

The New Technologies in the Developments and Reorganization of Public Organization

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INTRODUCTION

In the light of the increasing emphasis on the need to reform the public sector, many studies have focused on exploring and investigating particular transformations or attempts towards modernizing the public services in different countries. The paper that has been prepared and presented here actually focuses on evaluating the reforms made in Greece. It is generally argued that the Greek public sector is highly ineffective, with increased bureaucracies, permanent personnel, which give little emphasis to accountability and service quality, poor practices of performance management and human resource applications, inadequate planning and control of functions and operations and generally inefficient processes. Added to this the technological penetration which is considered to be a vital issue in the new public management is reported to be insufficiently developed or even missing in the case of the Greek public sector. While it has been established that the information and communication technologies are very critical for the reforms under the new public management, Greece appears to be lagging still behind in that respect.

The paper deals particularly with two issues: the use of information and communication technologies in the public service provision and the human resource management approach in the case of the Greek public sector. First the theoretical basis for both ICT (new technologies) issues and HR issues are actually discussed (with regards to their contribution to the new public management) and then based on the theories, the author reviews different aspects, developments or reforms made in the Greek public sector in terms of these two issues. The purpose is to synthesize a review of literature on HR and ICTs and then examine the practical implications on the Greek public organizations.

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THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

In order to review the role of new technologies and ICTs in the public administration under the concept of New Public Management, first there needs to be some reference to the basic elements of NPM. New Public Management signals the need for reforming, re-designing and re-inventing the public service provision under some fundamental principles which are rented from the private –business paradigms (Lane, 2000). According to Gruening (2001) New Public Management has some particular elements in its agenda, which are all manifestations of how the public sector should be administered and how the public services should be provide. These elements include: cutting off budgets, separating provision and production of the public services, inventing competition for the public sector organizations and for those who are employed in the public sector organizations, separating political and administrative agendas (distinguishing between politics and public sector), making the public administrators and the public servants accountable for their own performance but also for the performance of the public organizations as well, introducing strategic planning and strategic performance management and finally integrating the quality ‘ingredient’ in the public service provision.

Navarra and Cornford (2005) highlight four primary principles of the New Public Management: the efficiency, the accountability, the decentralization and the marketization. In regards to efficiency, this is critical given that the public sector organizations on a global basis had been reported to operate at enormous costs with generally low productive levels (Gruening, 2001; Mirandilla, 2008; Navarra and Cornford, 2005; Torres *et al.*, 2005). Efficiency in the New Public Management implies improving output (productivity output) and at the same time reducing the per unit cost through improvement of operations, reduction of bureaucratic processes, improvement of performance of civil servants, restructuring and redesigning of operations. Accountability, as Navarra and Cornford (2005) explain implies constituting the public organizations, the civil servants and the public administrators responsible and accountable for the public services offered to the citizens; decision making and public service offerings as well as practices are to become accountable to the value they create for the social world and the citizens. Barzeley (2001), Gruening (2001) and Lane (2000) indicate that that the public sector in its entire practice and concept must be considerate of the effects that it has on the welfare of the society.

Moving on to the third principle of New Public Management, decentralization is vital and it refers to restructuring and shifting decision making processes to lower level (instead of top level) so as to increase speed, responsiveness, customization and reduce bureaucracy and fragmentation in the public service provision (Navarra and Cronford, 2005). As Barzeley (2001) illustrates, public service organizations have been traditionally attached to central administrations, usually stemming from governmental action or from political parties in the ruling position and this has created a highly centralized management of the public sector which generates further problems including delays, insufficient services, low quality services and in general

ineffective services offered to the public and to the citizens. The New Public Management agenda advocates that the public services provided to the people need to be precise, accurate, of high quality and need to target citizen 'satisfaction'; the decentralization of decision making increases the autonomy of the civil servants, increases the responsiveness and the timeliness and improves the basis for providing tailored (to the needs of the citizens) services. Finally, marketization (the fourth principle in New Public Management) according to the views of Navarra and Cronford (2005) implies that the public service organizations should be run and administered in such a manner that the market (the citizens) becomes the driving force and that the relationships with the public (the citizens again) constitute the main and focal area. In addition to that, marketization also implies that there should be a revolution in the ways in which relations in the upward stream are also formed; for example in procurement and supply the New Public Management foresees revolutionizing contractual agreements and relationships which are inefficient and standing for infinite time simply because they adhere to the public sector.

New Public Management is an umbrella term for re-organizing, re-designing and re-configuring the public services provided in order to improve the quality, increase the cost efficiency and enhance the effectiveness of the services to the end citizens (Bonina and Cordella, 2008; Gasco, 2003; Teicher et al., 2002; Torres et al., 2005). Around the world, new public management practices have been implemented under the effort to modernize and make more competent the public service provision (Lane, 2000). Within the agenda of the new public management the core element is the transformation of the public sector through a number of reforms that are critical and important in constituting the sector as competitive as the private sector struggles to be. A basic assumption in the new public management theoretical perspective is that citizens should be served as customers and that the public service organizations should operate and function in such a way that they become accountable, responsible, oriented towards quality service provision and driven by the purpose of achieving customer – citizen satisfaction.

THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS) IN THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Asgarkhani (2005) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the new technologies and particularly the ICTs generate new grounds for governing the public sector and reaching the levels of public service provision that are advocated in the New Public Management. The author explains that the new technologies – stemming from the expansion and the widespread use of the internet – help create platforms which allow public service 'businesses' to be provided in meaningful, effective and efficiency ways. As in the case of the private sector, where organizations have made extensive use of the new technologies in order to improve their performance, increase their profitability, enhance their competitive positions in the market schemes, intensify their market orientation and increase their customers'

satisfaction, the case of the public sector organizations should present similar transformations. The public (the citizens) becomes more and more aware of the advantages and the benefits that are provided by the new technologies (namely the web and the internet) and this creates an increasing demand and expectation that the public sectors induced by the governments will adopt these new technologies in order to improve the provision levels and make them somehow comparable to the services that are offered in the private sector. Asgarkhani (2005) notes that the response of the public sector then needs to be such that satisfies the demand and expectation of the public; the new technologies need to be incorporated and integrated into the public administration.

The role of technology and ICTs in the public administration is typically manifested in the entire notion and conceptualization of e-government (Kaneko, 2005; Snellen and van den Donk, 2002; Pina et al., 2007a). However, as e-government gains an increased attention and a special place in the literature on public sector management and public service provision, it lacks a particular definition that encapsulates all its implications, effects and impacts as well as its role in the New Public Management perspective (Brown, 2005). Bonina and Cordella (2008) state that there is no universal definition of e-government mostly because the term is primarily perceived as the 'synthesis' of two areas (the public administration or public governance and the use of information and communication technologies) and this creates gaps in understanding the context and the purpose of this synthesis. In response to the lack of a universal definition of e-government, this paper presents some workable definitions proposed in articles and studies. Brown (2005) defines e-government as a term that "arises by analogy to the concepts and practices of electronic commerce applied to the public sector, referring to the delivery of government services to the public 'on-line' (typically over the internet) or to the technological infrastructure required to deliver those services" (p. 242). In a broader perspective, e-government is seen as a tool that reforms the public sector and allows the New Public Management to move from the theoretical base to the practical application and implementation (Mirandilla, 2008). Asgarkhani (2005) takes a similar perspective and suggests that e-government is in fact the driving vehicle to accomplish the essential goals that New Public Management addresses: accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and minimization of bureaucracies.

"E-government is the use of ICTs in order to: promote and motivate a more operationally efficient and cost-effective government; facilitate more convenient government services to citizens and businesses; enhance economic development; reshape and redefine community and government processes; allow greater public access to information; and make government more accountable to their citizens" (Asgarkhani, 2005, pp. 467-468)

Teicher *et al.* (2002) find two levels in defining e-government; at the practical level (service level) e-government refers to the establishment of a platform that allows citizens to obtain public services at twenty four seven (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week), to obtain services without the intermediation of the physical interaction

with the public servants (disintermediating the public servants), to obtain public services at speed and convenience and essentially to obtain public services with minimum costs (thereby increasing efficiency). At the administrative level, e-government refers to the establishment of the fundamental ground basis for improving cost-effectiveness of public administration, improving flow and dissemination of information, increasing the accountability of the public sector, increasing the transparency and finally enabling the element of quality to become integrally attached to the public service provision (Pina *et al.*, 2007a, Pina *et al.*, 2007 b; Teicher *et al.*, 2002. In another view, Torres *et al.* (2005) state that e-government in its generic form implies integration of new technologies to public administration, but in its real form it entails to different levels of development: full e-government means total application of online conducts between public organizations and citizens, while other levels of development include the existence of portals and web sites without interactive capabilities.

Bonina and Cordella (2008) explain too (as previously mentioned) that the term e-government, although may sound rather explicit in the sense that it refers to the adoption and use of new technologies and ICTs in governance models in the public sector, is yet not universally defined as it lacks an acknowledged and empirically established definition. According to these two authors, e-government is often seen by scholars and practitioners as a composite element of the New Public Management perspective and agenda given that it involves the diffusion of technology to the public service offerings and provision, but more often it is neglected that it does not only intend to increase efficiency and accountability (within the New Public Management framework); e-government has further implications on the social values of providing public services (Bonina and Cordella, 2008; Snijkers, 2005). As Bonina and Cordella (2008) characteristically point out, e-government and the use of ICTs should be also considered from the view point of the public value that they create and not particularly from the view point of the entire concept of re-inventing public organizations and government agencies. The public value created through e-government practices are illustrated in their case study of some initiatives adopted in Mexico. These initiatives have enhanced on the one hand the efficiency and transparency of the public sector (public organizations and agencies) but have also enhanced the effectiveness of the services especially with regards to 'how the citizens' obtain value from the e-government services. The alternative options of service delivery, the customized solutions as well as the speed in which e-government enables public service provision are considered then as fundamental elements of the creation of public value. The main argument is therefore that e-government and general the use of new technologies in the public service framework should be oriented not only towards improving the situation within the public organizations and the governance models but also towards improving the perception and 'consumption' of the services on the part of the citizens as well. Cordella (2007) adds that this after all is an important element of the New Public Management agenda as well.

Gasco (2003) identifies four basic effects that the diffusion of ICTs in public governance and public service provision has: first, the citizens have access to all information that they require; citizens can obtain information at real time regarding any public services and the role of the government is actually to gather, process and disseminate this information in order to increase transparency (by providing for example indicators of performance etc), improve its responsiveness and increase the speed by which the interaction between the public organizations and the citizens is done. Second, citizens can implement transactions online in real time; this is pertinent to two issues: the efficiency in which the public sector organizations operate given that online transactions are far more quick, they can be done at any hour within the day (even in weekends) and they require less civil servants while at the same time they can process (the ICT-enabled systems) far more online conducts/ transactions. Third, the online transactions implemented enhance the reduction of bureaucracies and the unequal treatment of citizens, eliminate problems of distance, enhance the convenience of both the citizens and the civil servants and help customize and tailor the services to the needs and expectations of the public. Fourth, the use of ICTs and generally the new technologies in the public administration and the operations of the public service organizations enhance the democratic procedures and increase the participation of the citizens themselves in the service provision. As Gasco (2003) explains, the new technologies ultimately change the relationship between the government and the people by enabling interactive, non-hierarchical relations. Brown (2005), Kaneko (2005) and Mirandilla (2008) state that the benefits of ICTs are in fact strongly attached to the New Public Management; the ICTs offer the means by which the NPM can be put in to practice. Yong and Koon (2003) argue that there are two perspectives from which the use of ICTs enhances the public administration; from the perspective of 'process', ICTs and new technologies allow the delivery of services at lower costs (efficiency) and simultaneously at greater volume and from the perspective of 'information and knowledge', the use of ICTs redefines the role of public organizations and public administrators in terms of being 'sources of information and knowledge' which is to be provided to the public.

E-GOVERNANCE AND THE CASE OF GREECE

In 2009 the OECD reported about Greece that the country "exhibits a lower degree of e-government readiness than its OECD peers, largely due to relatively low levels of broadband penetration which may also be one reason why citizen uptake of e-government service remains lower than in other OECD countries" (OECD, 2009). In a research undertaken by Hahamis *et al.* (2005), classifying the stages of development of e-government in Greece, the researchers concluded that in almost all cases (government to citizen, government to government and government to business) the development of e-government initiatives and practices are rather in the 'infant' stage (the cataloguing stage instead of the transactions stage). Markellos *et al.* (2007) reviewing the major programs adopted by the Greek government relating to the

diffusion of the new technologies to improve public service administration and public service provision, conclude that while the strategy in place is promising (in that it foresees the use of ICTs in critical areas to improve performance) the actual practices and the initiatives undertaken are rather insufficient and not targeted properly to enhancing an overall approach to New Public Management.

The most important action on the part of the Greek government towards the use of ICTs and new technologies is the OPIS program (Operational Program for the Information Society), which is set to integrate all initiatives implement distinctively and separately and which were largely inefficient (Markellos *et al.*, 2007). Under the OPIS program, up to now the following projects have been implemented: the SYZEFXIS network which connects more than 2000 agencies, the Hellenic Police Network which brings together over 1000 police stations and which offers access to citizens for services, the Online Monitoring and Automatic Information and Data Management System (for the Urban Planning Public Organizations and Agencies), which allows the public to retrieve data and applications, to submit any potential complains and to track the development or progress of applications, the TAXISnet system (under the Kleisthenis program) which enables citizens to download and submit tax documents and forms, the IKAnet (Social Insurance) which allows companies to submit online social contributions and forms, the Hellenic Selective Service system which allows citizens to obtain information of military service, the Government Gazette online presence which allows browsing and downloading information, the websites of different prefectures which provide information on local authorities and enable interaction and the citizen service centers (CSCs) under the Ariadne project which are actually one-stop shops that enable citizens to receive a bundle of public services but not through the internet; the ICTs in the case of CSCs are used at the back end of the public service provision (E-Government Factsheet, 2011; Hahamis *et al.*, 2005; Markellos *et al.*, 2007).

Tsourela *et al.* (2011) evaluate the development of the e-government initiatives in Greece and comment that at the present there is in fact some very important progress made but there is still much room for improvement especially in regards to reforming the public sector and improving its efficiency and effectiveness. Kaliva and Gotzamani (2011) too state that the e-government practices in Greece need to be more consistent and address fundamental problems which require reforms and transformations; strategic planning for the diffusion of information and communication technologies and more importantly should enable interactive relationships between public organizations and citizens. It is what Hahamis *et al.* (2005) had noted earlier, that the e-government initiatives in Greece exist but they are rather not developed in such a manner that the New Public Management principles are indeed achieved and implemented; e-government in Greece is still lagging behind and apart from the fact that it incorporates the ICTs in its own infrastructure and context, it does not offer the full benefits and potentials that the new technologies can offer. In what it had been discussed before regarding the public value, under the

claims of Bonina and Cordella (2008) and Cordella (2007), it can be argued that the e-government in Greece does not create this value.

THE ROLE OF HRM IN THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Another core element of the New Public Management concept is the strategic management of the human resources and the general approach under the philosophy of the HRM (Human Resource Management). This is easily understood given that the principles of NPM intersect the basic principles of HRM; in essence improving efficiency and effectiveness is done through managing performance, increasing productivity, enhancing accountability and responsibility of the civil servants, increasing customer orientation and setting performance objectives which are all fundamentals of reforming the public sector administration (and the public service provision) are the main aspects of the management of human resources (Bach, 2000; Truss, 2008; Poor *et al.*, 2009). Brown (2004) indicates that the New Public Management requires a shift from the traditional 'personnel administration' to a more strategic management of the civil servants in such a manner that their performance is aligned to specific objectives and goals, their productivity is boosted, their consideration of the citizens as customers is enhanced and their autonomy is increased so that responsiveness is achieved.

"Public sector HRM has been characterized by the creation of more flexible structures and processes, the removal of highly centralized agencies and service-wide consistency of rules and greater responsibility accorded to line managers and supervisors in the management of employees through flatter management structures and programmes of decentralization and devolution" (Brown, 2004, p. 307).

As Truss (2008) and Poor *et al.* (2009) comment, the role of Human Resource Management in the New Public Management is actually encapsulated in that there needs to be a transformation of the Managerialism and the public administration must adopt principles and practices from the HRM perspective in order to accomplish the basic goals of improving the provision of public services to the citizens.

HRM IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: THE CASE OF GREECE

The Greek public sector is often studied in the context of its high bureaucratic and extremely centralized decision making as well as its fragmented structure which hinder the performance of the public organizations in terms of providing quality services to the citizens. The permanent positions of the public servants, the lack of incentives, the lack of control and measurement of performance, the lack of autonomy, the concentration of power (especially in decision making) at the top levels and the absence of specific objectives and goals to be accomplished (stemming from the lack of customer orientation and marketization of the public services) have all been cited as basic characteristics of the administration of the Greek public sector (Psychogios and Szamozi, 2007; Sotirakou and Zeppou, 2005). In the onset of the

European recommendations for public sector reforms in the context of the New Public Management, the government has taken some steps to reform and transform these 'characteristics' through adopting a strategic HRM approach. Nevertheless, as many researchers have pointed out, these steps have been quite ineffective and inconsistent. "Modern management practices are largely absent from public organizations and the dominance of *clientelism* (between politicians and citizens) makes its operation even more ineffective" (Psychogios and Szamozi, 2007, p. 15).

Manolopoulos (2007) studied the adoption of new practices in the public sector and particularly the motivational practices used in the public administration for the civil servants. In his study the findings revealed that the administrators and managers were rather approaching insufficiently the motivation of the employees through highlighting and providing intensively extrinsic rewards to motivate the employees and improve their productivity (such as wages and job security). Bach (2000) has noted that especially in the public sector, reforms need to be based on intrinsic motivation stemming from cultivating the sense of accountability to the civil servants and not from providing extrinsic incentives which are rather temporal and which do not account for willingness to improve performance. Manolopoulos (2007) challenge the provision of extrinsic rewards in an effort to modernize the public organizations and increase the productivity of the employees on the basis of two arguments: first that the restructuring and the downsizing of the public sector in the country will ultimately tackle job security and second that the economic policy in Greece is unlikely to support optimum wages for the civil servants.

Sotirakou and Zeppou (2005, 2006) explain also that the management of performance of the civil servants is largely ineffective in Greece too. According to the authors, public organizations are not run by goal-orientation and performance-driven approaches and principles and that in essence align productivity and performance to effective operations and public service provision. In a similar manner, control mechanisms and performance measurements are almost never implemented and applied in spite of the fact that there are provisions for such practices. Reforms are not actualized even if they are in the agenda for the New Public Management practices in Greece. Petrakaki *et al.* (2009) have additionally showed that performance management and control practices are highly ineffective in the Greek public management also; the authors speak about pathologies in the Greek public sector which arise from the lack of a performance-oriented culture in the public organizations and the lack of such practices and initiatives that can ensure improvement in both effectiveness and efficiency. Even in cases where performance management practices are applied, the deep – rooted and traditional approach of 'personnel administration' as opposed to human resource management prevail.

CONCLUSIONS

The need for reforming the public sector, re-inventing the public administration and re-designing the public services offered to the citizens is fundamentally reflected in

the concept and the primary agenda of the New Public Management. Two fundamental aspects of the New Public Management feature the means by which reforms can take place and the ways by which the objectives of improving efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and bureaucracies and these are the use of new technologies (namely the use of ICTs) and the use of strategic approaches of Human Resource Management. The new technologies are generally admitted to improve all operations and particularly increase the intensity of the relationships between the government (the public organizations) and the citizens by making the public services more responsive and tailored to the need of the public. The role of ICTs is vital and it is typically manifested in e-government initiatives and practices. Ultimately such initiatives should target access of the citizens to the public services and transactions being made through networks and the internet. By examining some aspects of the case of the Greek e-government, however, it has been shown that 'cataloguing' is far more pervasive in the Greek public sector adoption of ICTs rather than 'transacting', which implies rather 'infancy' in the development of e-government. The use of ICTs in Greece under the intent to reform public service organizations and improve public services needs to be implemented under strategic integration of all projects and programs and allow greater interaction between the government and the citizens. In a similar manner, the use of HRM approaches in the light of achieving reforms (in the agenda of New Public Management) in the case of Greece also shows that the practices are still lagging behind. Despite some reforms undertaken it remains a reality that the pathologies of the Greek public administration continue to exist and that strategic practices of HRM are not in place, hampering thus the effectiveness of the public services offered to the citizens.

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