adjustment and validation of the methodology to measure soil erosion.

The pilot process of designing the plans showed how scientific and nonscientific bodies of knowledge were integrated to support concrete problem-solving efforts [39, 40]. The implementation of the plans resulted from a process of experimental coproduction of knowledge between the private sector, government officials, farmers' associations, and academics. This network's creation helped respond to the limits of hierarchical organizational structures such as that of the Ministry, overcome the fragmentation of efforts between sectors, and the need for more stimulation and coordination between research and higher education.

A second phase of the design process involved the construction of an online platform to submit the plans between 2013 and 2017. In 2013, a "very precarious" platform was available, as an agronomist involved in the process states. During 2014 and 2015, RENARE worked with the Ministry's IT technicians and a software development company to make the online platform more precise by adding a geographical viewer to draw the agricultural lands in real time. The improved software version posed a relevant problem in migrating information from the original tool to the new one.

Consequently, the government team interacted permanently with external technicians, who provided information about errors and the platform's usability. During this process, technicians from the government tested the analytical tools to assess the plans

and the emerging obstacles. Nevertheless, this second version of the software was inefficient: "The platform was improved, but it was not enough […] the model was still being calculated by the desktop version software and then uploaded to the platform" (technician from the government). Thus, a third stage was needed to improve the software (2016–2017). In 2020, it was decided to develop an entirely new platform. A public tender request created a national consortium. The consortium built the prototype in collaboration with government technicians, which was discussed with the certified agronomists, who validated it after their observations were incorporated. Then, continuous tests were done with government technicians until they became operational. The technical committee approved the final version of the software. With the new platform, the plans were submitted online using Erosion 6.0 (free software) and were controlled and monitored through satellite images. In this way, the computer system and satellite images analyzed the basic information of the submitted plans, allowing the government to oversee their implementation. In particular, the system could identify locations at a higher risk of erosion and locate farmers who were not complying with the crop rotation plans they had submitted (technician interview).

This process of policy design implied a new way of knowledge creation (transdisciplinary/contextual/ethnographic/experiential/qualitative, first-hand) with a pragmatic approach (knowledge and action, interface between different actors through observation and experimentation) to reach a better understanding of the diverse aspects of soil erosion. In addition, the relationships and interconnections of synthesis of facts, judgments, visions, values, interests, epistemologies, time scales, geographical scales, and worldviews.

In this context, experimentalism presents a new form of experimental governance, a new form of steering that diverges from conventional hierarchical control, the new public management (NPM), or from the bottom up, as in devolved or "interactive" "network" governance. This framework may help to deal with disputed, value-led environmental policy issues and different scientific foundations to solve the problem. In the SUMP, experimentalism emerged during the pilot phase and the development of the online platform. A key learning from this case is that immediate responses to turbulent conditions must be treated as experiments for longer-term strategic adaptation [9]. In other words, government entities should view their endeavors in dealing with uncertainty as chances to experiment with fresh approaches and engage in collaborative innovation.

These spaces made possible social experimentation in a concrete context, particularly learning on the go and openness to creative discoveries. Any conclusion was provisional and revised in action in uncertain and complex conditions. By creating these spaces for interaction and experimentation, the public sector tapped into 50 years of agronomic research in the country. Nevertheless, simultaneously exploring the possibilities in the current moment by applying past knowledge to enhance future productivity in policymaking underscores the creative aspect of action. This approach also underscores the importance of experimentation and the adaptive governance of public policy.

4.3 Outcomes: the iterative process of creating, refining, and improving the policies

The third factor evaluated has been the development of mechanisms through which the results of experimental coproduction are integrated into routines and practices of the public sector and absorption capacities are strengthened. The

coproduction experiment has led to the development and installing a land use plan management systems platform called the use plan management system. This system is crucial in land use planning and management, making it more efficient and accessible for producers and technicians. This platform serves as a tool to work daily, where new usage plans can be declared and previously submitted ones updated as necessary.

At the same time, it serves as an intelligent system for managing policy and an integral part of the National Agricultural Information System, mainly providing monitoring capabilities. In the first year of implementation, in 2017, the platform successfully managed 15,467 plans, covering a land area of 1,536,084 hectares, representing nearly 100% of the total area that requires planned activity.

The online platform to submit the plans is in a continuous process of improvement. In 2022, a new platform was being developed to improve operations with farmers. According to the current director of the Direction of Natural Resources, the technical modifications will improve processes and make them more friendly. The most significant changes that the platform presents are technical, but they also include some administrative ones. He clarified that there are adjustments of all kinds and changes in digitization, georeferencing, and measurements.

For the government, it introduces a new, more efficient technology for soil monitoring erosion. The software system allows the government to monitor if producers comply with their plans. This platform is crucial in managing land use policies and activities.

5. Discussion

Recent public administration and policy design studies have shown that experimental policy design can be associated with better results. However, more evidence is needed on introducing these practices into policy design and how an experimental culture can be embedded in public organizations. This study contributes to the existing literature on experimentation in public policy by providing an empirical example of what capabilities need to be developed. Much of the current literature deals with conceptual frameworks; however, there needs to be more empirical studies illustrating how to apply these models in practice. This case's evaluation helped identify the capacities public organizations should develop to navigate complex and uncertain issues effectively.

6. Summary of key findings

6.1 Discussion

Recent public administration and policy design studies have shown that experimental policy design can be associated with better results. However, more evidence is needed on introducing these practices into policy design and how an experimental culture can be embedded in public organizations. This study contributes to the existing literature on experimentation in public policy by providing an empirical example of what capabilities need to be developed. Much of the current literature deals with conceptual frameworks; however, there needs to be more empirical studies illustrating how to apply these models in practice. This case's evaluation helped identify the capacities public organizations should develop to navigate complex and uncertain issues effectively.

7. Summary of key findings

7.1 Anticipatory capacity: long-term vision with broad political support

In the design of police processes, where complexity demands the participation of multiple actors to achieve better results, the government's first challenge is generating anticipatory capacity. When various stakeholders participate in coproduction processes, each has their belief systems, points of view, preferences, and interests and, therefore, their interpretations of the problem. This gives rise to a new type of uncertainty: ambiguity, a situation in which the decision-maker does not have a single and complete understanding of what he must manage. To overcome these difficulties, anticipatory thinking can provide a reflective dialog about different interpretative frameworks (framings) and worldviews to mobilize people to generate a joint vision for action.

7.2 Synthesis capacity: bridge the gap between science and politics

The design of coproduction policies on complex problems involves continuous interaction between actors from different social subsystems (research, politics, civil society, private sector) to link different perspectives and types of knowledge (scientific and experiential) in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the problem and generate a roadmap for better decision making. This implies relating and interconnecting facts, judgments, visions, values, interests, epistemologies, time scales, geographical scales, and world visions that are not exempt from conflicts. Governments must increasingly work with interdisciplinary teams and move toward integrating practical knowledge, whether tacit or codified, for a deeper understanding of a problem, legitimizing decision processes for action. Another significant challenge for decision-makers in accelerating transitions is the integration of various forms of knowledge in a way that can support policy and practical practice. These processes also require a particular transformation of the existing knowledge infrastructures to move toward the production of interdisciplinary knowledge (integrating knowledge from different disciplines) and transdisciplinary knowledge (integrating scientific and non-scientific knowledge).

7.3 Adaptive capacity learning by doing

Governments must introduce adaptive capacity, a strategic approach used in decision-making, especially in complex and uncertain contexts. The main idea is to recognize the uncertainty inherent in many problems and situations and to continually adjust strategies and actions based on feedback and acquired knowledge. Instead of following a rigid, predefined plan, adaptive management allows teams to learn from practical experience and adapt as policy develops. Adaptive management is based on the premise that effective solutions can only sometimes be foreseen in advance and that flexibility and responsiveness are essential to address complex and dynamic problems. This involves constantly monitoring and evaluating progress, identifying changes in the environment or conditions, and adjusting strategies accordingly.

7.4 Evaluation and monitoring capacity

The evaluation and monitoring capacity is crucial for policies that face uncertainty and are characterized by their experimental and co-creation nature that confront

situations in which conditions and results may vary, which requires continuous adaptation of strategies and approaches. Therefore, the learning capacity and the reflective and critical culture that allow organizations and individuals to improve their policies and actions based on the results and lessons learned are critical. Therefore, it is vital to develop formative evaluations during policy implementation, which allows for faster decision-making adapted to changing circumstances. In this process, the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation and monitoring process encourages continuous feedback and collaboration, allowing for better implementation and effectiveness of policies. Therefore, the capacity for evaluation and monitoring allows organizations and policies to adapt and progress in uncertain environments.

In a scenario characterized by high levels of uncertainty, it is imperative that government institutions not only review but transform their governance strategies. This reexamination process must include the adoption of new paradigms and constant adaptation to ever-changing conditions. The ability to adjust to this uncertain environment will strengthen public administrations' resilience and enhance their agility and long-term strategic vision. This approach implies formulating policies that are flexible and inherently adaptive, with the ability to respond effectively to changing dynamics and emerging challenges in the complex government landscape. Ultimately, this transformation process will enable government entities to survive in an uncertain environment and thrive and lead initiatives that benefit society as a whole.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author details

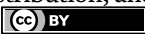Cristina Zurbriggen[1,2]* and Mariana González Lago[3]

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Advancing Ethics-Led Administrative Discretion in Public Administration: A South African Perspective

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Abstract

The chapter explores how South African *Batho Pele* ethics-led frame of discretion can enable future public administrators in an administrative state to better understand administrative discretion and effectively manage it. It is based on secondary data from the available literature against the South African post-1994 efforts to tame its inherited ethically barren apartheid administrative discretion in the practice of public administration towards building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. The findings show that the ethically barren apartheid administrative discretion posed a challenge to the new ethically attuned democratic South Africa's practice of public administration. They further highlight that indeed the lack of ethics consciousness in discretion in the practice of public administration presents a challenge for public administrators in an administrative state. The challenge is how could public administrators use their discretion ethically in the practice of public administration? For public administrators in an administrative state, the tension between moving in a spirited way in decision-making and remaining sensible is a real problem of how to exercise one's discretion in the practice of public administration in an ethically conscious way.

Keywords: South Africa, *Batho Pele*, *Batho Pele* principles, administrative discretion, administrative morality, administrative state, public administration

1. Introduction

In the twentieth century, the practice of public administration experienced an increase in the exercise of administrative discretion by public administrators amidst the rise of the administrative state which continues to attract mixed judicial attitudes [1]. It is now inevitable to imagine a functioning administrative state without the solid backing of the exercise of administrative discretion by public administrators. Despite sustained hostility and scepticism around it, the truth is that administrative discretion is an inescapable feature of the practice of public

administration in an administrative state [1]. This disposition has sparked concerns about its growing scope of influence in the practice of public administration to the extent that the general administrative principles in law that seek to tame it continue to be formulated as its politics of judicial review rumbles across the administrative state internationally [1]. Here, it is taken for granted that the global discourse on the problem of administrative discretion (lack of ethics thereof) to public administration is well covered in the literature. As such, no attempt is made to expand on it to draw international comparisons given time and space constraints. That said, however, an overview of the general challenge of discretion in the practice of public administration in an administrative state is provided in 1.1, and a mini case study of the challenge of discretion to South African public administration is presented in 1.2 to anchor the discussion. The intention here is to highlight the challenge of discretion to the practice of public administration if it remains unrestrained without ethics-led checks and balances to restore much needed ethics consciousness in its exercise.

1.1 Challenge of discretion in an administrative state

Despite sustained efforts to tame it, administrative discretion remains a stubborn challenge to the contemporary practice of public administration, and it is likely to remain so in the future public administration as a lasting concern. The challenge of administrative discretion (lack of ethics thereof) in the practice of public administration in an administrative state is most recently well documented in Ref. [2]. Here, Tandon [2] lays naked the administrative discretion abuses in contemporary Indian public administration, which are not necessarily unique to it but fundamentally cut across all public administrations in the administrative states around the globe. These abuses include but are not limited to "acting on a mala fide basis, disregarding relevant considerations and pursuing irrelevant ones and misapprehending the power granted by the statutes" [2]. These discretion abuses demonstrate wanton disregard for ethics in administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in an administrative state [3].

The resulting consequences of administrative discretion abuses are many and varied across administrative states [1, 3]. For ref. ([3], p. 5), they include but are not limited to "a lack of accountability, manipulation, unpredictability, intrusiveness, and poor decision making". Their occurrence "can lead to issues of favoritism, discrimination, or arbitrary decision-making" [4]. These issues can negatively impact the judicious exercise of administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in varied ways across administrative jurisdictions [2–4]. First, they can undermine administrative morality in the delivery of public services [4]. Second, they can reduce the efficacy of public administration [5]. Third, they can undermine public trust in the public administration. Fourth, they can impair the administrative performance of bureaucracies [6]. Fifth, they can lead to the tendency for public officials to make decisions with their intuition, or whims and caprices [7]. Sixth, they can lead to biased usage of discretionary powers delegated to administrative functionaries [2].

Thus, from Refs. [2–7] cited recent literature sources above, it is evident that administrative discretion does pose a challenge to public administration in an administrative state. As such, it is taken for granted that this is the case although no empirical studies or real-life cases that demonstrate it have been undertaken due to time and space constraints. That being the case, however, the cited sources do highlight

the potential challenge of the problem of ethics in administrative discretion that is further stressed in the below South African mini-case study.

1.2 Challenge of discretion in the South African administrative state

The history of South African public administration is self-contradictory by nature. It transitioned in a striking manner from the ethically barren apartheid-based administration to the more ethically attuned democratic administration. This double-barrelled history of South African public administration is eloquently highlighted by Cameron ([8], pp. 135–157) in his introductory remarks for his case study book chapter "*Public service reform in South Africa: from apartheid to a new public management*". Essentially, this case study book chapter by Cameron [8] provides a reader with insights into the evolving landscape of administrative discretion and ethical governance relevant to South African public administration that need not be repeated in this chapter. However, for the sake of couching the *Batho Pele* discussion in this chapter, it would be beneficial to the reader to briefly highlight in 1.2.1 the characteristics of the ethically barren paradigm of the apartheid administration which created notoriously contradictory administration practices in the history of South African public administration. This is important in bringing to light an aspect of ethically attuned public administration in South Africa post-apartheid that gave birth to *Batho Pele* ethics-conscious frame of discretion in the practice of public administration.

1.2.1 Apartheid-based administration

The ethically barren paradigm of South African public administration has its seeds planted by the racist apartheid administrative state in 1948. With the apartheid administrative state, the racist apartheid-era bureaucracy surfaced and became entrenched with unfettered discretion ceded to it. It emerged with greater discretionary powers that had particular implications for the character of public service. The apartheid-era bureaucrats "wielded considerable powers within state bureaucracies controlling the implementation - and often the substance - of a myriad of rules and regulations that traversed every sphere of life in the country" ([9], pp. 118–119). Essentially, the apartheid state gave the apartheid-era bureaucrats a fail-safe way to exercise ethically barren discretion at their behest. For instance, police officers were conferred broad discretion by the then-Internal Security Act of 1982 to hold persons (mostly Black South Africans) who they viewed to be a threat to public order under apartheid administrative state and subject them to indefinite detentions. This indiscriminate subjective morality in the exercise of discretion by the apartheid-era bureaucrats permeated every sphere of the practice of public administration, ushering "the labyrinth of laws, policies, and bureaucratic discretion that subjected South Africa's majority black population to daily degradation" ([10], p. 485).

In the apartheid administration, the bureaucrats exercised extensive discretion in making, interpreting and enforcing the rules and regulations associated with the apartheid administrative state ([10], pp. 481–491). Hence, the apartheid-based administration was not immune from discretion abuses and the resulting consequences stated in 1.1. Perhaps, one of its defining ethical malfeasances was the deliberate and sustained creation of the crisis of delivery of public services to South Africans based on race and colour ([11], pp. 48–56). The apartheid-based administration undermined the quality delivery of public services to Black South Africans [11] as it unapologetically "provided public services predominantly to small white

constituency" ([8], p. 135) at the expense of the Black majority of South Africa's population. In reality, it is the ethically barren discretion practices in public administration of the South African apartheid administrative state that planted its germs of destruction that eventually led to its demise [8–10]. Simply put, a lack of ethics consciousness in discretion practices in public administration inevitably engineered the ultimate death of the apartheid administrative state in 1994, bringing to end the apartheid-based administration.

1.2.2 Democratic-based administration

Upon the dawn of ethically attuned democratic dispensation in 1994, South African public administration found itself in public service delivery disarray with fragmented state administrations susceptible to racially inspired administrative discretion abuses in the practice of public administration. The need for overhaul and improvement of post-apartheid South African public administration "to achieve public service delivery for the public good" ([11], p. 49) became apparent and urgent. In terms of improving the delivery of public services to South Africans "the size of the task facing the new [post-apartheid South African public administration] was daunting" ([11], p. 49).

The legacy of ethically barren administrative discretion in the practice of public administration presented a challenge for public administrators in the more ethically attuned democratic administration post-1994 South Africa. The challenge then was and still is: how could public administrators constitutionally use their ethical discretion to address the immense aspirations for greater access to basic public services? For post-apartheid South African administrative state, the challenge of integrating ethics into administrative discretion to ameliorate the ravages of apartheid delivery of public services is real for public administrators, yet it is remarkably the least researched phenomenon. For South African public administrators, the tension between moving in a spirited way in decision-making and remaining sensible is a real challenge of how to exercise one's discretion in the practice of public administration against the backdrop of the history of apartheid shrouded in dearth of ethics consciousness in discretion.

That said, however, the challenge of how to exercise one's discretion does not face only South African public administrators. It is a general challenge that confronts public administrators in the practice of public administration across administrative jurisdictions [1, 2, 6, 7]. Signs are that it is likely to remain a contested issue in the increasingly "robotised" practice of public administration in an expansive automated administrative state with unparalleled use of artificial intelligence resulting in smart public administrations [12–15]. So, taking ethical administrative discretion seriously in the practice of public administration is a here-and-now urgent call by the chapter. It is the contention of this chapter that public administrators across administrative states must be obliged to demonstrate the exercise of thoughtful ethical discretion in the practice of public administration.

Specifically, the chapter submits that the exercise of ethical administrative discretion in the practice of public administration should be understood as obligating public administrators to undertake careful ethical reflection prior to the exercise of discretion ([16], pp. 21–64). It is also a reminder to public administrators that their "professional responsibility carries with it a duty to exercise discretion through consideration of the relevant ethical issues" ([16], p. 24). Hence, it "takes seriously the principle of ethical discretion, respecting the role of individual ethical decision making, but

requiring that such decision making be carried out through a justifiable process of ethical deliberation" ([16], p. 24). It thus promises a thought-provoking exploration into the crucial intersection of ethics and administrative discretion within the South African public administration landscape, arguing that the emphasis on ethics-led decision-making in public administration is both timely and essential in fostering transparency and accountability in government practices.

1.3 Snapshot of the chapter structure

This chapter explores how the South African *Batho Pele* can be a viable administrative tool for the exercise of ethical discretion in the practice of future public administration in an administrative state. It adopts a qualitative approach of analysing and synthesising secondary data from the relevant available literature sources in terms of a desktop study methodology. In doing so, it considers how *Batho Pele* can enable public administrators to better understand their exercise of ethical administrative discretion and effectively manage the challenges it poses to them in the practice of public administration. It is divided into five (5) sections of which Section 1 introduces the chapter. Section 2 generally discusses the contentious nature of administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in an administrative state. Section 3 provides an overview of South African *Batho Pele* as an attractive framework for ethics-led administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in an administrative state. Section 4 makes a case for South African *Batho Pele* as a viable ethics conscious agency for advancing future ethics-led administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in an administrative state. Section 5 concludes the chapter.

2. Contentious nature of discretion in public administration

In no small measure, the exercise of administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in a modern administrative state is a contentious subject. To illustrate its contentious nature, Schmidt and Scott [5] claim that the expansive exercise of administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in modern administrative state has created a growing anxiety about its scope and limits at the present and, probably, for the future. For Ref. [5], the anxiety about administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in modern administrative state derives from the fact that "discretion gives decision makers choices as to how resources are allocated, or how other aspects of state largesse or coercion are deployed" ([5], p. 454). Here, the scope and limits of discretion are more often not well-defined and articulated, resulting in undesirable instances in which "discretionary power [of state functionaries] challenges aspects of the rule of law" ([5], p. 454). This challenge manifests itself in many and varied ways, the most apparent being "transferring decisions from legislators to departments, agencies, and street-level bureaucrats and risking the uniform application of key fairness and equality norms" ([5], p. 454).

2.1 Anxieties created by discretion

For ref. ([5], p. 454) are convinced that, in the modern practice of public administration, "the expansion of state administrations [has] generated a degree of

anxiety about the growth of administrative discretion". Here, Schmidt and Scott ([5], p. 454) are adamant that "the presence of administrative discretion both *de iure* and *de facto* [in the practice of public administration] is a source of anxiety" in the contemporary administrative state. Schmidt and Scott [5] suggest that this is the case for two (2) primary reasons. First, Schmidt and Scott ([5], p. 454) argue that "the roles of a wider range of actors exercising powers with a wider range of instruments" continue to grow unabated in modern practice of public administration. Second, Schmidt and Scott ([5], p. 454) deposit that there are "also new forms of discretion, for example over automated decision-making processes, over the formulation and dissemination of league tables or the use of behavioural measures" that are increasingly becoming central in the practice of public administration. Thus, these developments have overtime increasingly led to the changing modes of how administrative discretion is deployed in the practice of public administration [5], often resulting in administrative anxieties.

2.2 Changing modes of deployment of discretion

For ref. ([5], p. 454), the above-stated developments in the practice of public administration in 2.1 are significantly "changing modes of deployment of discretion" in the modern administrative state. Schmidt and Scott ([5], p. 454) argue that these developments have given rise to what they dubbed "two potentially contradictory trends" in the deployment of discretion. These trends are "an increase in determining and structuring administrative decision, leading to a more transparent use of discretion; and the increased use of automated decision-making processes which have the potential of producing a less transparent black box scenario" ([5], p. 454). Indeed there is a concern that "if public [administrators] are replaced by robots and on-the-spot decisions are rendered by artificial intelligence and machine-based technologies, discretion, compassion, and moral judgement might be lost, even though public services could be delivered more punctually and cost-effectively by machines without a conscience" ([17]. p. 18). It is perhaps these emerging developments with the anxieties they create in the practice of public administration that prompted varying views about the essence and nature of administrative discretion in the administrative state.

2.3 View of discretion as a "pet turned into a monster"

Here, an interesting yet controversial description of the essence of administrative discretion is provided by Yeboah-Assiamah et al. [7]. Yeboah-Assiamah et al. ([7], pp. 1–12) sarcastically dubbed administrative discretion as a "pet turned into a monster". For Yeboah-Assiamah et al. ([7], p. 1), *discretion as Pet* encapsulates an acknowledgment and recognition that "the nature of services public officials provide[s] calls for human judgement that cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute [for required] freedom of action to adequately respond to somewhat novel, unexpected, and unique situations". That said, however, their view is also that *discretion turns Monster* when "public power holders [tend] to use discretion in bad faith [to extend that they are not able] to convincingly justify or account for the use of discretion" ([7], p. 1). Here, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. ([7], p. 1) suggest that the monster nature of discretion manifests itself in the "Excessive (mis) appropriation and usage of discretion [that] reduces the spirit and letter of administrative practices".

2.4 "Pet turned into a monster"-dilemmatic disposition of discretion

Given [7] disposition of administrative discretion as *a pet turned into a monster,* one is not surprised by Cox's famous commentary in the early 2000s that "seemingly no aspect of public administration engenders more controversy than the idea of discretion" ([18], p. 20). In agreement, West ([19], p. 340) notes that administrative discretion poses a dilemma in the practice of public administration as "it conflicts with our fundamental beliefs about institutional limitations and responsibilities". West ([19], p. 341) further states that "Our misgivings about delegated authority have been reinforced by a good deal of social science and legal literature which identifies discretion as a cause of malaise in the policy-making process". West ([19], p. 342) concludes that "The great dilemma posed by discretion is that it is both necessary and problematic". West ([19], p. 342) adds that "It is necessary if government is to respond effectively to the needs of modern society; [and] it is problematic in terms of widely shared values and beliefs concerning institutional roles and competence" ([18], p. 342). That being the case, however, West ([19], p. 341) interestingly notes that "Yet, despite profound reservations about discretion, the delegation of authority to [public administrators] has continued apace". In fact, the expansion of administrative [discretion] has accelerated in recent years, indicating "the inevitability of discretion in decision-making in the administrative state" ([20], pp. 99–134). This has led to questions about the appropriate exercise of administrative discretion in the practice of public administration—how it ought to be exercised appropriately.

2.5 How ought discretion be exercised?

According to Daly ([20], pp. 99–134), "the inevitability of discretion and judgement in decision-making in the administrative state" is apparent in the practice of public administration. For Daly ([20], p. 110), "Even if we were to allow, for the sake of argument, that statutory provisions are always clear, discretion and judgement could not be eliminated from administrative decision-making". In this regard, Daly ([20], p. 120) poses an interesting and pertinent question "Given the inevitability of administrative discretion and judgement, how ought it be exercised?" In response, Daly ([20], p. 123) eloquently and convincingly explains, "how [public] officials *should not* exercise the discretion and judgement they inevitably exercise". Daly ([20], pp. 99–134) strongly points out that "it would be *unrealistic* and *inappropriate* [to remove] discretion and judgement in decision-making in the administrative state". First, "It would be *unrealistic* to expect [public] officials to think like lawyers because, most of the time, they are not trained lawyers" ([20], p. 120). Second, "It would also be *inappropriate* to expect [public] officials to master the details of legal interpretation" ([20], p. 122). This raises the question of how administrative discretion should be exercised in the practice of public administration.

2.6 How should discretion be exercised by public officials?

Now, Daly ([20], p. 123) has given response on "how public officials should not exercise the discretion and judgement they inevitably exercise", West ([19], p. 123) turned to the question of "how they should do so". Here, Daly ([20], p. 123) recommends that public officials should employ what he fondly dubs "an informal, good faith approach [in] the exercise [of] discretion and judgement they inevitably exercise". First, Daly ([20], p. 123) states that "[public] officials should approach

legal instruments such as statutes and constitutional texts in an *informal manner,* developing an understanding of the instruments which coheres with the officials' understandings of the objectives of the regulatory schemes they are charged with administering". Second, Daly ([20], p. 123) adds that "in applying legal instruments, [public] officials should make *a good faith effort* to remain within the boundaries of the legal framework they are operating in [as] part of the decision frame they use in their daily activities". It is in this regard that Daly ([20], p. 99) concludes that "The emphasis in public administration should be on informal legal interpretation conducted in good faith: administrative discretion and judgement should presumptively be exercised in a large and liberal way not characterised by pedantry and pettifoggery". Here, it can be speculated that, perhaps, it is ([20], pp. 99–134) conviction on how discretion should be exercised by public administrators that prompted the founders of an ethically attuned democratic South Africa to create an ethical discretion framework of *Batho Pele* for the practice of public administration in the republic.

2.7 Founding spirit of ethically attuned *Batho Pele* discretion

It is the understanding of the inevitability of discretion and judgement in the practice of public administration that prompted the birth of *Batho Pele* as an ethical discretion framework for service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa in 1997 [21–24]. In essence, with the birth of *Batho Pele* as an ethical discretion framework for service delivery, the architects of the post-apartheid administrative state in South Africa seemingly acknowledged that every act of a public administrator involves what Gulick in ([25], pp. 117–118) called a "seamless web of discretion and action". As such, administrative discretion is a necessary evil that always "entails the usage of a public officer's judgement or intuition to make decisions, especially, where the rules, regulations, and procedures appear grey, or such usage becomes imperative due to a context-dependent situation" ([7], p. 1). The next section of this chapter that follows is intended to provide an overview of South African *Batho Pele* as a plausible ethics-led framework for administrative discretion in the practice of public administration in the more ethically attuned post-democratic dispensation in South Africa.

3. An overview of *Batho Pele* as a framework for discretion

As alluded to in 1.2, the Republic of South Africa (RSA) has a chequered history in which abuse of discretion in the administrative state during apartheid along racial divide was the norm rather than the exception. With the lessons from the demise of the apartheid administration, post-1994 RSA found itself facing the huge task of consolidating its newly attained democratic dispensation. Perhaps, one of the greatest challenges to the newly founded democratic administrative state was the difficulty in taming its inherited apartheid, ethically barren administrative discretion in the practice of public administration. Here, *Batho Pele* provided what Mojapelo et al. ([26], p. 357) call a "window of opportunity" in taming the then ethically unconscious administrative discretion inherited from the apartheid era. Thus, *Batho Pele* presented an opening to cultivate the much-needed administrative morality in the practice of public administration in the new republic's ethically attuned democratic dispensation.

3.1 From apartheid to *Batho Pele*

From Apartheid to *Batho Pele* ([24], pp. 142–161), a breakaway with the past in the exercise of discretion was attained, giving way to the new dawn on how administrative discretion *should* be exercised. This transition in the state administration seemingly acknowledged that public administrators will always inevitably exercise discretion in the administrative process in the new South Africa. With this new lens, *Batho Pele* decision framework as a guide to public administrators to ethically exercise their discretion was embraced with much anticipation for excellence in the delivery of public services in the post-1994 RSA.

3.2 Impetus for *Batho Pele*

As such, in the context of post-apartheid RSA, *Batho Pele* ethical frame of administrative discretion was born from a need for commitment to service excellence in the practice of public administration with a particular focus on the delivery of public services to citizens ([27], pp. 8–11). It is not an additional task but integrated in the manner with which public administrators approach their daily tasks in a professional and organised way, which ensures excellent service delivery to citizens each time. It is in this regard that *Batho Pele* is perceived to be about real public professionals exercising ethical discretion while doing real jobs in addressing real issues that affect real people. In doing so, their primary administrative task is to live up to the "Service to the People" motto of *Batho Pele* ([28], pp. 66–90) adopted by the ethically attuned post-1994 RSA administrative state.

3.3 Understanding *Batho Pele*

According to Mojapelo et al. ([26], p. 2), "[t]he term '*Batho Pele*' means 'People First' in Sesotho, one of the 12 official languages of South Africa". So, *Batho Pele* as a Sesotho phrase loosely translates to "Putting People First", implying a people-focused exercise of discretion in the administrative process by public administrators. Here, in their interpretation, Mulaudzi and Liebenberg ([24], p. 142) state that "[t]he term *Batho Pele* strongly implies quality service delivery to human communities as well as accountability and transparency with a 'human touch'". Here, Mulaudzi and Liebenberg ([24], p. 142) understanding of the term in the administrative process in which public administrators inevitably exercise discretion is that "[s]ervice provision should be informed by the needs and aspirations of the local communities, extracted from the community through participation". For Mulaudzi and Liebenberg ([24], p. 143), "[t]he term *Batho Pele* at heart implies caring for communities in delivering services that benefit the quality of life for communities and individuals alike". This means that "apart from the 'human touch', *Batho Pele* implies accountable and transparent governance aimed at the citizenry on all levels [of] government" ([24], p. 143), calling for the new ethic of "thuma Mina" public service accountability for taking public service to the people ([29], pp. 83–106).

3.4 Spirit of ethics-led *Batho Pele*

Fundamentally, in the South African context, *Batho Pele* is an ethics-led frame of administrative discretion in practice of public administration adopted "to get public

servants to be service-orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery, and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement" ([28], pp. 66–90). In this regard, *Batho Pele* outlines guiding ethical principles meant to guide the behaviour and conduct of public servants in the exercise of administrative discretion as they serve South African citizens. It is a way of delivering services by putting citizens at the centre of administrative discretion in public service planning and operations ([30], pp. 581–593). It is a major departure from the apartheid dispensation, which excluded the majority of South Africans from the government machinery to one that seeks to include all citizens, ensuring that the principle of "Leaving No One Behind" in governance and delivery of public service becomes a reality in the practice of public administration ([31], pp. 277–291). The following section of the chapter presents the South African *Batho Pele* as a viable agency for advancing ethical administrative discretion in the practice of future public administration.

4. *Batho Pele* as a viable ethics-led agency for advancing discretion

In the South African context of the practice of public administration, there is no doubt that *Batho Pele* has become an ethical frame for making decisions about delivering public services ([32], pp. 421–436). It is, according to Mulaudzi and Liebenberg ([24], p. 150), an "intended approach" in decision-making for public administrators in the exercise of their discretion and judgement in the practice of public administration. In this regard, Motalane ([23], p. 157) state that "*Batho Pele* [is] aimed at putting [people] at the centre of public service". Thus, according to Motalane ([23], pp. 153–163), *Batho Pele* is indeed a decision frame for the exercise of ethical discretion and judgement in "improving service delivery in the South African [administrative state]".

4.1 *Batho Pele* as ethical discretion frame

Batho Pele has a strong ethical discretion-based decision-making orientation in the administrative process of service delivery "emanating from the *Ubuntu* principle that means putting other people ahead of one's needs" ([33], p. 119). Its ethical discretion-based decision-making orientation is founded on what is commonly known as the "*Batho Pele* principles" ([34], pp. 95–125); ([35], pp. 430–440). The *Batho Pele* principles (putting people first principles) are organised around manifest realities that "discretion is an invaluable characteristic of administrative [process]" ([36], p. 221). Accordingly, the principles brazenly acknowledge that "discretion [is] not only as an inevitable but also a potentially highly beneficial feature of [administrative process], properly understood" ([36], p. 221). Most profoundly, the principles support the shift towards the kind of culture of ethics-led discretion in service delivery that puts people first in the practice of public administration. As such, they are innovative decision-making approaches in the practice of public administration. Here, the principles provide an ethical administrative decision-making mechanism for public administrators to work consciously in the exercise of their discretion in providing service delivery and to get them to commit to and prioritise serving people. Also, the principles serve as an acceptable and expected frame of ethical conduct for public administrators regarding service delivery in the practice of public administration.

4.2 *Batho Pele* principles clarion call for ethics in discretion

Within the broader scope and context of *Batho Pele* principles since their inception in 1997, there is a clarion call for public administrators to always examine their conscience in the exercise of discretion in service delivery decision-making. Examining one's conscience in the exercise of discretion in the service delivery administrative process provides an opportunity for public administrators to always recognise that they "should be flexible, innovative and proactive" ([35], p. 439). In this regard, the *Batho Pele* principles' promise in the spirit of service delivery can be summarised by this administrative process slogan of "We belong, We care, We serve" [37]. The *Batho Pele* principles thus call "all public [administrators to] put people first [in the practice of public administration] and adhere to the overarching framework of 'We Care, We Serve, We Belong'" [37]. Thus, *Batho Pele* principles are widely recognised as an ethics-led "mechanism to aid the improvement of service delivery in South Africa" ([38], pp. 207–222).

4.3 Ethics-led aims of *Batho Pele* principles

Batho Pele principles aim to inculcate the ethical culture of responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services in the practice of public administration [33, 37]. Essentially, the "We belong, We care, We serve" belief set that anchors *Batho Pele* principles captures the revitalised *Batho Pele* ethics-led culture in the practice of public administration. This belief set is a value system of ethical discretion decision-making in the administrative process, which serves as a desirable ideal for the practice of public administration to influence and shape the conduct of public administrators. In the main, the "We belong, We care, We serve" belief set is intended to endorse the *Batho Pele* principles as depicted in **Figure 1** below.

Here, Joel ([38], pp. 210–212) provides an excellent explanation of what the *Batho Pele* principles are about, what their aims are and what they involve. However, in the broader sense without necessarily repeating the admirable work of Joel ([38], pp. 207–222) in this regard, the *Batho Pele* principles could be summarised as: involving putting people first in the provision of services, setting service standards, ensuring courtesy, remedying mistakes and failures, getting the best possible value for money as well as encouraging innovation rewarding excellence ([38], p. 210). Put differently, the *Batho Pele* principles aim "to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery, commit themselves to continuous service delivery improvement, allow citizens to hold them accountable for the type of services they deliver and to adopt a citizen orientated approach to service delivery" ([39], p. 254).

4.4 *Batho Pele* principles and ethical culture of accountability

Thus, at the heart of *Batho Pele* principles is a deliberate and determined effort to instil an ethical culture of accountability by public administrators in the exercise of their discretion in the practice of public administration. In effect, these principles challenge public administrators to find new, innovative methods of exercising their discretion in the practice of public administration as they deliver services to people. In agreement, Pietersen ([39], p. 254) sees the *Batho Pele* principles depicted in **Figure 2** as decision-making ethical ideals in the exercise of discretion in the administrative

Figure 1.
Batho Pele principles. Source: Umvoti Municipality, 2021 cited in Joel ([38], p. 210).
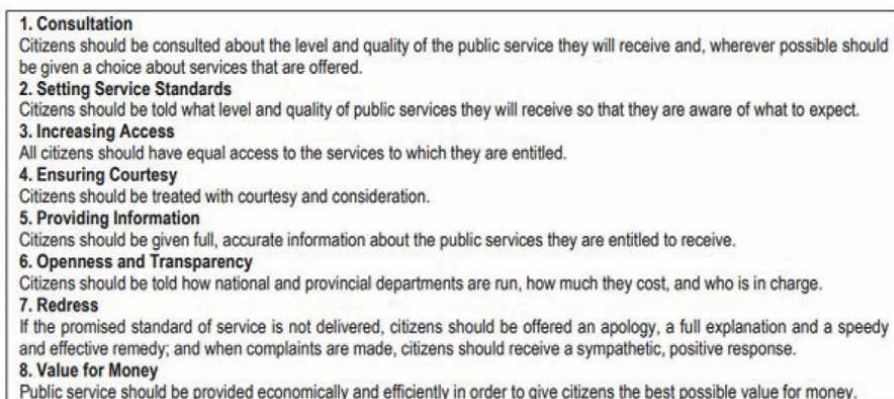
Figure 2.
Batho Pele principles. Source: ([39], p. 255).

process that uniquely bring about what she terms the "Customer First Revolution". This approach to service delivery in the exercise of discretion is customer-focused and is inspired by the *Batho Pele* principles, which "emphasize that the first and foremost duty of public service is to serve its customers" ([39], p. 254). Here, the *Batho Pele* principles are thus seen as a promising way of taming administrative discretion by public administrators in the practice of public administration at least in the case of South Africa.

4.5 *Batho Pele* principles and effective "stakeholding" discretion

When adopting *Batho Pele* principles for effective public service delivery ([35], pp. 430–440), public administrators need to understand that these principles are the

cornerstone of the effective "stakeholding" for the exercise of ethical discretion in the practice of public administration ([21], pp. 109–121); ([34], pp. 95–125). Here, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh [34] believe that, if properly structured, *Batho Pele* principles as a code of ethics for the exercise of discretion can be a useful tool in the practice of public administration. In this regard, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109) have developed what they have dubbed "Structural logic of the *Batho Pele* principles as a practical map" to give effect to their practical application. This illustrative practical map of *Batho Pele* principles as developed by de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109) is depicted in **Figure 3** below. According to de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109), "the figure is not readable because it is meant to be illustrative; however a readable version [of it] can be obtained using [this] link https://kumu.io/Guswn/batho-pele-principles".

For de Wee and Asmah-Andoh [34], properly structured and mapped *Batho Pele* principles can become a useful system of ethical discretion in the practice of public administration. de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109) believe that *Batho Pele* principles can become "the guiding principles [in the exercise of ethical discretion] to improve public services". de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109) are convinced that in the practice of public administration, "[e]thical behaviour should become a habit and effective codes [like *Batho Pele* principles should] allow both bureaucrats

Figure 3.
Practical map of Batho Pele principles. Source: ([34], p. 109).

and elected officials to test their actions against expected standards" ([34], p. 109). Here, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 109) reckon that, as the public service code of ethical discretion, "structured" *Batho Pele* principles can become a cure to ills associated with "an increase in unethical behaviour of public officials" ([34], p. 109). They can also arrest "unethical behaviour in the public service [which] is [often] characterised by a lack of responsiveness" ([34], p. 110), making *Batho Pele* principles a viable ethical discretion structure from which public administrators responsively make decisions in the practice of future public administration.

4.6 Verdict on *Batho Pele* principles as a guide for future discretion

Although no real-life instances or case studies that demonstrate application (or lack thereof) of the *Batho Pele* principles in administrative discretion have been empirically undertaken due to time and space constraints, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh ([34], p. 110) state that, nonetheless, "[i]t is sufficient to assume that the unethical behaviour and the high levels of corruption in [today's administrative state involving] the actions of the [public] officials are reflections of the chaotic state of the system of ethics [that govern discretion in the practice of public administration]". For de Wee and Asmah-Andoh [34], properly structured *Batho Pele* principles as a guide to ethical decision-making could help to tame administrative discretion in the practice of current and future public administration [1, 40–43]. Thus, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh [34] believe that the "properly structured" *Batho Pele* principles could provide an attractive roadmap to a brighter future of the exercise of ethical discretion in the practice of public administration. Indeed, de Wee and Asmah-Andoh [34] are convinced that the ethical force of the future practice of public administration could find its elusive footing and rigour in "structured" *Batho Pele* principles, thus enabling public administrators "to act expertly, scientifically, or disinterestedly, much [more] expeditiously" ([40], p. 168) in their "exercise of casuistical, prudential judgement in discretion" ([36], p. 222). As Daly ([20], p. 99) emphatically puts it, future "administrative discretion and judgement should presumptively be exercised in a large and liberal way, not characterized by pedantry and pettifoggery". This should be the case as "the ability to adapt rules [by public administrators], and thereby to exercise discretion, is an entrenched feature of bureaucracies" ([41], p. 269). This is so despite the fact that, with artificial intelligence, "most discretion is [increasingly becoming] indeed 'digital discretion'" ([43], p. 327). Thus, whether automated or not, discretion should truly be a *Batho Pele* ethical practice, and exploring it through such a lens seems worthwhile ([44], pp. 393–407). The next and last section concludes the chapter by suggesting that *Batho Pele* principles can indeed provide a plausible frame for ethical administrative discretion in the practice of future public administration ([45], pp. 102–104) if its possibility of doing so is taken seriously.

5. Conclusions

The goal of this chapter has been to highlight the inevitability of discretion in the practice of public administration by reference to its influential history, its contentious and controversial nature as a concept, the growing anxiety and denials about its scope and limits, the challenges and problems it manifests, the scepticism and reservations about it and its accelerated expansion in the administrative state despite natural antipathy to it from staunch adherents to the administrative philosophy of always playing by the book in the practice of public administration.

Using the South African experience, the chapter has highlighted the intricacies of discretion in the practice of public administration from Apartheid to *Batho Pele* eras relating to public service delivery. In this regard, the chapter has been written in a reformist spirit. It has taken the view that discretion is a necessary evil in the practice of public administration, and much greater study of it is needed for the brighter future of public administration as it adapts to a dynamic world of the automated administrative state increasingly characterised by the robotised practice of public administration.

Against this background, the chapter has attempted to address the perennial question that confronts the South African public administrators in the practice of public administration: how to exercise one's discretion in the practice of public administration? The tension between moving in a spirited way in administrative decision-making and remaining sensible is real for public administrators in the dynamic world of the administrative state in which the character of discretion within public administrations is impacted by the exploding use of artificial intelligence.

In answering the question, the chapter has explored the plausibility of South African *Batho Pele* ethics-led principles becoming an effective administrative discretion tool in the practice of public administration. It views *Batho Pele* principles as a code of ethics for decision-making that can make the exercise of bureaucratic discretion in the modern administrative state more ethically conscious. It is optimistic that ethics-led *Batho Pele* principles can become a plausible model for revisiting discretion in the practice of future public administration with the view to reconceive it in the modern robotic era of increasingly multifaceted smart public administration.

This chapter offers a roadmap for future research for an ethics-led model of administrative discretion in the automated future practice of public administration. Hence, it closes with a contention that if taken seriously, as the ethics-led organising principles of discretion in the practice of future public administration, *Batho Pele* can indeed assist to develop a much-needed ethic of *Thuma Mina* (Send Me) public service accountability for taking public service to the people—*Batho Pele*. It can also help to develop ethically conscious and humane *Batho Pele* administrative discretion as a defining and lasting feature of the future public administration with less of hearing: "computer says no", which is becoming a familiar mantra in smart public administration of the modern administrative state. It can also help to understand the evolving character of discretion and use it to negotiate ethical decisions in practice for future public administration.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Chapter 4

Perspective Chapter: Institutional Structural Reform and Sustainable Resilience

Salwa Mekky

Abstract

The institutional structural reform strategy is envisioned as a significant driver for reengineering and modernizing work systems at public institutions. Reengineering has become essential for building resilience against local and global issues, especially in time of crisis. Unfortunately, many government institutions that continue to use traditional strategies and mechanisms incompatible with political, economic, social, environmental and technological dramatic changes risk facing a high degree of uncertainty about institutional capacities in meeting public needs, particularly during times of crisis or dramatic change. In this context, the chapter proposes broad features and guidelines for institutional structural reform with a global perspective as a cornerstone toward sustainable development. Furthermore, it introduces new concepts such as initiative management, state survival bureaucracy and inclusiveness. It emphasizes the significance of digital governance as a component of the structural reform process, not only from a service standpoint but also as a smart engagement platform to enhance civic participation and decentralization.

Keywords: structural reform, institutional resilience, sustainable development, digital governance, public institutions, reengineering

1. Introduction

The role of public administration is indispensable to place society on the targeted path of development, as it is considered one of the main organizational pillars for providing services and public goods to citizens with varying and ever-increasing needs and interacting in a complex and continuously changing environment. Such a complex framework directly affects development requirements as well as uncertainty concerning the ability of governments and institutions to formulate and implement adaptive and absorptive policies. Government officials face many challenges in light of the political, social and economic rapid changes on national and international levels that affect both the public and the private sectors [1] which directly influence the effectiveness of the bureaucratic apparatus as the key actor in providing public services and basic needs, which are often at risk in the face of tidal changes. Accordingly, it has become indispensable to upgrade capacities and structurally reengineer government institutions to enable them to play their role in meeting sustainable development

requirements effectively, especially since many public institutions still operate according to traditional approaches. Dramatic change has become imperative to build more sustainable and resilient institutions that can take adaptive or proactive actions to improve public service provision and meet societies' expectations. Most importantly, to manage rising risks and survive protracted crises' implications. This chapter navigates through some new trends in public administration that revolve around the institutional structural reform (ISR) concept, in Ref. to the tourism sector in Egypt as a case study, aiming at developing more resilient institutions capable of adapting to both national and international challenges, especially in time of crisis. While identifying key components of ISR, the chapter highlights a number of supporting and control variables. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of adopting an integrative or cross-institutional participatory approach, especially as local knowledge and development cooperation actors are considered to be significant sources of resilience which in turn plays a key role in building and sustaining citizen's trust, legitimacy and credibility. To address such an issue, governments must enact both legislative and institutional structural reforms while using innovative strategies not only to enact more effective management mechanisms but also to upscale human capital capacities to ensure sustainability, especially in light of that technological breakthrough in management models and digitization revolution that greatly affect those strategies.

2. Literature review

During the last four decades, the public sector has been reshaped through structural reforms under the umbrella of the New Public Management (NPM) theory [2, 3], through which the traditional concept and hierarchical authority of public administration was replaced by the concept of management based on Results-Oriented since the late 1970s [4], or the Marketization of State; The new public administration revolves around two main axes when applying the practices of the private sector in the work system. The first is with regard to all functions within the institution, and the second is everything related to the interactions of the institution in the external environment, considering public institutions as quasi-markets [5]. Despite studies on the impact of the concept of reform, according to the new public administration model, on the quality and effectiveness of the public services system, we still have a limited understanding of its impact, which may differ from one field to another, as many institutional factors affect the results of operations. The reform includes the impartiality of the state and the level of quality and efficiency of the bureaucracy, accountability and accountability mechanisms, transparency rules and characteristics of public managers and employees, including gender representation and experience in the private sector [6]. It is also affected by the administrative and political culture – that is, attitudes. The concept of management for the new year has tended toward the pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness and measuring success based on outputs and outputs rather than inputs and operating processes, as was the case with traditional concepts of performance measurement mechanisms [7]. In addition, it changed many mechanisms of the work system, the most important of which are competitiveness in the field of service distribution between the public and private sectors, incentives for public officials and the classification of structures into smaller implementing agencies based on specialization and division of labor [6].

The European Commission calls for an economic strategy based on fiscal responsibility, investment and structural reforms in order to boost growth and create

more jobs. Structural reforms address obstacles to the main drivers of growth by liberalizing labor markets, products and services, thereby encouraging job creation, investment and improving productivity. It is designed to enhance the economy's competitiveness, growth potential and adaptive capacity [8].

Surveys conducted by the World Bank 2020 indicate that mistrust and widespread corruption in government still prevent many countries from achieving the envisaged social and economic development and that efforts to strengthen the independence of official institutions entrusted with activating accountability, applying relevant international standards and enhancing transparency and public participation are essential to enhance the capacity of the effectiveness of the state in providing the best vital services to the people [9]. The United Nations has also emphasized that institutional reforms are necessary to achieve the goals of sustainable development, and effectiveness, accountability and inclusion are basic pillars for achieving them. Without modernizing the concepts and mechanisms of public administration to adapt to the changing and growing needs, achieving a better future for all will be impossible. Hence, in the absence of effective management, governments will be powerless, and therefore, sustainable development will not be achieved. Therefore, countries must have a new vision to prepare their institutions and public administrations to achieve the goals of sustainable development and develop their performance in order to achieve more effectiveness, transparency, accountability and inclusion [10].

COVID-19 has driven more attention to the concept of institutional resilience to support sustainable recovery in both developed and developing countries. Institutional resilience, as OECD describes, reflects the ability to provide and improve results over time in a credible, genuine and adaptive manner, as well as the ability to manage shocks and change, where the level of inclusivity also plays a key role in strengthening institutional resilience through development cooperation actors [11]. Barma, Huybens and Vinuela articulated resilience as an outcome of institutional efficacy or the ability to consistently provide and improve results, where this, in turn, fosters trust, legitimacy and credibility, all of which are forms of resilience that serve to strengthen an institution's capabilities [12].

In addition, Anderson and Tollenaere define institutional resilience as the ability of a social system (society, community or organization) to absorb and recover from external shocks while constructively adapting and transforming to handle long-term changes and uncertainties. They also reiterate that institutions that create relationships with citizens and acquire their trust are more robust. This implies that, in addition to examining an institution's functioning in and of itself, development actors must assess its role in mediating state-society relations and the legitimacy or credibility earned as a result [13]. In order to achieve legitimacy and sustainability, institutional capacity-building and reform projects must connect with a country's social and political framework. Moreover, development cooperation actors are expected to seek, identify and build on local knowledge, experience and existing sources of resilience in order to strengthen institutional resilience [14]. It helps to mitigate the harmful economic and social consequences of crises, as Strupat and Marschall put it [15].

As for the relationship between digital governance and the effectiveness of institutions and their ability to achieve the requirements of development, good governance requires, among other things, the issuance of correct decisions based on information, data and knowledge, and the converting this information into a digital form and making it available on a network accessible to all individuals paves the way for digital governance electronic governance; Hence, digital governance ensures the enhancement of citizen participation and influence in decision-making processes, as citizens

are no longer only recipients of the services provided to them, but can proactively determine the types and standards of services they want [16].

3. Factors influencing new trends in public administration

3.1 Political dimension

The field of public administration is undergoing an evolving change due to the rapidly changing environment, including the political context, especially since the field of public administration is influenced by sociology, economics, business, political science and other sciences that are cornerstones in building resilient and sustainable societies. Public administrators' key responsibilities are to identify the needs of society, examine available resources and assets, and strive to make investments a priority to support infrastructure and economic development; however, during time of dramatic political changes, uncertainty about resources becomes a key challenge facing societal development, due to changes in the political climate [1]. In addition, with budgets and public employment constraints witnessed by most countries across the world, vital public services are always at risk, pushing for building in flexibility to adapt policies and practices within the framework of available financial and human resources, in order to efficiently and effectively provide the necessary services public officials are accountable for. One of the key drivers to realize this, is to upgrade public officials' competencies with a global perspective.

3.2 Technology and digitalization

Technology and digitization are relentlessly advancing, with a significant impact on how governments and institutions interact with citizens. Technological breakthrough offers opportunities and more reliable tools for government administrators to increase their capabilities to access, store, retrieve and analyze data, study trends, learn about best practices around the world, develop policies and procedures that modernize and redesign work mechanisms, and achieve more transparency. Digitization has also reduced operating costs in organizations. As fewer physical resources, such as paper and file storage facilities, are needed to obtain and store information, computing systems and smartphones have become more compact and energy efficient, and they have provided opportunities for telework and facilitated interactions among local and international teams, departments and their leadership, institutions, as well as between institutions and the public with respect to efficiently addressing problems and provision of services. Yet, it should be noted that with the advancement of technology, the need to protect the privacy of personal information has become a necessity, insinuating that today's public administrators have to stay vigilant to ensure public trust is maintained.

This advanced technology has given rise to digital advocacy/virtual advocacy at the grassroots level, which has become a global trend in this changing environment. Technology has changed the way news is reported, how organizations interact with the public and how elected bodies respond to proposed legislation at all levels of government. Technology and social media are a key tool to share information, participate and advocate change. Environmental issues such as climate change, human rights violations, international conventions and other global issues that were once isolated from many countries are now of global concern. Governments and their policies are

facing scrutiny, not only from their own citizens but from the international community. Hence, it has become inevitable that public policies are designed to achieve national interests within a global perspective. This is in addition to the fact that social media also has a dramatic impact on the field of public administration.

3.3 Sustainable development goals

The principle of sustainability has become a major requirement for integrated development process at the global level, where the following 17 Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs have become a fundamental pillar in drawing up public administration strategies and policies in order to transform the world [10]:

- Goal 1: No Poverty

- Goal 2: Zero Hunger

- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

- Goal 4: Quality education

- Goal 5: Gender Equality

- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

- Goal 13: Climate Action

- Goal 14: Life Below Water

- Goal 15: Life on Land

- Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

- Goal 17: Partnerships to Achieve the Goal

Since the goals of sustainable development are highly integrated where results in any field affect and are affected by other areas, SDGs aim at achieving a balance between sustainability of social, economic and environmental development, seek inclusion of marginalized groups deserving of care and eliminate major problems

affecting all aspects of life, in particular extreme poverty, hunger and epidemics and discrimination against women. To achieve these ambitious goals, knowledge, creativity, innovation, technology and financial resources have become persistent development requirements, which calls for adopting the concept of structural reform of institutions, on top of which human development and gender mainstreaming are key drivers. SDG 16 aims to strive toward promoting peaceful and inclusive societies to achieve sustainable development and justice, as well as to build efficient and accountable institutions. Without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, rule of law, sustainable development could never be realized. In addition, reform also requires a real partnership between all stakeholders, official and nonofficial actors, namely the iron triangle of the government, private sector and civil society, which contributes to achieving goal No. 17, which also seeks to promote international partnerships. The world today is more interdependent than ever, which calls for both international coordination and cooperation, to address global issues, share knowledge and promote investments in developing countries. In the past, improving access to technology and knowledge was an important means of exchanging ideas and promoting innovation [10]. Therefore, Sustainable Development Goals come as a backbone for developing the New Public Management (NPM) model, to which countries resorted in the 1980s to implement administrative reform and modernize the public sector in response to changes due to the wave of democracy.

4. Institutional structural reform as a backbone for resilience

Global crises prompted government officials to continuously develop policies in order to achieve public interests across all areas, ranging from the use of renewable energy sources to reducing opportunities for government corruption. The emergence of new global issues, such as climate change, has given rise to new challenges in public administration. Many of the decision-making engines are now global which requires integration while keeping national interests as a priority, placing additional challenges for public officials to put in place redesigned mechanisms that meet requirements of development with a global perspective without compromising the needs and rights of future generations. In a context characterized by continuously changing public policy priorities, institutional leadership vision plays a significant role in integrating the concept of sustainability at the forefront of the agenda; we find, for example, organizations that value social responsibility and the concept of cohesion and stewardship are most likely to initiate and develop sustainable public management policies that are in line with international changes requirements.

Furthermore, innovation has become a key pillar of development in the field of public administration, as it is worth mentioning that most of the economies in which the Global Innovation Index (GII) has risen have benefited strongly from their integration into global value chains and innovation networks. China, Vietnam, India and the Philippines are clear examples. In this context, GII asserted the importance of multilateralism and international partnerships in the fields of scientific research, industry and services as well as emphasizing foreign investment as a key success factor [17], which comes consistent with SDG No. 17. The public sector needs to build resilience and gain the ability to adapt to technological development, which has proven highly significant, especially in times of crisis, during the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the increasing prevalence of digital technology is already blurring the barriers between the virtual world and the physical world. In light of this context, public

officials face numerous challenges posed by new global trends for adopting and implementing new visions and approaches in the field of public administration with regard to governance, leadership styles, planning, performance measurement and evaluation, focus on citizen service and client-based strategies, institutional structural reform, e-government, service delivery, innovation, professional ethics and transparency.

In the face of the aforementioned global challenges and trends, and within the framework of striving to achieve SDGs, it has become imperative to review the traditional concepts and mechanisms of public administration to integrate and institutionalize global trends with a new national vision toward raising the efficiency, effectiveness and contribution of institutions to the sustainability of the wheel of development, and to promote the development of healthy and integrated societies as well as maintain cohesion and resilience of societies in the face of crisis. Accordingly, it has become exigent to adopt the concept of institutional structural reform (ISR), which could be defined as an inclusive planned effort for reengineering regulatory and institutional frameworks to dramatically develop a more efficient and effective bureaucratic apparatus, resilient enough to ensure stability and mitigate risk, where institutional resilience refers to built-in self-sustainable systems with absorptive, adaptive and developmental capacities that enable institutions to survive shocks and manage change in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Integrate sustainable development goals into the concept of public administration and institutional strategies.

- Keep up with international changes and trends in public administration.

- Maintain international competitiveness.

- Eradicate corruption.

- Promote transparency and accountability.

- Contribute to inclusive development.

- Support institutional homogeneity, which is a key pillar to preserving the state in the face of crises.

- Raise the efficiency of the administrative apparatus.

- Achieve citizen satisfaction with respect to public goods and services.

Moreover, reform measures have become one of the requirements for establishing partnerships with international institutions such as the World Bank, which is currently developing a strategic partnership framework with different developing nations, such as Egypt, on three major interrelated areas, namely: improving governance; boosting job creation opportunities led by the private sector; and supporting social inclusion. The strategic partnership framework has been designed to maintain the flexibility necessary to respond to changing national needs while providing international expertise to offer integrated development solutions that are appropriate to the specific context of Egypt [9].

5. Institutional structural reform integrated system

Based on a study of the main components of the institutional structural reform (ISR) program implemented in public institutions in the sector of tourism in Egypt, this section identifies the main axes of reform in such programs and sheds light on some new trends in public administration that would enhance the progress of the reform process toward more competitiveness in achieving sustainable development. The Egypt Tourism Reform Program (E-TRP), which was introduced by the Ministry of Tourism in November 2018, intends to develop a sustainable tourism industry through structural reforms that will increase its competitiveness and conform to international standards. E-TRP's main goal is to have at least one member of each Egyptian household working in the tourism industry, either directly or indirectly. The E-TRP was created as a policy framework with support from both public and private sector partners, aligning its objectives with the 17 SDGs. There are a number of key pillars, among which are the regulatory and institutional reforms that this section highlights. National and international reports assert that the reform implemented in the tourism sector has achieved E-TRP goals in less than 10 months [18]. According to the data issued by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in 2023, the number of tourists increased from 8.29 million in 2017 to 13 million in 2019, an increase of almost 57%. Despite the fact that during the severe pandemic crisis, this indicator fell steeply to 3.7 million, the tourism sector has become resilient enough to experience a swift recovery, hitting 8 million and 22.9 million in 2021 and 2022, respectively. In addition, revenues of the Egyptian tourism sector increased during the first half of the fiscal year 2022–2023 by 25.7% compared to the same period in 2021–2022, where revenues during the fiscal year 2021/2022 amounted to about 10.7 billion dollars, compared to 4.9 billion dollars in 2020/2021, marking an increase of 121.1% [19].

5.1 Legislative reform

Legislative reform is one of the main pillars of the success of a reform process, and this axis targets a deep review of the legal framework, including but not limited to laws, statutes and rules regulating the various sectors, especially since the majority have been enacted more than 30 years ago and have undergone sequential amendments that blurred their philosophy; and hence call for dramatic reformulation in order to be in line with local and international challenges as well as requirements of sustainable development. To ensure the reliability and validity of the reformulation process, it has to adopt an inclusive, participatory approach to consider all stakeholders' opinions and interests; for example, for a new fair and effective labor law, it has to realize a balance between employers' and employees' interests, establish fair merit-based systems in employment, rewards and promotions. Also, in this regard, maintaining effective communication channels with international institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Organization and United Nations organizations, must be considered to discuss their technical contribution.

5.2 Institutional reform

5.2.1 Administrative restructuring

There is a need to review organizational structures to implement the concept of institutional structural reform, and to develop and modernize work systems to

contribute to upgrading both efficiency and effectiveness to achieve development goals in various sectors. This requires the following:

- Review organizational structure and job analysis in order to achieve flexibility, effectiveness and documentation of work systems within institutions.

- Use digital technology in the Human Resources Information System (HRIS).

- Develop and communicate objective and valid evaluation mechanisms and tools in conformance with international quality assurance standards.

- Empower distinguished cadres, especially youth and women, and promote gender mainstreaming.

- Prepare knowledge workers via intensive training programs to develop technical and administrative competencies.

- Prepare in-house trainers through training of trainers (TOT) programs.

- Modernize the digital infrastructure, including networks, hardware and software.

5.2.2 Human resources development

Institutional structural reform aims to raise the efficiency of the administrative apparatus and to provide qualified human capital meeting the new requirements of the local and international labor market, which requires the following:

- Endorse merit-based systems for hiring, rewards and promotion.

- Set objective criteria and mechanisms for recruitment, selection and evaluation and feedback.

- Establish in-house training and development unit within institutions responsible for assessing training needs, setting objectives, planning, implementing and evaluating training programs.

- Coordinate and cooperate with educational institutions to link the curricula and research with labor market needs and offer internships to promote professional skills.

5.2.3 New strategic trends

This section overviews a number of new strategic trends that have a significant impact on the field of public administration, especially with respect to institutional structural reform.

5.2.3.1 Multilateralism

Multilateralism in developing partnerships is an essential pillar for achieving the goals of sustainable development. There are two dimensions to this concept. The first is related to the partnership between the government, civil society and the private

sector, where Smart Ecosystems must be applied, according to which governments work to increase partnership between the public and private sectors and civil society in order to solve societal issues, such as healthcare, mobility, education and work-force development. These ecosystems benefit from the collective intelligence of the private sector, technology startups, academia, think tanks and citizens. As for the other dimension, it is concerned with partnerships with international institutions to transfer expertise to contribute to the reform process, especially through obtaining educational and training grants to increase competitiveness on the one hand and supporting investments on the other hand.

5.2.3.2 Management by initiative

Effective leadership is a fundamental driver of creativity and sustainability [20]. The process of ISR needs what we can call Management by Initiative (MBI). The role of management should not stop at the limit of improvement, even if it affects all vari-ables because it is limited in its scope and objectives, but it should lead to the speedy introduction and implementation of an innovative idea or mechanism with the aim of interlocking positive change and deals with the stagnation of the current situation and the difficulty of its transformation into an appropriate and stimulating situa-tion. Management by initiative, undertaking risk, creativity and predictability, goes beyond traditional functions of management, planning, implementation or follow-up but extends to presenting innovative initiatives and coordinating between the various state agencies to create synergy in responding to requirements of change [21]. In fact, achieving the requirements of development and competitiveness is a national goal to break out of the chain of dependence on major countries and highly contributes to sustainable development.

5.2.3.3 Inclusive management

Institutions are moving increasingly toward integrating the concept of inclusion in management, especially youth and women, and empowering them to assume leadership positions, which confirms their important role in society and reiterates the decisive need for their active participation to achieve comprehensive develop-ment. Undoubtedly, ISR needs new vision and creative capacities, where empowering young people could contribute effectively to digital transformation, keeping abreast of modern technology, using the latest systems in management and resolving public issues through innovative ideas and initiatives. Furthermore, there is also a global trend toward promoting women's active participation, and in support of gender mainstreaming, many efforts aim to integrate the principles of merit, equity and equality in management, especially since there are many studies that have asserted that women's economic empowerment contributes to a significant increase in GDP.

5.2.3.4 State survival bureaucracy

The administration responds effectively if the security, stability and survival of the state is endangered. Non-politicized bureaucracy plays an important role in the survival of states in transitional stages and radical change by protecting state institu-tions from failure on the ground. The concept of state survival bureaucracy (SSB) acts as an alternative to the concept of the "deep state," and has all the mechanisms that contribute to achieving the continuity and sustainability of the state as an entity

and identity. Since the concept of the deep state has emerged to refer to cases in which decisions issued by executive and elected officials are rejected and resisted, experts and academics have launched the concept of the "deep state" to express the elements and reasons for this rejection. The concept of bureaucracy for the survival of the state includes the administrative apparatus and its institutions, which are committed to preserving the identity and entity of the state, and whose role appears clearly in countries facing real survival crises. The bureaucracy for the survival possesses self-correcting mechanisms that enable the state facing tidal changes to deal with these changes [21]. This also requires the integration of a new concept and methodology for risk management in all administrative functions to enhance the resilience of institutions and their ability to adapt. In the face of crises, the concept of bureaucracy for the survival of the state contributes to maintaining the institutional balance to provide public services and gain the satisfaction of citizens as a result.

5.2.4 Digital governance

In the context of new global trends and challenges, there is a fast-emerging new perspective in public administration – digital governance – which reflects the use of technology to develop and internationalize performance of institutions, and develop mechanisms that promote direct interaction with citizens, which has been marginalized, especially in the field of public policy advocacy and services provision, as to improve quality of life, economic growth, education and the environment; There is huge potential for digitization and innovation to add value to society and contribute to the development of many sectors, given that coordination and collaboration across sectors play a pivotal role in allowing us to "rebuild better" especially post crisis [22].

Digitization has become the main driver for connecting the virtual world with the physical one. Convergence of these two worlds has enabled the government to track, monitor and manage resources. The integration of advanced technology could help achieve more transparency and traceability across value chains to serve customers and society in a rather more accountable and sustainable manner [23]; as well as making evidence-based decisions. The establishment and management of the Smart Engagement Platform is an essential component of digital governance. Such a platform functions as an effective interactive tool for development partners to share information, lessons learned and ideas among government agencies, companies, civil society and digital citizens, and hence provides an opportunity for virtual advocacy as well, serving as a forum through which governments have the opportunity to use technology to empower civic participation, support decentralization of the services system, and make better decisions.

On the institutional level, successful digital transformation will require enabling people to work in modern ways, such as remote management, which will require new skills, as well as developing the work system and capabilities to apply modern technologies and advanced management models in order to maintain the sustainability of the survival and competitiveness of enterprises in a rapidly changing world. Since one of the main pillars of business survival and economic resilience, especially since telework and distance learning may persist post-COVID-19, building a solid digital infrastructure that is citizen-based. Such dramatic transformation makes cooperation across governments, financial institutions and regulatory bodies extremely necessary. Digital governance also calls for global integration and partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as creating a supportive ecosystem for startups, the seed for more entrepreneurship and innovation, and this includes promoting business
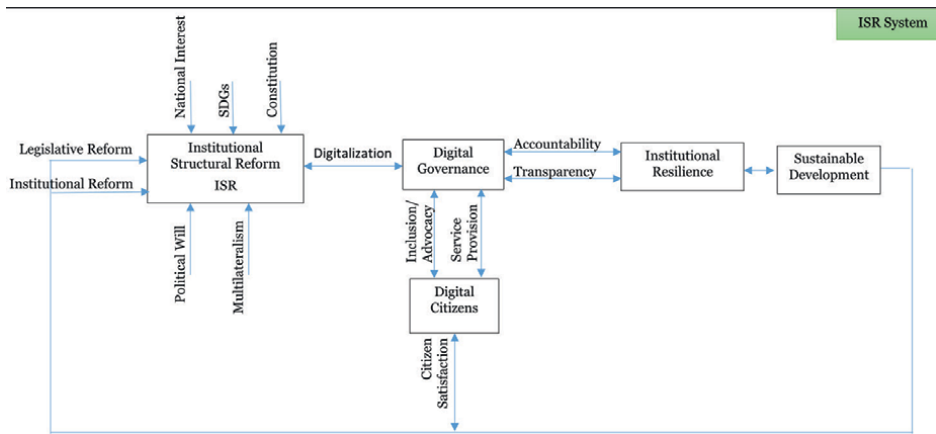
Figure 1.
Institutional structural reform (ISR) system. Source: Author.

incubators, financial, technical and networking support [23]. In addition to the fact that these new trends are consistent with the content of goal No. 17 of sustainable development concerned with the importance of advancing partnerships in order to achieve development, they are also considered pivotal for the success of transformation to digital governance, where national and international coordination and cooperation are inevitable to exchange experiences and set global standards as well as broad policy frameworks to conceptualize rapid change to technology, industries and societal patterns and processes in the fourth generation of industrial revolution. In light of this, societies need to raise awareness about global technological trends and dissemination of the culture of digitization.

5.2.5 Institutional structural reform (ISR) system

Figure 1 conceptually illustrates a self-sustainable institutional structural reform system (ISR) and the role of digital governance in realizing institutional transition toward building more adaptiveness and sustainable resilience, which would contribute to achieving sustainable development, where SDGs act as a key driver in policymaking and restructuring mechanisms. The diagram also shows the relationship between significant governing and supporting variables and their impact on the reform process that is citizen-based, where citizen's satisfaction, which is a key success indicator, could be highly influenced by the level of effectiveness of services' provision, degree of inclusiveness, improvement of quality of life that is reflected by economic, social and environmental developments.

6. Conclusion

The study presented many developments in the field of public administration related to the branches and concepts of management, where the structural reform of ISR institutions has become one of the main pillars for moving forward toward achieving the goals of sustainable development, which requires the adoption of new visions and approaches for internationalizing public administration in order to meet

the requirements of development and create more resilient and sustainable institutions capable of surviving crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change ramifications. In addition, there is a dire need to promote a cultural revolution in the bureaucratic apparatus to advocate and stimulate reengineering for building resilient societies. There is no doubt that many countries face numerous challenges, especially those related to human capital capacity building in the area of information technology management. Otherwise, a considerable percentage of the labor force will risk lack of employability and might exit the labor force market.

The study reiterates that there is an urgent need to adopt and implement ISR, including both legislative and institutional reforms, at a large scope to contribute to creating and sustaining resilient institutions and societies. Although there are some recent studies on the non-politicization of public administration, which constitutes a major driver in preserving the survival of the state in times of crises and radical changes, we need more research in this area, especially with respect to the concept of digital governance and distance management, with respect to implementation mechanisms and impact assessment in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the requirements of sustainable development. In this context, the following actions are highly recommended:

- Adopting social protection policies that enforce early intervention and response to localized shocks through basic service provision and safety nets, among other initiatives to address the most basic requirements, especially of most vulnerable and marginalized communities, in line with national strategic development goals.

- Develop mechanisms to encourage and promote entrepreneurship and innovation, such as incubation business programs, while providing financial and technical support to entrepreneurs.

- Promote multilateralism in expanding local and international partnerships in the field of exchanging experiences, education, training, scientific research and investment.

- Adopt a more participatory policymaking approach via inclusive community engagement to benefit from local knowledge and to leverage existing local governance structures – governmental and non-governmental- to enhance accountability, social cohesion and governance.

- Regular review and evaluation for ongoing adaptation and continuous adjustments of community action plans calls for adopting a cross-agency learning and change culture. There is a dire need for flexible, multi-sector and multi-year programs based on encouraging local ideas, community initiatives and self-reliance.

- Create smart engagement platforms as an essential component of digital governance. Such platforms play a significant role in strengthening institutional resilience, where development actors are encouraged to identify, support and build on local knowledge and experience which enable local structures and systems to survive during crisis.

- Improving capacities, incentives, ownership and participation of the communities are core principles for proactive and adaptive policies.

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Chapter 5

Synergistic Governance and Public Policies Cycle

Maria Rammata

Abstract

Public policies have been going through a transitional state in which conventional tools such as the "top-down" approach in the executive phase of public design have proven to be less effective. In an inherently uncertain and chaotic world, public administrations are assigned with the implementation of rules governing post-netaw public management expertise within a context that is ever-changing and which transcends what has been so far considered as "normality" in a hierarchical model. To create a viable environment, political leaders and civil servants engage in a struggle to manage uncertainties through existing networks and the relevant expertise of stakeholders. Moreover, nonconventional methods that are unfamiliar to the hierarchical (Weberian) state, such as heuristic judgments, the application of principles of the neuroscience behaviorist approach, and so forth, open up new road maps for public administration to enable organizations to act in a nonlinear and incrementalistic manner. In this chapter, it will be attempted to break down the new prospects that appear; this is a dynamic public administration, remodeled in an efficient manner catering to the needs of contemporary users. It is stressed that immediate, flexible forms of management must be established; the aim of this is to achieve a mutually accepted situation as has been recommended by experts and stakeholders, in order to be able to determine what may be a viable, provisional solution.

Keywords: public administration, nonlinear public administration, networking, hierarchical model, incrementalism, top-down approach, crisis management

1. Introduction

Public policy design is a complex undertaking of primary concern in governance and constitutes a conscious and deliberate effort to define the policy objectives in a specific area and to match them to the available policy instruments [1]. Public policy analysis traditionally refers to "Policy formulation based on the collection of knowledge about the effects of instruments used for the appropriate policy objectives in order to develop and implement policies to achieve specifically desired public policy outcomes and aspirations" [2]. Considering those assumptions, we hereby aim to highlight the limited perception of the traditional aspects of public administration and the necessary adaptations to be made in modern governance, especially in the light that it faces unprecedented challenges that necessitate the cultivation of the

operational dimension of governmental action. This transversal approach, that sheds light on the administrative apparatus of public administration ([3], pp. 48–49) in a networking mode, is also advocated by the nature of modern challenges. For these missions, the state needs to transform its institutional framework, its resources, functioning, and human resources to perform more effectively in a particularly demanding environment.

2. Modern public policies positioned in a hostile external environment

Scholars, such as Thomas Dye, define public policies as "What governments choose to do and what they choose not to do" [4]. Lasswell [5] added the concepts of "ends" and "means" that governments choose at any given time to implement the government's agenda to the aforementioned definition. More commonly, policies (the political dimension of public policies-policy) include a wide range of purposes pursued through official government action, such as reducing crime through public policy on justice, improvement in the general public's health through public policy on health, etc. Interventions in the areas of public policies usually involve programs, measures, and actions undertaken by more than one ministry, for example, in the analysis of public policy on health; strategic planning requires simultaneous cooperation of all relevant institutions and agencies (beginning with the ministry of Health and internal affairs to the ministry of employment and Finance) in an effort to ameliorate the condition in public health, prevent risks to physical and mental health, and generally enhance the quality of life of citizens. The specific characteristics of public health problems and their undeniably multifactorial nature call for a horizontal approach, integrated planning, and cross-sectoral action, and this usually happens also at a multilevel administrative status. Howlett ([6], p. 2) stated that "Policy tools and designing policy portfolios becomes more complex when, as is very common in many policy-making situations, multiple goals and multiple sectors are involved in a programme." To that end, a more effective and consistent decision-making process should be applied where a holistic governmental approach would take the lead and propose viable solutions in a coordinated and inclusive manner [7].

Considering the above, it is also undeniable that more and more public administrations and societies are exposed to unforeseen risks, to volatile political-economic or other conditions, and to new challenges, such as extreme weather which increases in intensity and frequency. Especially in a volatile and hostile external environment such as the current one, public authorities struggle to generate viable public policies that amend traditional methodologies and foster resilience to overcome challenges while simultaneously respecting the "rule of law" (Etat de droit) and applying accountability measures. Ready-to-apply contingency plans seem to be a mediocre responsive measure toward various novel threats such as outbreaks of infectious diseases like Ebola, or flu or severe acute respiratory syndrome-related coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV2, COVID-19), massive immigration flows, or natural disasters. It is needless to say that no government can claim a level of preparedness for these systematic threats at a great scale. In this context, the "raison d'être" of public administration is gradually changing from being a "permanent responder" to the basic and mild needs of citizens' daily lives to becoming a "proactive operational manager" of frequent and simultaneous crises in different fields where the slightest failure can be fatal for large numbers of citizens. Undoubtedly, there will be errors, miscalculations,

misjudgments, and other fallacies in a logic in which the following motto prevails: "*work for the better, prepare for the worst.*" This external challenging environment calls for a remodeled approach for the generation of public policies, and these will be outlined on the following pages.

3. Processes for the generation of public policies

The foundations of the functioning in public administrations lay, as Lasswell stated, on the public policy planning in a procedural dimension of public policies that are composed of interrelated evolutionary stages in a sequential manner, leading from "inputs" (problems-resources) to "outputs" (policy outcomes and related impacts). The same view was supported by Easton in his expression "Black Box" as to the processes that unfold within the political-administrative machine to demonstrate the impossibility of exercising full control within it [8]. The resulting sequence of stages in the formulation and implementation of public policy, referred to as the "policy cycle" ([9], p. 12, [10], pp. 45–55), is initiated from the statement of public problems, policy formulation, decision-making, and implementation and leads to evaluation. According to another approach to the "policy cycle," it includes six stages: (1) identification – definition and analysis of the problem; (2) policy formulation of evaluation criteria; (3) identification of policy alternatives; (4) evaluation of policy alternatives – termination; (5) presentation and selection of appropriate policy; (6) monitoring of implementation of the policy.

From this perspective, public policy analysis investigates the interdependent decisions of a politician or a set of actors with the aim of refining the quality of governmental choices in this sequential process. This requires both the establishment of formal institutions (the political dimension of public policies – polity) charged with the authority to assume the responsibility for designing the content and implementing public policies, as well as an analysis of the instruments and tools available to support decision-makers in their effort to make the right decisions or those with the most positive effects while remaining accountable for them.

In the methodology of public policy analysis, four main approaches can be distinguished. The first one known as the rational model focuses on centralized governance where means are proportionate to the objectives assigned and help to their attainment. Policies are deemed to achieve specific objectives, and alternative scenarios are considered from both quantitative and qualitative perspective in a cooperative structure. The rational model essentially advocates that there is one best option and that this is to be explored and implemented. In the rational model, the linear approach to problems, as well as selectivity in the choice of criteria that ultimately prevail in terms of decision-making, often leads us to adopt erroneous approaches that are found to be such only after they have been implemented. Under its ratio, the success of an organization depended on the application of ten principles that promoted the administrative science [11]: unity of command, hierarchical transmission of orders ("chain of command"), separation of powers – authority, subordination, responsibility and control, centralization, order, discipline, planning, organization chart, meetings and reports, and accounting. In the hurt of the rational model lays the foundation that, in political, just as in economic, contexts, individuals tend to rationally maximize their utility [12, p. 47]. Examples of the rational model of management in the public service are the zero-based budgeting system and the planning and program budgeting system (PPBS), which were implemented in the budgeting processes of federal agencies in

the United States. Nevertheless, the rational model connects to bounded rationality ([13], p. 355, [14]) and has been strongly criticized because of the limits of human cognition and information available to the public policy analyst and technocrat. In this area, decision-makers are inevitably led to focus on certain aspects of the problem under study and downplay the impact of others ([15], p. 39). Also, it was obvious that subjectivity in criteria and inability to rely on a completely objective judgment, as the rational model advocates, prevailed even if the problems were simpler, easier to manage by the state and developed in a rather stable environment ([15], p. 38).

In modern times, when it comes to dealing with flexible, unknown, and multidimensional challenges in a context that lacks stability (in terms of health, transport, employment, commerce, etc.), it is very difficult to dispose off a readily applicable mechanism of information and related data transfer between institutions to exist (in real time), yet we should work toward developing these monitoring skills so as to achieve better performance in various areas of public intervention. To be more specific, "harsh times" refers to failures in dealing with complex public problems and in implementing decisions; these have led to the research of new approaches such as the incrementalism model, which is the second approach to public policy analysis. According to Peter Haas [16], "Complexity refers to the existence of socioeconomic interactions between many actors, including the exchange of resources and knowledge that crosses into new relationships." The provisions of the incremental solution model of the public policy focus on a tactic of seeking out the optimal solution through the undertaking of incremental small initiatives to achieve "small wins" ([17, 18], p. 145), up until the moment that, long term, a more holistic and possibly definitive solution to the problem is achieved. The incremental resolution of public problems through public policies was extensively addressed by Lindblom in his publication "The Science of Muddling Through" [19] where he precisely expresses the need for public policy analysts to distance themselves from the interests of users that should be reconciled through a series of multilateral negotiations focusing on persuasion and mutual compromise in order to seek a gradual resolution of the problem ([15, 20], p. 40). This is an attempt to manage them better, i.e., to reduce the negative consequences of the problems, rather than to remove them from the "map" of public problems immediately. For example, in the case of the management of the homelessness problem, the distribution of food in public places gives a temporary reduction in the negative effects of the existence of the problem but does not definitively solve it. Furthermore, in the likelihood of dealing with those complex issues, it is very possible to commit errors related to the oversimplification of the issue as is common in attempts to overcome chaotic situations. In cases like this, public policy-makers are advised to take the assistance of behavioral analysts[1] that inaugurate a "behavioral public policy" [22] founded on the idea of the activation of polyheuristics and behavioral components in view of a new policy while predicting the human behavior that would be triggered ([23], pp. 188–189). The poliheuristic approach combines poly (many) and poli (politics) along with heurisitic (shortcuts) ([24], pp. 82, 84) which relate to two options: under the first one, the policy-making screens the alternatives to discard some of them, and under the second one, left with fewer choices, the policy-maker compares the alternatives with the expected outcomes to make a more rational

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[1] In the OECD [21] report about "Behavioral insights and Public policy," it is cited that ""Behavioral insights" are lessons derived from the behavioral and social sciences, including decision making, psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, organizational and group behavior are being applied by governments with the aim of making public policies work better."

decision. From this perspective, the concept of managing through networks is also analyzed in an effort to deal with the unforeseen and to prepare acceptable and viable solutions for all counterparts ([25], pp. 131–159).

The third model is referred as the garbage bin model and advocates that organizational goals and stated objectives of public policies do not exist in the sense of declarations and strategies but emerge through the circumstances and parallel initiatives of organizations ([18], p. 146, [26, 27]). This model does not envisage that it is possible to have a set of objectives aimed at the optimal functioning of agencies, but that any solution to a public problem is the result of random factors.

In between the above-mentioned "incrementalism" and the "garbage bin" model lays the proposition of Etzioni [28] who discussed the issue of distinguishing the governmental decisions between those with long-term repercussions and those that relate more to an incrementalistic approach that has short-term implications. His contribution is valuable in terms of considering the two options as being two variables that divide issues in a relatively substantive approach. His contribution known as mixed scanning recognizes that governmental actors often oscillate between these two dimensions when it comes to deciding upon the resolutions to make ([29], p. 363).

3.1 Working toward a synergistic method for public policy that deals with complex public problems

3.1.1 Problem definition: traditional vs. wicked and unpredictable problems

Every public policy analyst places the identification of problems, their conceptualization, and prioritization first in the order of significance according to specific indicators. The definition of any problem is one of the most important stages in the formulation of public policies where all the known variables are being considered and the primary guidelines for their solution are presented. When defining the problem, the aim is to assess the information required and to take an objective, all-round approach which may require a lengthy and time-consuming process of evidence, interviews, and surveys. Information should be gathered, and one must ensure that it fits the criteria of credibility that it is controlled, reachable, authentic, updated, relevant, fit for purpose, and approved.

The registration of issues on the agenda ([30], p. 108) initiates a process of searching for a resolution via institutional channels for issues of great interest and impact. In pluralistic liberal societies, issues are discussed within the civil society as represented by stakeholders from the external environment such as political/party leaders, research institutes, interest groups ([30], p. 89), the media, the international environment in the context of mimicry, and the scientific communities ([31], p. 341 and [16]), and if there is enough support, they are transferred to the institutional agenda[2] if the topic is considered valuable enough to decide about it [32]. The more the groups are involved in the problem-solving stage, the more the forms and definitions of the problems emerge, creating a complex backdrop for their resolution.

The contemporary problems, as already mentioned, are complex and dynamic, hence the introduction of the term "wicked" in the relevant literature. As early as 1973, Rittel and Webber referred to the need for a public administration to deal

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[2] It is not excluded that powerful interest groups (e.g., representatives of industries or cutting-edge technology companies, etc.) have access to political pathways and push their positions onto the official agenda, without these issues entering into consultation.

with those problems that can only be "managed" rather than "tamed" [33]. It is even said that the only thing accomplished by many governments that promised society a solution to "wicked" problems has been to lose the confidence of their citizens ([34], p. 24). "Morbid" problems [35] cannot be fully defined or understood in terms of a linear cause-and-effect relationship, involve ambiguity and unpredictability in their development, and draw conflicts between stakeholders as to the values they serve (evoking value conflict). Initially, Rittel and Webber's analysis focused on the problems of poverty, urban reconstruction, crime control, and poor education. However, a few decades later, environmental pollution and other more complex problems such as drugs, social policy, juvenile delinquency, etc., broadened the scope of "morbid" problems to include environmental disasters and ecological and techno-logical problems [36]. According to the early analysts, these problems are "untamed" and "malignant"; they are also "vicious," "tricky," and "aggressive."

Theoretical scholars of policy design and analysis have argued that much light should be shed on the causal phenomena that lead to the creation of a public problem based on the assumption that the discovery of the root causes of a problem leads to half of its solution and further argued that new policies arise because of the failure of a successful policy up until then.

3.1.2 Attempting to propose a schema for the design of successful public policies: hierarchical vs. incremental model: synergies through consultation and networking

Public policy formulation that ensues the definition of the problem attempts to identify and evaluate possible solutions to policy problems as well as to systematically examine the various alternatives available to address a problem successfully. Under the hierarchical model, the design of public policies is not only limited to assessing the relative benefits and risks presented by the policy instruments and whether they meet the stated policy objectives but also extends to their feasibility or to investigating the likelihood of being accepted by members of the society. Related to that, the research includes both a technical component which demonstrates the feasibility of the policy targeting plan and a political component through which the feasibility of the policy is investigated through the lens of the society behaviorally. Thus, several criteria are used for the evaluation of alternative action plans ([37], p. 44).

In contemporary policy studies, the framework of criteria is crucial for fostering an evidence-based and soundly weighed judgment of the appropriate policy for each problem. The analysis of policy instruments and their application are embedded both in the context of "designing" policies and in the study of the influence of policy ideas in the policy formulation process that led to the adoption of specific designs in particular circumstances ([38], pp. 103–119). Further, the context within which the relevant policy design processes are embedded also sets the boundaries and guides the decisions ([38], p. 37, [39]). In addition, when speaking about intolerable and complex issues such as the wicked or the environmental disasters that involve many cabinet offices, it is of great value to adequately evaluate these criteria. Later, Peters [40] reduced qualitative tools to the following: directness, visibility, capital/labor intensity, automaticity or level of administration required, level of universality, reli-ance on persuasion vs. enforcement, and their "forcing vs. enabling" nature.

While the definition of the problem, context, instrument, criteria, and indicators are said to be largely important for the outcome of the design process, it is worth high-lighting the need to thoroughly practice the consultation phase with all relevant coun-terparts. Specifically, for the public policy formulation process, Harold Thomas [41]

distinguished four important aspects that start with evaluation, continue with dialog and consultation, and conclude with the formulation and consolidation of policy. Under the evaluation process per se, the required information and data are explored to establish an integrated understanding of the public problem in the case. At this stage, sources of information may include reports, technical evaluations, empirical research, evidence-based data [42], inputs from stakeholders, or even the public. This is followed by the dialog phase among the actors and organizational staff involved in policy formulation. At the core of this phase are reflection, consultation, and exchange of views on the policy objectives and possible means to achieve them in a management by objective logical frame of thinking [43]. The dialog is conducted with the participation of experts and representatives of the private/public sector or other stakeholders. The consultation of nascent public policies allows the implementing organizations to identify any comparative advantages to shape their policies ([34], pp. 32–46).

Indeed, consultation represents a vital tool for contemporary public governance as it sheds light on all aspects of the problem at hand and sustains accountability. One well-known definition from Hartz-Karp places emphasis on "an approach to decision making in which citizens analyse existing events from multiple perspectives, debate among themselves and weigh up their options" [44]. Based on another definition, consultation consists of simply seeking information and advice. According to the most widespread practice of consultation, it ranges from information, advice, or mediation from the government to the parties [45] to the active participation of direct or indirect stakeholders. Otherwise, it varies in spectrum from information and listening to action or decision-making. Among these stages, there is dialog with the parties concerned, debate, and in-depth analysis of the different views and alternatives to the public problem at hand ([34], p. 32, [46, 47]).

The analyst of any sectorial public policy is then advised to select the criteria for the ranking of the alternatives based on the predominant public interest at stake [48] separately in each case and the priorities of the different (identified) stakeholders ([49], p. 390). In order to study the above options and arrive at the adoption of the optimum one, various methodological approaches can be applied such as the cost–benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis. Cost–benefit analysis (CBA) is a method of assessing the benefits of each alternative by focusing on the "cost" (not the "objective") and evaluating the wider public benefit in terms of the expenditure/investment made to meet a societal need. Cost-effectiveness analysis collects and evaluates data to assess the alternatives offered as a means of solving the public problem. The aim is to find out which is the least costly scenario for a given level of effectiveness or the most effective for a given level of resources. For example, in the context of the Ministry of Development, given a specific amount budgeted for a purpose, alternatives of the same investment cost will be evaluated and which of them are most successful in achieving the stated objective will be assessed. Also, at this stage of identifying and evaluating alternatives, empirical social experiments can be carried out. To conduct an experiment, researchers randomly assign some members of a target group the alternative option under observation and the parameters to be analyzed ([50], pp. 361–362). The impact of the proposed alternative is measured as the average difference between the proposed study and control groups on the relevant measures (e.g., for general cases, how the accident rate or the level of traffic violations, etc., has changed). The abovementioned methodologies entail that there is sufficient time and a systematic approach that allows for the development of consultation, empirical and evidence-based research, and cost–benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis. All the abovementioned tools combine to permit the evaluation

of performance management in a specific area; yet they are used, not only to improve policies and their implementation but also to arm policy-makers with arguments "for or against policy" ([51], p. 15).

When it comes to dealing with wicked-multidimensional problems that engage several cabinets and may have a greater negative impact on society on a larger scale, some of these methods appear to be obsolete or inappropriate to apply in a very short and stressful time frame. In this context, the feasibility of public policies, the realistic framework that determines them, and the logic of satisfying as many interests of as many stakeholders as possible comprise the methodology of decision-making based on the model of incrementalism, where reference is made to "the need for political leaders to lead to compromises which, however, result in the existence of unclear objectives for public policies." In decision-making based on the incremental approach model, objectives and instruments evolve simultaneously, while the experimentation and the "trial and error" logic prevail due to constant changes [52].

It is precisely this difference in the nature of the task of crisis management compared to the traditional governmental tasks that are referred to above. When the basic institutions of the State are confronted with a crisis, they cease to operate under the familiar traditional hierarchical form of administration, depart from their main role, and are led to a horizontal, networked, and collaborative form of action. The more complex and ambiguous the system is, the more the need for central steering and coordination arises, but it is, unfortunately, inclined to failure as there are many factors that interfere in the process and there is no consensus for the primordial role of any of them (almost all ministries, health national experts with different views, associations of medicines, etc.). For example, the management of the COVID-19 crisis ([53], p. 105) introduces the question of the ownership of coordination mechanisms that will be implemented on a national level. Usually, it is on the central governmental level that these committees and working groups depend on, and this is a given fact that we will consider in this paper.

It appears that, through crisis, governmental routines change, conventional administrative working flow cannot find application, and rapid multitask ad hoc task-forces, such as interministerial committees, subcommittees, and working groups are installed in order (1) to elaborate on the various aspects of the issue at stake (that may have been detected at an early stage as described in the previous paragraphs), (2) to monitor the implementation plan, and (3) to oversee the crisis in depth while being able to respond in faster terms than the old machinery of the State. Their composition is determined in order to ensure broad participation of various stakeholders: representatives of the respective governmental departments, local authorities with their various committees, the best qualified national and foreign experts, representatives of economic sectors, research bodies concerned, social partners involved in the subject, other associations, interested parties, think-tanks specialized in the matter, etc. [31].

The final objective is to minimize negative consequences and at the same time satisfy as many stakeholders as possible in a consensual frame of mind that aims to promote the policy proposal that will be welcomed by most critical stakeholders (and therefore not necessarily the one ideal solution). Moreover, crises require immediate action, and the possibility of delays inevitably caused by successive approvals must be eliminated. Examples of crisis management from many countries have indicated that crisis management and consequently the informing of society are better undertaken by managers who are directly responsible, none other than the operational managers in charge of the crisis management (on the field). Thus, in the case of the Oklahoma City bombing (1995) ([54], p. 895), the Incident Command System

(ICS) was successfully implemented, i.e., the system in which a coordinator from the local fire department was appointed who was the point of contact and the person in charge of all actions on the part of the relevant public services, voluntary organizations, and other parties involved. He also kept the public informed through frequent official announcements. Moreover, the relevant actors involved in the crisis had been identified in good time before the outbreak of the crisis, and the interaction and trust developed between them prior to the crisis facilitated the management of the crisis as it progressed. Subsequently, at the time of the crisis, the joint crisis management committees already formed were activated and implemented the plans already developed during the recession.

When setting up flexible schemes consisting of coordinating horizontal groups or committees of experts to manage the crisis on a minute-by-minute basis, it should be borne in mind that coordination is inversely proportional to the number of actors involved or administrative levels (central, regional, and municipal). In the Oklahoma crisis management system model, there was a line of command, with a parallel recognition of the sharing (diffusion) of power particularly as the crisis unfolded. In other words, it was a system that successfully combined a collaborative model of governance with a hierarchical one in the sense that a competent delegate and representative of the most involved entity took ultimate responsibility for the actions undertaken and gave orders under the general supervision of the central administration to which he or she was accountable at the completion of the project [54]. The question of who is really in charge would be a constant concern if there was not to be a supreme body (e.g., in fires the fire brigade, and so on) that would be legitimized to take final responsibility after an assessment of the information gathered from all the bodies and organizations involved.

4. Assertions and evidence for implementing public policies

The design of public policies, their successful implementation, as well as their monitoring and evaluation are key factors for modern governance as well as for the effectiveness of policies and the implementation of the "rule of law." At the same time, flexible forms of approach to the tools for better management of public organizations are related to the ability of the public body to identify possible solutions to the problems it is called upon to solve and to initiate those policies that are the most applicable, realistic, effective, efficient, sustainable, and best suited to serve the public interest.

In particular, when we deal with the implementation of public policies, we call upon the institutional capacity to conform to the constraints of the external (PESTLE) environment in which public policies evolve, which have a major impact on the way in which public policies are implemented, i.e., whether they will achieve their purpose or not. Based on the theory of the external environment, the power of circumstances is enormous to the point that it ultimately leaves public administrators with little room and freedom of maneuver. Public organizations and leaders are indeed left with few choices because they are inevitably drawn by events and circumstances outside their control, and the degree of influence and control they can effectively exert over the policies they monitor and implement is reduced. Various external parameters, e.g., social differentiation, economic well-being of the population, major events, catastrophes, other disasters, etc., influence the degree of difficulty in making the decision. Moreover, action areas with many specific needs are more difficult to be

efficient (e.g., education), while larger action areas where the stakes are high (e.g., health and safety of citizens, border security, and defense) are easier to help lead to a decision, however, costly.

In this context, public administrations and the leadership of public organizations are called upon to steer a course through complex scenarios and to manage uncertainties skillfully, demonstrating the resilience of their organizations against complex situations exacerbated by the external environment. Ultimately, public policies become susceptible to exogenous factors, and their intended outcomes are never entirely predictable, which makes it a priority to apply the "adopt and adapt" method, i.e., the ability of political and administrative systems to react quickly by incorporating changes arising from changing circumstances and adapting legislation [55] as quickly as possible to new political, economic, social, technological, legislative, and ecological circumstances.

4.1 Globalization and crafting of public policies

The adaptation of national administrations to international standards as a result of globalization is inevitably a factor in strengthening the modernization and readiness of public administrations to confront international conditions and negotiate the policy contents at an international level. Contemporary problems fall within the broader concept of managing systemic problems, where the influences are multiple, both within and outside the system, and for which a methodological centralized approach cannot deliver the expected solutions. The responsibility for solving these problems is usually shared between several ministries or is practiced in cooperation with counterparts from outside, and their consequences are often unpredictable and undesirable [56, 57]. For example, in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was indispensable to apply coordinated methods [58] for the restrictions and public health policies among EU or OECD member countries to deal with the virus because otherwise poor implementation of a health policy in one country could automatically lead to an outbreak of the pandemic in another that might have applied more stringent protective measures. Even a change in the food system and the agricultural subsector can have dramatic changes in other subsectors, such as energy, health, economy, and education at the international level [57, 59].

4.2 The top-down approach for implementing public policies

The top-down approach focuses on the role of public authorities (central government directly, decentralized administration, local government [60], or finally services provided in partnership with the private sector) in the implementation process. Based on this approach, the policy process relies on a causal relationship between policies and mutually influencing parameters. The interactions and linkages between the acting subjects (predominantly within the public administration and secondarily in its wider environment) lead to outcomes (outputs), but this policy often tends to ignore the impact of the actions of the actors involved in the implementation. In the normative approach in which the "top-down" approach to public policy is embedded, this is interpreted as an input that comes predominantly from the political elite as a result of internal processes, and implementation is approached as an output factor that brings about a series of impacts on its recipients. It also takes the rational behavior of actors for granted when, as already mentioned, there is a finite limit of rationality and data to be applied.

According to Mazmanian and Sabatier's [61] theory, policy decision and implementation are fully dependent on government representatives, and there is a clear distinction between the planning and implementation of public policies. Their model for effective top-down implementation of public policies includes the following criteria:

1. Specific clear and coherent public policy objectives.

2. A program based on a basic causal theory (what is happening and why).

3. The process, timeline for implementing actions, and measurable indicators of outputs and outcomes are well structured.

4. The relevant institutions have the appropriate authority to implement the programs, while being committed to achieving the assigned objectives.

5. Stakeholders (both executive and legislative) have an active role and support the project (within the administration).

6. There are no particular changes in the external socio-economic environment.

4.3 The bottom-up approach for implementing public policies

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the theory known as "bottom-up" emerged and came as a response to the previously prevalent hierarchical "top-down" approach. The trigger for its emergence was related to the divergence that occurred between the results (outputs) and the policy objectives (targeting) of governments. The studies conducted turned to the lower hierarchical levels and policy recipients who often seemed to have come up with better ideas for implementing the declared policies as the most directly relevant to the policy issues under development. Another prevailing view was also related to the need to highlight discretion and flexibility in implementation systems that were absent in the absolute top-down model, while methodological tools were directed toward the needs of the lower hierarchical layers (street level bureaucrats such as police officers, doctors, teachers, etc. [62].
The main features of the bottom-up approach are as follows:

• It takes into account the role of all those factors involved in the implementation stage that are called upon to bring about the final result by changing their behavior.

• The success of a public policy is defined in terms of human behavior, and this should be taken into account in the design.

• It emphasizes the adaptation of general objectives to changing circumstances.

Sabatier [63] notes senior state officials and ministers overemphasize the ability of central policy-makers to work it out secluded in their offices, to announce clear policy objectives, and to scrupulously control the process of their implementation. In criticizing this law-centric approach, the proponents of the "bottom-up" view simultaneously overestimated the amount of discretion of lower bureaucratic officials

and thus overemphasized the autonomy of the "bottom" over the "top." The focus on the empirical evidence gathered from the international literature led to the introduction of a third approach, the so-called intermediate or hybrid approach which took characteristics from both theories, i.e., the central, executive approach, and local autonomy ([64], p. 268).

4.4 The "intermediate-hybrid" approach in the implementation of public policies

The "intermediate-hybrid" approach, focusing on the interactions that develop during the public policy cycle, incorporates elements of both the top-down basic approach and ex-ante mapping, as well as the screening of stakeholder reactions and finally portrays policy as an evolutionary process based on a series of stages and interactions between critical variables.

In the intermediate approach, emphasis is placed on the interaction and the synergistic dimension in the implementation of public policies through negotiations that take place between those who design the implementation of the policy (political elites) and those on whom the necessary action for implementation depends on (not only bureaucrats and lower hierarchy but also other stakeholders). This approach views the design and the implementation as two inter-related procedures that should give and take information that is indispensable for the design of policies to come [65].

5. Conclusions

Dahl and Lindblom [66] stated that the possibilities for choosing policy instruments are unlimited and states should not be limited to only those already known and practicable. "Government" tends to be replaced by "Governance" that shifts the emphasis away from the statute "rule of law" (procedural and linear approach, [55]) to more flexible forms of regulation and implementation that will focus on the attended results and the needs of the stakeholders (citizens, private sector, organizations, etc.). Public governance refers to the formal and informal arrangements that determine how public decisions are adopted, how public authority is exercised, and how public actions are carried out, from the perspective of maintaining a country's constitutional values, while being more flexible and resilient in the face of changing wicked problems, actors, and challenging environments. Moreover, good public governance describes various normative accounts of how public institutions ought to conduct public affairs and manage public resources for the maximization of citizens' and other users' satisfaction. Nowadays, good public governance not only relieson the traditional tools of "steering" and "rowing" through the legislative, executive, and judiciary but also compelled to seriously take into account the voice of all relevant stakeholders through the consultation process that may have a great impact on the formulation of any new policy [67]. Indeed, the model of the "lonely organization" that determines its policy in isolation is obsolete. Equally obsolete is the image of government at the apex of the societal pyramid. Horizontal networks and synergies replace vertical hierarchies, while at the same time, governance entails a move away from traditional hierarchical forms of organization and the adoption of network forms. As such, the traditional distance between the State and civil society becomes less and less obvious and a participatory approach emerges in the way of exercising public power through focus groups, e-forums, e-platforms, and other means that are used for entities to comment on, before the adoption of a new law. In addition,

the European Commission has also been a strong proponent of the use of public consultation mechanisms as a best practice to be systematically followed.
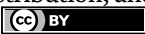
It is up to the old institutions to face these new challenges and accommodate their means in a more horizontal, synergistic, accountable, and flexible way of operating in an incrementalism way of dealing with public affairs. The State is thus claimed to be superseded by a "networked polity" where authority is devolved to task-specific institutions with unlimited jurisdictions and intersecting memberships operating at sub- and supra-national levels. This issue becomes urgently important for modern governance and should be further analyzed so as to acquaint governments with a modern and dynamic way of crafting public policies.

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Perspective Chapter: The Place of Virtue Ethics in Public Service Delivery

John Mendie and Stephen Udofia

Abstract

Public service delivery at any level refers to the delivery of public good, public safety, and public well-being in ways that are accountable, transparent and ethically defensible. This is done through the process of steering, directing and coordinating the affairs of the state, organization and any constituted body. But quite often, the consequences of this state of affairs is that there is, among other things, a 'moral deficit' in the public service delivery process which is suggestive of the dearth of moral excellence, virtue inculcation and discipline among the actors in public service. Based on the literature and in spite of the pursuit of effectiveness and the condemning of unethical behavior by public service managers, scandals still occur and allegations are still made. In this chapter, a brief description is given of some ethical concepts viewed as important in addressing the issue posed. Our approach is based on the concept of public service delivery making indirectly the necessary assertions for good administration. It is also suggestive of the sheer disregard for the character of the moral and political agent which actually provides the basis for appropriate action.

Keywords: public service delivery, virtue ethics, morality, governance, virtue

1. Introduction

For many countries in the world, one of the major challenges confronting them is not only making public servants functional, effective, and rich but how to make them efficient, accessible and accountable to the people. This aims at making the public servants result oriented, and capable of delivering public service. There is a general perception that public servants are not accessible, lazy, not effective and corrupt. This perception presents a negative view on nation building. In this regard, one would quickly think of the political instability, economic stagnation, corruption, mismanagement, civil strife and various other civil disorders.

In the wake for endorsement of unethical or immoral practices as part of the public service conduct in most countries, the political climate has been traumatizing for the entire citizenry. It seems that most political leaders around the world subscribe to the Machiavellian principle of demagoguery in public service or virtue and good conduct ([1], p. XV). The moral deficit in the psyche of both the general citizenry and the people

governed needs to be addressed. Given this "moral deficit" or "moral gap" in the public service delivery process of most states, there is need for proper education of political functionaries and/or would-be leaders in a manner that would bring about ethical rebirth in their actions, value orientation, civic resonance in public space, and attitudinal change. There comes an overarching need to foster moral sense of reason and the formation of character of public servants in ways that will enhance good and constructive governance globally. There is need to emphasize morality or goodness in public service delivery, for both morality and public service delivery thrive on values and both also have one common goal: practical realization or enhancement of public well-being.

For the fact that morality and governance thrive on values, achieving good public service delivery therefore, requires a high sense of moral consciousness on the part of those governing and the governed ([2], p. 82), to achieve a balance of morality. The natural inclination of humans to do evil, being self-centered and being mischievous in policing others, in a especial way, certain behavioral abuses among those in public service must be constantly checked ([3], p. 61). Virtue theory is a pioneering ethical principle that can effectively enhance virtue inculcation, value orientation, character training and civic education of state actors. As a philosophically defensible ethical model, virtue theory can significantly address the failure of public service delivery by taming the self-serving inclination and behavioral excesses of those in power and position of authority in the state. However, the burden of this chapter is to trace why some countries have been unfortunate in this regard. Some of the responses this chapter seeks to provide include the absence of the necessary intellectual acumen for public service delivery. Some scholars claim that would-be public servants are unprepared, with limited managerial skills necessary for public service delivery. Most disturbing concern here is why leaders would vie for public service positions they are ill-equipped to steer or handle.

2. Methodology

This study is expository, analytic and critical. Besides being a library-based work involving a textual exegesis and analysis of primary and secondary literature that is germane to the study, it also involves some visibility study, as the problem herein dissected can be experienced in the day to day activities of most countries including Nigeria. Criticism, the most dominant method of philosophical inquiry which entails expression of approval or disapproval of propositions would enable us glean some essential elements of virtue ethics to grapple with the failure of public service delivery in most countries including Nigeria. The chapter has been partitioned into six main themes that begin with an introduction, wherein the objectives, scope, thesis and background are carefully highlighted. The literature would aim at exposing the problem of public service delivery in the light of Machiavellian model, the internal and external factors associated with public service delivery. Next, would focus on the exegesis of virtue ethics as understood in this chapter. It would attempt a lucid account of the origin of virtue ethics in the history of philosophy, beginning from the early Greek era to the contemporary period. It also shows the congeniality and philosophical strength of virtue ethics and distinguishes it from other theories. In what follows, we shall develop a nexus between virtue ethics and public service delivery. This chapter would critically present a pathway for who a virtuous public servant should be. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusion. It also adopts the University of Ibadan Manual of Style (UIMS) for documentation.

3. The problem of public service delivery

Essentially, the problem of public service delivery is human problem, which exposes a deep-seated predicament that raises a myriad of questions. What could really be the identifiable factors behind this crisis in public service delivery? Is it the case that the needed intellectual force and perspicacity is absent in public service delivery? Or is it that we lack leaders with the appropriate managerial skills necessary for public service delivery? Public service delivery can be seen as the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of public realm ([4], p. 7), or being a laid down procedure of setting and handling legitimate powers, which is donated by the people, to bring forth law and order, to guide their fundamental human rights, setting precedent for the rule of law together with due process of law, then it provides for those fundamental needs and welfare of citizens while seeking for their happiness ([5], p. 117). Perhaps this explains why Treasury Queensland sees it as a comprehensive and systematic process which includes all the interfaces and activities that shape or influence governmental or public policy formulation, enforcement and means or manner of enforcement ([5], pp. 86–89).

Public service delivery encapsulates layers of relationships and political nuances between policy makers (individuals who constitute the government) and citizens. It presupposes a power structure with its own hierarchical categories, incorporating the economic, socio-cultural, and political tensions within the society. The means of arriving at such peaceful solutions to existential problems and the implementation of such solutions into purposeful action make up what is called public service delivery ([2], p. 88). This is a spiraling process by which power is being exercised in various relations towards the attainment and implementation of the intents of government and the citizenry. As a major actor, public service delivery requires a principled leadership, that is, disciplined or principle-centred men and women who have knowledge of the social process and who will help lead their nations and citizens to the path of socio-economic development and growth ([3], p. 4). Essential elements or characteristics of public service delivery include effective participation in socially worthy activities, rule of law, efficiency, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitableness and inclusiveness. For the purpose of this work, public service delivery should be understood quite simply as the exercise of governmental power in the management of a country's economic and social resources with a view to attaining inclusive overall growth and development, to meet the common good of the masses as opposed to selected groups of a state or country ([6], pp. 11–12). Some essential principles of public service delivery include strategic direction, accountability, capable workforce, ethics and integrity, fiscal, regulatory and administrative frameworks ([5], p. 91). Thus, public service delivery promotes and enhances the well-being of society, while poor or bad public service delivery destroys the goals of the society. It is the latter that is often referred to as the problem of public service delivery.

3.1 The Machiavellian model

There seem to be an open endorsement of unethical or immoral practices as part of the political conduct in most countries of the world. Indeed, political leaders appear to subscribe to the Machiavellian principle of demagoguery in politics or virtue and good conduct. Machiavelli had argued that morality weakens a leader and that a leader who is enamored with concerns about goodness would soon come to ruin. Not only did Machiavelli repudiate the need for moral goodness in public service delivery,

he out rightly claimed that "it is necessary for a prince that desires self-maintenance (in public service delivery) to seek for goodness, to make judicious use of this knowledge or discard it, as he deems necessary ([1], p. XV). This Machiavellian principle is a fundamental assault to morality and it is a lucid misleading example of how public service delivery and political authority should be ordered.

Most leaders tend to have embraced this Machiavellian idea of *Realpolitik* which for J. Obi Oguejiofor has fuelled "political instability and incompetent leadership not just in Africa but the whole world ([7], p. 32). To awaken a politically moribund country to life, this hideous style of political public service delivery needs to be jettisoned or abandoned. The history of some nations, for instance, has been a tragic one in which the people have been tossed to and fro by both internal and external forces. There are scholars, who trace some country's political quagmire on the evil of colonialism and the cord of sustained imperialism. In fact, some nations have been 'captured' and 'imposed' upon by foreign or alien socio-cultural systems or hegemonies, albeit with the acquiescence of host nations themselves. However, the nation and its people have always managed to survive these foreign intrusions and hegemonies.

3.2 Internal and external factors

Earlier in the eighteenth and nineteenth century some nations were colonized by European powers, it was ostensibly to bring enlightenment to the Dark nations. The effects of colonialism on those nations seem to have influenced the reason for which such nations came to see colonialism as synonymous with material exploitation, cultural expropriation and anthropological impoverishment. The severity of gross ego distortion, tilting of self-confidence, incapacitation of those nations, undermining of the possibility of germane public service skills and the consequent sentiment of low self-esteem, occupied the affected nations. Indeed, no human disaster can equal the dimension of destructiveness or cataclysm that shook some nations, through activities infested by colonialism. Today, the characteristic humaneness, personalism, hospitality, morality, wholesome personal relations, and the overwhelming sense of the sacred have been infested and obscured by the cankerworm of Western materialism and individualism among public servants. Civil strife and wars have become more vicious in some nations, as the people now possess lethal weapons, the same instruments with which they were kept in check by the West.

Various systems of public service delivery have been experimented in some nations but none seem to have produced any positive outcome or result. Post-colonial nations have remained the battle-ground of competing ideologies which have left those nations confused as to which direction to follow in the pursuit of ethical or and economic development. That truth is, there is a wide range of limit to diaspora knowledge or system of ideologies because as it turns out, such ideologies conflict with local norms of the people's way of life. Then, there is the tendentious problem of dictatorship in such nation. As one country lunches a return to democracy, another reverts to one form of dictatorship or the other. As one country embarks on a national reconstruction after a bitter civil strife, another is caught in the web of war.

The economy of most nations is equally disoriented, and in some countries it is difficult to convince people that a person can be honest as a high profile public servant. The deficit in public trust seems to overturn some nation's ideal of morality or civil obligation at the service of a carefree lifestyle where to steal from the government was not largely considered immoral ([7], p. 36). It is true that the Western invasion left some nations in shambles, though these same nations equally share in the blame game

for years after independence and still, their leaders are yet to effectively steer the ship of state with a conscious, deliberate and determined effort. They cared little about moral and political training or mastery for constructive ordering of the state ([8], p. 53).

As a remedy to the failing system came the chants of democracy in some countries. But many years after its introduction, the story still remains the same. It stands debatable among scholars today, whether democracy is still the answer to the crisis of public service delivery, for democracy is in want of a strong foundation. It would seem therefore, that neither military interventions nor democratic intercessions could stem the tide of ineptitude that flowed through some nation's political landscape. None of these systems took seriously the fact that political leadership and public service of whatever kind ought to truly be people-centered, having the *prima facie* and *defacto* responsibility to operate within the precincts of morality in order to facilitate the purpose of public service delivery which is towards a better management of human commonwealth, for the realization of the common good ([2], p. 89). Obviously, the *peccadillo* of omission of the total well-being of the people in the public service delivery process of these systems amounted to their outright failure. Indeed, any system that does not take into account the well-being of the people and the common good is bound to fail. That is why some scholars believe that a good society which enhances the good or well-being of all must coexist with moral institutions, for there is a strong basis or nexus between politics and ethics, and/or among politics, ethics and public service delivery ([9], p. 151). With respect to public service delivery failure, it would seem however that in reality, there is no political, economic or social problem. What we have basically are human problems. Even though and with particular reference to Africa, Osam Edim Temple has argued that the challenges of ethical leadership in Africa are fundamentally metaphysical ([10], pp. 47–65). It is necessary to state clearly that the present challenge in public service delivery is principally the deficit in right character, moral virtues and civic values which are essential elements for effective steering, right of proper ordering of the state. Morality, character building, virtues and values must be brought back into the picture of political statecraft and democratic public service delivery in all nations. Achieving good public service delivery in the state requires a high sense of moral consciousness on the part of those public servants and the public. This is germane for curbing the failure of public service delivery among nations, to achieve a balance of morality the natural inclination of humans to do evil, being self-centered and being mischievous in policing others, in a especial way, certain behavioral abuses among those in public service must be put to check ([3], p. 61).

Bringing to bare some external and internal reasons advanced by scholars for the public service delivery in some countries are colonialism, ethnicity, corruption, leadership deficit. In most countries, leadership selection processes take the imposition pattern, which is often along tribal groupings and ethnic aggregations. The effect of this unhealthy scenario is that visionary leaders are dropped and mediocre ones are selected or imposed on the masses. This unreasonable practice weakens institutional patterns of public service delivery. The political climate of most states, is such that leaders and/or would-be leaders frequently mount the podium of leadership without any good track records, good performance history, and with limited experience necessary for constructive ordering of state affairs. Consequently, there is need for erection of social institutions where public servants can be trained, with the language of values and virtues for effective socio-political engineering. Education, whether moral or political is a quintessential tool for social transformation, social ordering and progress. In what follows, virtue theory, also known as virtue ethics which deals with the issues of moral excellence or human character will be discussed.

4. Understanding virtue ethics

Let us look at virtue ethics, tracing its origin from early Greek era to the contemporary period. We will also try to tease out the essential ideas in this aspect of ethical thinking with a view to showing how it differs from other ethical theories. Discussions on the idea of the morality of human conduct fall within the scope of ethical philosophy. However, the aspect of morality that deals with the issue of moral excellence or human character is discussed under virtue ethics, also known as virtue theory. Modern moral philosophy has long been dominated by two basic theories, Kantian deontological theory on the one hand, and Utilitarian consequentialist theory on the other. However, increasing dissatisfaction with these theories has led in recent times to the reemergence of an alternative theory, known as virtue ethics, or simply, virtue theory.

4.1 Deontological theories of morality

Deontological, otherwise known as nonconsequentialist theories of morality are directed towards something that is not the consequences of one's actions. When we consider utilitarianism and egoism, for both, ethicists are after the outcome of one's actions. Egoists, on the one hand, posit that one should behave to suit their very own self-interest alone, while utilitarians on the other hand, posit that one should behave in manner that seeks interest of all affected. For these theories, what makes a good act is determined by how suited it is to the service of someone's interest, whereas the goodness of a person is determined solely by how the person performs such actions that eventually brings about good consequences ([11], p. 56). A striking example is the Divine Command theory. The main assumption embedded in these theories averts that consequences do not, and obviously should not; penetrate into our judging of whether actions or agents are moral or not.

4.1.1 Act nonconsequentialist theories

The main preposition in this theory emphasizes the fact that general moral rules and theories are not required but only those situations, actions, and people we cannot make general claim. In making decisions the main crux is "intuitionism"; which stresses the right and wrong of a situation and which is determined by what the person feels (intuit) is eventually right or wrong, to say, a highly individualist theory ([11], p. 75).

4.1.2 Rule nonconsequentialist theories

This speaks to what is moral, not what the outcome is on the basis of following the rules. For instance, wherever there are rules that support morality then the consequences do not matter; aligning by the rules, which are right moral detects is our concern. The Divine Command theory asserts that a person's action is right and the person is good if, and only if, he/she adheres to the commands which are given to them by a divine being, not minding the consequences ([11], p. 75).

4.1.3 Kant's duty ethics

Immanuel Kant held that it is only through reasoning alone one can arrive at a 'valid absolute moral rules' upon which hold same weight as indisputable mathematical truths; and these very truths have to be logically consistent with itself, and not

contradict itself. Again, these truths must be universalized. Categorical Imperative speaks to the fact that an act is immoral if the guiding rules that would authorize it cannot be implemented for all universally. Practical Imperative do not allow mere usage or conception of a person as means to satisfy another person's end, it rather upheld the unique end of a person and not as a means (Kant, I, II, III).

4.1.4 Ross' Prima facie duties

Sir. William David Ross was in agreement with Kant as to the establishing of morality on a basis other than consequences and on the contrary discarded Kant's absolute rules theory. Rose could be situated between the dilemma of Kant and rule utilitarianism following his understanding of ethics. He proposed prima facie duties which all humans (public servants) should follow, except there exist more superior reasons why it should not be followed. Rose presented some prima facie duties in his theory, such as justice, fidelity, self-improvement, reparation, beneficence, gratitude, and non-maleficence (non-injury) ([12], pp. 21–22).

4.2 Virtue ethics

Virtue ethics began with the Greeks and most prominently Aristotle around fourth century B.C., but it has become significant to many contemporary ethicists. It speaks to the individual's character being the most significant factor of ethical thinking, not minding the rules about individual acts themselves (deontology) or the consequences of those individual acts (consequentialism) ([13], p. 52). It seems to me that, this virtue theory stands out from the other theories we have considered for the fact that it speaks not merely on the consequences of an action, feelings of the individual, or rules guiding the acts, to influence the person's growth (public servants) towards moral or virtuous character acquired through good actions or "virtuous" person or a public servant would do. What is primarily for virtue ethicists is not the judgment of *acts* or their *consequences* but the judgment of *agents*; for "we are what we repeatedly do, excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit" ([14], pp. 1105a4-1105b15). Thus, as an approach in normative ethics, virtue ethics can be understood as an *agent focused* ethics of being, which pride itself on concepts such as *arête* (excellence), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), golden mean (*mesotes*) and *eudaimonia* (happiness or well-being) ([15], p. 107).

The word "virtue" can be understood from a plethora of perspectives. Etymologically, the word virtue derived from the Latin *virtus,* meaning manliness or strength; or the Greek *arête* which designates moral strength or moral excellence ([13], p. 313). The opposite of virtue is vice. A virtue is defined as "moral excellence, righteousness, responsibility, or other exemplary qualities considered meritorious". It is a character trait or quality, valued as being always good in and of itself. Virtues refer to certain qualities, might or strength displayed by an individual. It is seen as the moral strength that conquers the tyranny of voices. Virtue is further understood as a disposition to act in certain ways and not other ways. A virtue, as different from mere habit, points to a disposition to act for reasons that form a disposition which is exercised through the person's (public servant) practical reasoning; it is built up by making choices and as expressed in the making of other choices. When an honest person decides not to take something to which the person is not entitled, this is not the upshot of a causal build-up from previous actions, but a decision, a choice which endorses the person's disposition to be honest. Virtue as a disposition to behave in the right manner is inculcated from a young age ([14], p. Bk II). The crux is on the good or virtuous

character of the individual (public servants) himself, not minding the actions, the consequences of such action, and the feelings or rules guiding such an individual.

Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* could be summarized thus: reality and life are teleological with the reason that they aim towards some end or purpose for the individual. Happiness is viewed to be the end of life, and reason is the basic activity of humans; therefore, the aim of human beings (civil servants) anywhere on earth is to reason in a right order so as to gain a complete life. A person has the capacity to attain goodness. This goodness could be achieved through constant practice that is predicated on a guide towards moral decision-making from a virtuous individual.

Alasdair MacIntyre made a contemporary exposition of virtue ethics. He averts that virtues are dispositions which makes one act and to feel in certain patterns and such a person would bring forth virtuous feelings within himself, which does not deterred him to act virtuously. This moral agent must state what this very practically wise and virtuous person (public servant) would perform in a given circumstance and carry out the virtuous act which such a moral agent must perform ([16], p. 149).

4.3 A leap from the Greek era

Undoubtedly, the Homeric poems set a great path for the onward movement of the Greeks moral philosophy. *Arête,* with its associated adjective *agathos* (good) with plethora of synonyms, stood out as the strongest word of commendation. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey, arête* is visibly accorded to the nobleman and the hero, referring to their courage and strength, most importantly when expressed during competition ([13], p. 148). Moral ideals in Greek life were influenced by the belief in life beyond the grave. As Bobier observes, the Homeric man envisaged the next life as a miserable existence and loathed it. For that reason, his attention was turned to the present, where the real self lives, feels, thinks and enjoys happiness (14–15). Since Homeric morality was concerned with earthly existence, the moral sense becomes a matter of necessity and of prime importance for the distillation of virtues and values, in the *hic et nunc* (here and now). Within this pre-Socratic era, especially during the early mathematical and mystical conceptions of reality, the Pythagoreans believed in an individual's return to the One. Therefore, as long as one is exile in the flesh, one must realize the divine element in oneself by the practice of virtue. This became the most effective means of imposing limits and order upon passions and of bringing human existence to a participation in the "harmony of the spheres" ([17], pp. 14–15). For the Pythagoreans, only one attained virtue by following certain rules and rituals. Virtue, in the end, became for them a legitimate process of purification whereby the soul was gradually freed from its tomb, the body. This progressive purification of the soul (*via virtu*) continued through a long series of reincarnations until eventually the virtuous soul escaped from the nocturnal or chthonic region to the divine region of light or the One.

However, within the Heraclitean *corpus* the discussion on virtue was grounded in the *Logos.* Only by understanding and by seeking constant union with the *Logos* can a person become wise, good, and happy ([18], p. 24). This can be obtained by self-knowledge because this leads to the *Logos* operative in the soul. In the knowledge of the *Logos*, an individual realizes that the tensions of life are balanced by moderation in all things, which is "the greatest virtue" ([18], p. 32). The Heraclitean depict virtue in form of the downward and upward movement of the soul towards the unitive force of the *Logos.* For Democritus, virtue lies in the ardent preference of such goods of the soul as uprightness, wisdom and so on. Democritus believed that true happiness, which is the real goal of man, resides in the soul: "Happiness, like unhappiness

is a property of the soul" ([18], p. 107). That is why the ideal of the Democritean man is a "stable disposition" of mind that is unperturbed by chance and is characterized by a firm trust in nature as a never-failing source of pleasure and contentment ([17], p. 80). This stable disposition aids in the ardent appreciation of those goods of the soul, and also lurks as virtue, within the theorizations of Democritus.

In the passage of time, virtues like *dikaiosyne* (justice) and *sophrosyne* (self-restraint) were strongly commended as appropriate and necessary in the Greek society. On his part, Plato made a leap to demonstrate that self-restraint, justice and control using reason were possible avenues in which people could carry out their duties in the society, and for this reason they could not properly do so. Drawing from Plato's early dialogs, virtue had same understanding to knowledge (good and evil) as required for the attainment of the highest good or *eudaimonia,* which individual need and action desires of him. Plato further posited that the rational faculty of the soul or mind is to rule the spirited part of human, while the appetitive and emotional parts is to lead all desires of the person and actions of the person to *eudaimonia*, which virtue is its main constituent ([19, 20], p. 246a). Further discussions regarding what came to be known as the Four cardinal Virtues: *prudential* (prudence), *iustitia* (justice), *fortitudo* (fortitude or courage) and *temperentia* (temperance), can be found in Plato's *Republic*.

Nevertheless, the concept of *arête* (virtue or excellence) reached its apotheosis in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, making him its most distinguished exponent. He introduced a detailed/systematic account of what is known today as virtue ethics, with the threefold essential: *arête* (virtue or excellence); *phronesis* (prudence, foresight or practical wisdom) and *eudaimonia* (happiness, well-being or flourishing). Aristotle refers to a virtue as being a balance point connecting deficiency and excess of a trait in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Speaking of the greatest virtue, he says, situates not in the very middle, but at a golden mean that is closer to each other, hence, the Latin maxim *in medio stat virtus*, "in the middle stands virtue" ([19, 20], pp. 436a–435b). Accordingly, an individual, for Aristotle has a function by nature to fulfill and the fulfillment of this function, with the aid of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) constitutes *arête;* for an individual therefore, the *agathon* (good life) is a life that involves such fulfillment. It is the interplay of these essentials which assures man's true happiness (*eudaimonia*) in the end. As a teleologist, he posited that *eudaimonia* is not constituted by honor, power or wealth, but through the activities of the rational faculty in line with virtue.

The understanding of virtues by the Greeks was made known in the Latin era by Cicero and subsequent adopted into Christian moral theology through St. Ambrose of Milan. At the scholastic era, and through history, the best understanding of the virtues, having a deepened theological background was made possible by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* and his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* ([21], p. 194). During this period, there was an emphasis on such Christian virtues as Kindness, Chastity, Charity, Humility, temperance, diligence and patience. The very aim of keeping these virtues was to protect the individual against temptation of the Seven Deadly Sins which are: greed, wrath, lust, envy, gluttony, pride and sloth ([22], p. 75). Virtue ethics persisted as the dominant approach in Western moral philosophy until at the Enlightenment. It suffered a momentary eclipse but was revived by the writings of some philosophers like G. E. M. Anscombe, Philoppa Foot and Alasdair MacIntyre. Thus, virtue ethics is concerned with the development of the good or virtuous person, with emphasis on the good or virtuous character of human beings themselves, rather than on their acts or consequences of their acts ([23], p. 68).

4.4 Contemporary resurgence

Before and after Aristotle, emphasis has been on virtue ethics. However, Aristotle is the most consistent virtue ethicist and patron of the theory. Though popular at a time, it became eclipsed by deontological or consequential theories. The theory was later revamped by the writings of contemporary virtue ethicists such as G. E. M. Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Alsadair MacIntyre. Anscombe represents a contemporary attempt to revive Virtue Ethics. She presents a view of morality that goes beyond deontological imperatives and postulates that one should avoid a mistake of seeking a solid ground for morality built on legalistic notions like "duty" or "obligation" in a perspective of a general disbelief that there is no existence of a divine law-giver who is the source of such duty or obligation ([24], pp. 1–19). For this reason, she advocates a return to virtue ethics. Another contemporary virtue ethicist is Philippa Foot who also helped to shape the contemporary resurgence of ethical naturalism. Like other virtue ethicists, Foot argues that the virtues are beneficiary, that is, human beings do not get on well without them ([25], p. 450). They are beneficial both to the individual (as in the case of temperance), or to others (as in the case of justice). Foot sees the virtues as a kind of corrective to impulsive action, springing from desire or inclinations, requiring not only will-power but training and the development of good habits and dispositions. Foot questions the idea of moral judgments having a special commendatory or action-guiding force.

In his book *The Object of Morality*, G. J. Warnock like Foot, makes the virtues central to morality. His own preferred lists of virtues include: non-maleficence, beneficence, fairness and non-deception. Like Foot, Warnock tries to justify them in terms of their conduciveness to the satisfaction of human wants, needs and interests. But the wants, needs, and interests which they serve are those of people in general, rather than the agent's in particular. For Warnock, the human condition is such that given people's limited sympathies; things are inclined to go badly ([26], p. 197). The purpose of cultivating the moral virtues, therefore, is to ameliorate the human condition, by counteracting people's limited sympathies and thereby making things go better.

On this part, Alasdair MacIntyre, like Anscombe, advocates a return to virtue ethics in general and Aristotelian virtue ethics in particular ([27], pp. 69–72). MacIntyre's critique of modern ethical theory, outlined in his book *After Virtue*, is the most severe in virtue ethics. MacIntyre claims that present moral discussions do not make any meaning since they are based on moribund traditions. That is, for him, the enlightenment period abandoned Aristotelianism, particularly, the concept of teleology. Ancient and medieval ethics, he averred, uses teleological knowledge that human life does not have proper end or character, that is, man would not attain this natural end without preparation of himself. Thus, the philosophers of the enlightenment and their successors were doomed from the beginning because they lacked a teleological structure or framework on which to base their moral understanding. MacIntyre's *After Virtue* ends with the question, "Nietzsche or Aristotle?"

At the instance that MacIntyre acknowledges the limitation of the book for lack of sufficient grounds for a definitive answer, he clearly stated that Aristotle offers the best answer for the problems identified in the book and not Nietzsche. By probing into Aristotle's mind, MacIntyre held the view that virtues speaks to dispositions of not only acting in a certain ways but a feeling in certain ways, which brings forth a virtuous character in a person, not necessarily observations of rules or the calculation of such great consequences ([28], p. 70). Thus, for MacIntyre, to act virtuously does not mean acting against inclination (according to Kant), but to act from inclinations that have been formed through the cultivation of virtues ([27], p. 149). In all, MacIntyre

advocates a return to Aristotelian virtue ethics and also combines Aristotelian empha-
sis on virtue with a modern skepticism about the possibility of an objective theory of
the good for an individual in the community. However, the revived virtue ethics in
some ways, appeals to feminist promoters, who are of the opinion that the other ethi-
cal theories (Kantianism and Utilitarianism) that championed on rights and duties,
were viewed as male ways of approaching life, whereas virtue ethics, appealed to a
recognition of the value of intimacy and relationships. Virtue ethics seemed natural-
istic on this consideration; it makes a shift from the idea of keeping the commands to
an appreciation of the way an individual might express his or her own fundamental
human nature, and thus, fulfilling his or her potential as a human being.

In spite of criticisms against the virtue tradition, the truth is, virtue ethics has
great prospects to enhance the moral life in people. The practical value has positive
roles it can apply in politics, religion, education and other areas of public service life.
However, we need to mention that virtue is not in born but acquired overtime. Human
beings are able to acquire virtues through practice or habitual action. Since we are
what we repeatedly do and since excellence is an art won by training and habituation,
it is clear that it is not an act, but habit. In the final analysis, we are a sum-total of the
choices we make.

5. The nexus between virtue ethics and public service delivery

The failure in recognizing that there is a close link between public service delivery
and virtue ethics is responsible for the abnormalities experienced in the exercise of
public service in most nations. Specifically, the urge to provide a separate understand-
ing of ethics from public service delivery serves as a crucial reason for the collapse of
most nations of the world. An aspect of the goal of ethics seeks to assist us showcase
the needed moral behavior in any community. Talking about the goal or concern of
ethics, it is safe to assert that it helps provide us with standards or reasonable guide-
lines to provide the needed direction of the affairs of people in the '*polis,*' that is, the
political society. Following our argument herein, it could be stated that ethics and
public service delivery points to the same goals that provide means of helping public
servants to acquire good moral behavior and the promotion of a good political order
which will assist members of society gain socially adaptable goals ([29], p. 27).

Some scholars have stated that public service delivery is embedded in ethics and
that all public service theory is embedded on some ethical premises ([30], p. 73). If this
assertion holds water, it then means that ethics cannot be left out of the domain of public
service, because the sole aim is determining what ought to be done by public servant, to
encourage good life in the state. In like manner, public service delivery seeks to deter-
mine what the public servants ought to do and the manner it ought to be done, address-
ing also how a society should be handled by the public servants ([31], pp. 108–112).
Isaac Ukpokolo held that ethics and public service delivery do not only have conceptual
linkages, but content linkages with the sole aim of elevating interests of the public
servants ([30], p. 78). Base on this, the public service life must be directed in a manner
that reflects the moral values and civic virtues required to better the livelihood of all
members of the society. On another note, public service delivery should reflect moral
norms and those civic virtues required for fostering peace and harmony in the state.

Many nations are not doing well in the areas of ethical public service delivery and
leadership. There is a noticeable gap between the ideals of ethics and the practice of public
service delivery. This gap comes from many areas such as the tension that exists between

public service delivery and morality, as noted by Niccolo Machiavelli and the misleading teaching of how public service authority should operate. Majority of public servants in the state show the desire to remain in power irrespective of the ethical implications that may come up. The unsatisfied desire for power has taken over the moral responsibility and duty towards the people they lead. Base on this, majority of the public servants have hastily digested Machiavelli's tyrannical idea of demagoguery at the expense of ethical public service delivery. Machiavelli relegates the idea of moral goodness in public service delivery and counsels any leader (prince), that seeks (in power) to learn how not to be good, and either use or not use this knowledge, with regards to necessity ([1], p. XV). This narrative of *Realpolitik*, cautions would-be public servants to detach from moral goodness, because morality ruins a leader in his or her quest for power quaffing according to this school of thought. Where some public servants seek to follow this misleading teaching on public service delivery, there would be a gap created between public service delivery and morality or ethics in the society. In contrast, Ekanola states that this apparent gap points to "a moral deficit manifests in the psyche of both the general citizenry and the public servants who govern them" ([32], pp. 105–117). The lack of moral order shows off in various forms of vices which bring about poor public service delivery, absent of focus among public servants, and lack of dedication towards development.

5.1 Application to public service

The primary goal of teaching virtue ethics to the public servants obviously is the creation of a virtuous or ethical person; nevertheless, subjecting the public servant to act in an ethical manner and make them aware of doing ethical acts to make them virtuous. It has not worked successfully to hold up certain public servants and say, "Here is the ideal virtuous person; now act as he or she does." Research has shown that most of our so-called heroes have had feet of clay, or at least not acted virtuously. For instance, many of our famous Kings kept slaves in the past. We also look at how many of our country's presidents are struggling with their private and public lives. Some have still done considerable good for their country and the citizens, but they may not necessarily fit any pattern of such "ideal virtuous person".

Virtue ethics constitutes a particular problem since it seems to be a shortcut, providing a more superficial solution to our ethical problems. For example, "just make all of the public servants, children and adults virtuous, and they would act virtuously" is much too simple an answer to our ethical problems. All that is needed is rational moral education (not indoctrination into a specific ethical code) which would help public servants learn all that is contained in moral issues and how to handle them. Acquiring this education would enable them understand how to act virtuously and ethically.

With an effort to curtail this tide of horrible public service delivery and delimit the Machiavellian dimension to public service delivery, sustained moral and public service awareness or reorientation in the public service culture of some nations is desirable. This ethical and public service education ought to stress on virtue inculcation, moral training, character building and value orientation of the public servant in the state. This education should reflect the civic values and virtues required to achieve socially worthy goals for socio-public service flourishing of the society. From this very requirement, Aristotle's virtue ethics that speaks to character formation, moral training and virtue inculcation of the public servant for effective alignment in the community, would serve as a philosophically defensible ethical model for the reinvention of good character, moral goodness, civic virtue and germane values for decent leadership and civilized followership among nations.

6. A pathway for virtuous public service delivery

One of the sure approaches to providing ethical public service delivery is the mental decolonization strategy among civil servants through value education, moral and cultural of the entire citizenry. This pathway uses the externalist element as a causative factor for the question of public service delivery. Even when the effects of these factors are evident among public servants in some countries in recent times, it would only become pertinent to settle for an internalist remedy. This internalist remedy averts that to address basic nation's question of public service delivery, obviously the person have to stop blame game. Since our concern is basically self-induced, we require critical self-examination and self-evaluation through moral and public service education among state actors. Among some nations in recent times, the kind of public service leadership is such that conveys low premium on moral excellence and probity. The new standard is that money; violence and power has become instrument of statecraft in the hands of public service elites, gearing towards forfeiture of character, due to systemic failure or do not have strong institution for character.

As a renowned scholar, Godwin Sogolo states that "public servants require proper education; such that comprises value orientation, attitudinal change and ethical rebirth" ([9], pp. 85–94). The public servants require rights and empowerment education that is directed towards the culture and way of life of the citizenry. This education is aimed at freeing the public servants from the shackles of political and economic slavery: internal slavery is identified by persons in public service together with their puppeteers from the powerful nations of the western world and elsewhere around the globe ([33], p. 162). Following the above remark, it could be construed that when we equate statecraft with public service duplicity in some countries, it is visibly clear that some persons lack the needed moral and public service tools for constructive public service delivery. Where these tools are not present, one is guaranteed of the constant show of despotic, ineffective and ineptitude public service delivery in many countries. Looking through most countries in the world today, there exists a noticeable 'moral light out' or 'moral turpitude' which influences the proper ordering of the public service delivery process. Our only pathway out of this moral and public service dungeon is the inculcation of values and civic virtues in the citizens and state actors. Quoting Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Madu states that:

> *The prosperity of any state does not depend on the strength of her fortifications, not on the beauty of her public buildings, but it consists on the number of cultivated citizens of the state, her men of character and enlightenment ([34], p. 10).*

Having a feel of excellent public service delivery or being a beneficiary of good public service delivery demands a high sense of moral consciousness from the public servants and the people served. This is essential due to morality, for Utuama, checks on self-centeredness and mischief, the human natural inclination towards evil, by policing, most importantly the behavioral excesses of the people in public service or positions of authority ([6], p. 61). It provides a precautionary option against public service unrest and societal upheaval. If this argument holds water, we could say that moral education is necessary for the flourishing and survival of human community. Moral education develops a heightened sense of good or bad, right or wrong; a sense of rectitude that comes from socialization. According to Sogolo, it is not possible "for us to have a good society devoid of some kind of moral institutions" ([9], p. 151). Base on this, moral education remains instrumental for inculcating in public servants the right public values (from the right means) essential for constructive public engagement and relationship in the state.

Public service delivery education becomes vital for stemming the tide of public service delivery failure in countries of the world. The vital duty of public service education is to instill in the public servants the mental capacity to understand and handle social or political issues in reasonable and efficient manner essential for coexistence and the maintenance of social institutions. In this regard, the stress is on acquisition of values that enable or empower the civil servant to acquire those reasoned objectives in the state. By civic virtues, values or right dispositions were thought of by Philippe Schmitter's character traits, such as: self-restraint, trust, honesty, capacity for cooperation, loyalty, tolerance, sociability, civility, compassion, courage, respect for the worth and dignity of each person, concern for the common good and a sense of public service efficacy ([35], p. 143). Let us state that the moral and public service delivery education which is either acquired formally or informally points at one goal: the practical realization of the happiness in civil service delivery.

In the book *Politics*, Aristotle asserts that "man is a political animal (*zoion politikon*)" ([14], pp. 1253a1–18). For the animal (whatever Aristotle meant by that) require to be educated through constant habitual virtue acquisition, character building, value transformation and moral instruction. In the instance of the public servant here could be referred to that animal does not have the necessary training to enable him relate with others at the micro level in the society, notwithstanding, it would post great difficulty for the civil servant to relate seamlessly with the economic, political ideals and social values at the macro level. The first stage of this moral education for active participation in public service delivery starts informally from the macro level of the society, known as families or homes, and from the formal level at schools, places of religious worships and social gatherings of the society. This ethical reorientation needs to be accorded serious attention, for it possesses the power of molding in pupils the desired knowledge of all it takes to be responsible citizens of the society. Ethical reorientation has the potential to make the pupils become morally sound in mind and politically equipped for meaningful and significant impact in the society.

In the time past, philosophers and other scholars have been clamoring for the addition of ethics as one discipline to be taught in primary and secondary schools. This quest is often greeted with oppositions—no credence to the activities of moral relativists and skeptics who vehemently rile at the thought of a universal moral standard which binds every public servants in the society. In a specific context, it has been very difficult to include ethics in primary and secondary schools, with this; it becomes all important to make way for augmenting the curriculum of civic education to address right principles for pupil's instruction, values and sustained ethical theories. Achieving this would serve to bring forth the desired civic and moral virtues among the incoming public servants for constructive social engagement in the state.

The question of how the active public servants or those in the position of authority are educated to attain the needed moral and civic virtues for public service delivery needs swift attention. We observe that it is not as easy as stated, due to certain kind of settled public service delivery habits in the public service culture among nations. Within the Aristotelian clime, when something is said to become a habit, it points to a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior; an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary. It speaks to a quality in itself that is very difficult to alter, to dispose or ill the subject in question, in which is found, either directly in itself or in relation to its operation. Habits are behaviors, performed without much resistance, acquired by repetition, associations or inclinations, expressed with little or no thought and activated ([36], p. 113).

And so, the most efficient manner to teach the needed civic virtues and values among the public servants are through the influence of ethical and social institutions. It is pertinent to erect one of such institutions where there is none, because it is not possible to have a good society without some kind of social and moral institutions. Godwin Sogolo states:

> *The primary duty of a society from cradle-up is to mould the public servant by teaching him standardized modes of behaviour seen in social institutions. On the flip side, this process is easier, but on the other, it follows an unbridled indoctrination process ([9], pp. 43–51).*

Sadly, neither the easier process nor the indoctrination process of virtue education would guide a consistent attitude to the pattern of public service delivery. And this is highly lugubrious. In event where our social and moral institutions are not functioning as expected, to checkmate the excesses among public servants, most likely would witness a complete decay of public service delivery in some nations. As a panacea, the establishment of 'Citizenship and Public Service Training Centres' remains a pathway for the onward molding of present and future public servants in civic and moral qualities for constructive public service delivery.

Again, to enjoy a healthy public service delivery culture, philosophers need to delve into mainstream public service. The truth is, 'until philosophers play active role in public service delivery or public servants engage actively in philosophical consciousness,' the issue of public service delivery will stay the same. Philosophers majoring in Values, language, logic, virtues, etc., would be adequately equipped to navigate the public service terrain for significant social engineering. Philosophers ought to demonstrate willingness in public service delivery and not an armchair public servant that only brings about unhappiness, rage and misery. The subject matter of Philosophy itself stands at the heart of every well-meaning nation. Still, the puzzle is if we can boast of the 'will' to bring this influence to fruition? At the ambience of Aristotle's virtue ethics, wrap attention should be accorded to the term *akrasia*, translated to mean weakness of the will, which points to knowing the right thing to do because it promotes the good even in the absence of will or moral stamina for it. This failing, nonetheless, remain unchallenged. Based on this, mistrust exists among the populace towards the state for not being able to initiate or implement policies that would better the lives of the public servants. As a crucial key for effective public service delivery, an over arching return to character training, value orientation and ethical building would win back the trust.

7. Conclusion

The hallmark of effective public service delivery is ethics and accountability. To this end, public servants have a crucial role to play in guaranteeing the accountability, efficiency of government business, transparency, and hence shun appropriation of public property for personal use. This is not only applicable in financial terms, rather in general terms, in the areas of accepting responsibilities for the outcome of their actions in using the resources of the country (material, human and finance) to bring about public goals. By doing so, they should keep watch by recognizing the inadequate approaches advanced by scholars to grapple with the failure of public service delivery in most nations of the world and given their disregard for the character of the moral

and public service agent. To this end, this chapter has proposed virtue ethics as a better approach to stemming the tide of public service delivery failure in some states. This is because virtue ethics promotes good character traits in persons, providing morally appropriate grounds for intelligible actions and deliberations in the public service delivery arena. It also provides a check to mischief, self-centeredness and human tendencies towards evil act by policing especially, the behavioral tendencies among those in position of authority. Thus, virtue ethics presents a more pragmatic ethical framework for moderation of conduct of the public servants and in the discharge of public service delivery.
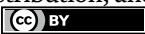
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Currently, there is an ongoing debate about the future of public administration. The role of public administration is evolving and changing, thus impacting the dynamics and mechanism of public affairs. Its models, programs, characteristics, and expectations at all levels have radically grown to facilitate public concerns. This book looks into the future efficiency of public administrations and attempts to predict their meaning and role in the future. It is a useful guide for the world's public administration leaders as it will help administrations to change their everyday operations, ethics, and policies. It presents the critical skills and tools needed to master public administration, supplementing the efforts of governments to work for people's welfare. It advances the connection between administrative authorities and citizens and channelizes a more logical way of gaining a country's progression. The book contains six chapters that articulate the foundation of the future of public administration. By embracing digital transformation, prioritizing citizen engagement, and addressing public concerns, the future of this field is an exciting frontier which ensures a brighter, more connected, and equitable future for all of us.

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