

# Applicability of the New Public Management Principles to the Haitian Administrative System

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**Abstract**—This paper reports on a study that sought to understand the applicability of New Public Management (NPM) principles in the context of the Haitian administrative system. The concept of New Public Management emerged within OECD countries in the 1970s when the bureaucratic model was deemed incapable of supplying public services in a way that optimized resources. Haiti has been in the spotlight over the last thirty years as a failed governance system, as such it has become of interest to scholars as a test bed for the applicability of NPM principles, and their potential for rebuilding this failing system. A mixed methodological approach using multiple lines of evidence was designed to conduct the study over a twenty year time period. The evidence gathered over this period shows that the applicability of NPM principles within the Haitian administration system is facing six main challenges.

**Keywords**— Haitian administration system reform; New Public Management principles, applicability, major challenges

## I. INTRODUCTION

GLOBALIZATION has brought forth, among its various imperatives, a reformatory movement of the State, initially within the OECD countries. The public sector has been particularly targeted by this trend as its bureaucratic structure has been proven to hold limited capacity to efficiently and effectively deliver the public services requested by the citizen. International Institutions, such as the World Bank, the UN, and the IMF, as well as numerous researchers and public decision makers have elevated the reform of the State to a major agenda item. Despite the undeniable political motivation of this tremendous call for reform, its technical dimension has been quite consensual, with critics outlining that in terms of functionality, the bureaucratic model has been shown to be a 'Poached paradigm'. Consequently, to a significant extent, the call to reform the State comes down to mean a profound change in the way its administrative branch has been managed.

Four key orientations were outlined in framing the content of the NPM model. The first orientation focuses on output control, as opposed to the bureaucratic model's input control. The second orientation calls for the deregulation of the bureaucratic organization through a consistent decentralization of authority and decision making processes. A third is seen to

fall naturally in facilitating the introduction of market mechanisms or logic into the production and delivery of public services. The fourth orientation propelled to the front line is the concept of "consumers' satisfaction" as a core mission of the public services. The emphasis on these orientations remains the search for resource optimization as part of public sector's management, based on the criteria of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness, and parsimony. Seven fundamental principles or doctrines stem out these four orientations of NPM (Mönks, 1998; Timsit, 1982; Hood, 1991; Yamamoto, 2003). These aim to transform the art and science of governing into a renewed concept of governance in search of the optimal way of conducting public affairs. Its implementation has been experimented in the OECD countries since the second half of the 1970s with mixed outcomes. Nonetheless, its impetus is considered to be powerful enough to address the much needed organizational change expressed by industrialized and developing countries alike.

The primary goal of this paper is to empirically explain the applicability of NPM to the Haitian public sector. The paper is structured into five stages. The opening section presents a brief summary of NPM's nature and principles. The history and characteristics of the Haitian public sector are reviewed in the second section. The justification for the research hypotheses makes up the third section. The empirical data, gathered over an observation period of twenty-five years, along with the methodological process are summarized in the fourth section. Data analysis, the key findings, and the prospect for a successful implementation of NPM in the Haitian context form the content of the final section.

## II. ORIGIN AND NATURE OF NPM PRINCIPLES

The perceived legitimacy of decision makers and the particular line of action they take are key considerations in relation to NPM. Legitimacy in this context is an important determinant at the implementation stage of any public policy, with both internal and external actors to the political system likely to be simultaneously involved in the decision making process. The decision making process is expected to display three key features: (1) to conform with the generally accepted official rules of the internal institutional environment and (2) to be flexible enough to allow for external participation; and (3) to be accepted by the customers of public services. Thus, legality, legitimacy, and satisfaction are the three crucial pillars of governance.

The scope of governance is another area that needs to be understood within the context of NPM. The technical

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expectation is that the traditional border between the private and public sectors would fail to find a legitimate solution to the prevailing economic and social problems. NPM seeks to enhance legitimacy of the decision making process by involving more key actors in it. This is seen as a means of delivering more effective and sustainable public policies. The need to create a coordinated network of autonomous organizational actors who would be capable of making adequate governance decisions remains another key feature of NPM. Another challenge related to NPM is the identification of the appropriate actions to be performed by each organizational entity involved in public service delivery, along with ensuring the interdependence of these entities is coordinated effectively. Four schools of thoughts are credited to have contributed to the formation of NPM. Public Choice theory has supplied its idea of mathematical and econometric modeling for application to the public sector. The Consumerism school of thought, which promotes citizen participation in the public decision making process, is the second contributor to NPM. Organizational Theory is another contributor to NPM. As opposed to the norms associated with bureaucracy, its principles and practices are said to be greatly flexible and adaptive.

### III. HAITIAN PUBLIC SECTOR: HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

In a recent conjoint content analysis of the most available documentation on the conduct of Haitian public policy and data generated from a series of interviews, Michel (2000) has found that the context of the Haitian administrative system is historically marked by systematic attempts to substitute the underlying logic of collective actions with the individualistic logic of the rulers. Those attempts describe an amazing application of the enduring Edward Lynton's idiomatic expression of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole<sup>1</sup>. As the public administration's general legal framework is set up by the country's constitution. Every single leader, from the independence in 1804 to 1987, has come to power with a constitutional change agenda. This has had implications for the administrative system, as its legal framework is dependent on the country's constitution. Another characteristic derives from the country's colonial heritage. The new country that emerged out of a destructive colonial period had not inherited any administrative structure, and there was no hope that it could provide its citizens with those public services that they demanded in a service orientated way. Not only was the concept of citizenship inexistent under the colonial regime, it was a grave offense to speak out during this period. The colonial administrative system relinquished by the settlers was dichotomized in the sense that one of its two sides was used as a predatory tool against the nation and the other side was used to generate the services required by the slim minority of settlers (Hurbon, 1987; Manigat, 1998).

"Personalization of the power resources" is also a noticeable generic characteristic of the colonial administration.

<sup>1</sup>*Kenelm Chillingly, His Adventures and Opinions.* London: [Routledge](#) (1873).

This refers to the fact that small groups of individuals had presented themselves as the legitimate incarnation of the State, and pretended to exert the very organizational attributes of the State on the basis of their own personalities. This personalization negates the impersonal and general bureaucratic rules. Brinkerhoff (1987) has documented an additional fundamental characteristic. It is said to be a chronic absence of political willingness. Political willingness is measured by the following operational indicators: (1) the awareness by the central government that a problem does exist with the current administrative system and deserves immediate attention, (2) a fair representation of the desirable situation to move to, (3) the legitimization of the proposed solution and chosen mechanisms to transition from the problematic situation to the desirable one, and (3) adequate human resource allocation.

Finally, as far as public service delivery and functionality are concerned, Manigat (1996) has identified two conflicting models or systems. The first is represented through a sphere of self-organization, an autonomous model, in which a majority of citizens provide for themselves without any support from the State; and, a second limited form of public service which develops a predatory type of relationship with citizens, while specializing in symbolic actions to please its international partners. The former is referred to as an independent model and latter is known as the dependent model. In terms of functionality, the administrative system in the Haitian context seems to exist for the sake of the second model, the dependent model. Suggesting the institutional foundation of its public management system is chronically anemic and still hampered by its historic dichotomy.

### IV. THE NPM AND ACTORS' VISION

Research findings have already authenticated the fact that a coherent vision, capable of acting on core organizational values, is what it takes in the first place to initiate a successful change process (Filion, 1991; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, Lampel, 1999). In terms of management, a consistent vision displays two vital characteristics: it provides the terms of reference for a good diagnosis of the problem and the actions required in addressing it and it endows those actions with a much needed sense of direction. According to Thompson (1997), there are three fundamental success factors linked to any organizational change process that are dependent on internal stakeholders or actors' vision. The first factor is agreement on the type of change that is required within the specific organizational context. The second relates to the need for insuring stakeholders' core values are respected and providing assurances against the perceived loss of control over specific organizational elements. Anticipation and understanding of how resources will be distributed is the third success factor. The message from these three success factors is that the internal environment, the prevailing organizational values, and the form that resource allocation is anticipated to take are enough to determine the fate of any policy response.

Being well acquainted with NPM's inherent benefits, an adequate diagnosis of the current situation, and a fair representation of the desirable organizational structure

constitutes the backbone of mobilizing change (David, 2013; Michel, 2000; Lachman, Nedd and Hinings, 1994; Tönnesson, 2005). A fundamental success factor in leading an organizational change process is a shared or a well aligned vision for addressing a particular problem (Weber, 1968; Mintzberg, 1996). Thus, we wanted to test the hypothesis of a potential conflicting vision from all three core groups of actors: (1) the Government of Haiti, (2) the local public organizational entities, along with (3) special interest groups and civil society.

## V. METHODOLOGY

**Research Design.-** The empiric data for this article comes from a triple line of evidence. A mix-method approach – a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, was used to collect, process, and analyze these data. The first line of evidence is a qualitative study of the Haitian public management system completed in 2000. It gathered data over the period of 1804 to 1998 (Michel, 2000). Its main focus was to study the extent to which the private sector's decentralization strategy could enlighten a similar public policy of mandatory decentralization prescribed by the 1987 Haitian constitution. It was particularly interested in assessing the strategic vision of each component of the governance system, with particular focus on perceived ability of the prescribed decentralization strategy to deliver the administrative system that was needed and provide a technical basis for resource optimization and high quality public service delivery. From a methodological point of view, such a study involves the manipulation of very latent data that can best be generated by a suitable qualitative design and be processed using the content analysis technique (Holsti, 1969; Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). Thus, we have collected the primary data through a series 135 interviews with four groups of actors: central government decision makers, international or external participants in the strategic planning process, local government actors and law makers, private sector and special interest groups' representatives. The secondary data come from 57 documents collected from each of the four sources of primary data. Holsti's content analysis technique was used to extract the valuable content to be analyzed. The NVivo software (originally called NUD\*IST) was used to process the empirical information. Thus, the first hypothesis was tested through this first research activity.

The second research activity was conducted in 2008 in the context of an institutional reinforcement effort supported by the United States Government (Michel, 2008). The terms of reference for that study commended the focus on the Human Resource aspect of that effort. The main particularities of this second line of evidence were that four focus groups were used to generate the data, two validation workshops were organized at the end of the collection process to allow participating managers to modify the ex-ante information they provided. Extensive primary and secondary data collection resulted in 76 semi-directed interviews and 37 documents. As for the first research activity, content analysis was used in the treatment and interpretation stages.

The third research activity relied on more of a mixed-methodological approach as proposed by Creswell (2009). Its design was essentially quantitative and only its input generation stage applied qualitative techniques to structure and validate the questionnaire. It started out in 2009 and was completed in 2010 (Jean-Gilles, 2010). 550 managers formed the randomized sample of respondents. The response rate was 43% (235 respondents). On top of the **Cronbach's  $\alpha$**  coefficient of **reliability**, two series of test were conducted in the treatment process: **factor analysis**, **test t** and **multiple** in SPSS.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

### A. First and Second research activities

The first hypothesis states that the adoption processes of NPM principles within the Haitian public sector faces the hurdle of conflicting visions among key internal stakeholders. The qualitative results for this hypothesis testing expressed understanding of the current situation and associated problems, the best course of action that would solve such problems, and the characteristics of the desirable outcome.

**Diagnosis of the problem.-** In comparing the verbatim quotations, it is observable that the two groups of speakers have opposite views on the very nature of the problem. The GOH, for example, elaborate on the inappropriateness of the solution, but do not define the problem so well. One single mention of the "*concentration problem*" is made; while every other comment is a denunciation of the proposed NPM principle of decentralization through such statements as "*The international community is just trying to control the administrative system*" or "*the decentralization process is a divisive issue, a threat for national unity*". Thus, when the GOH evokes the idea that "It's a highly strategic issue..." it may well be referring to the political process instead of the managerial meaning requested by the peripheral actor and encouraged by the international community. The peripheral actors make a deeper diagnosis of what the current problem seems to be. In their view, "*The central government is presiding over a managerial vacuum*" and point to an "*institutional and strategic vacuum at the central level of government.*" All this appears to the periphery as leading to a "*persistent illegitimacy*" of the entire administrative system. On the diagnosis front, the two groups don't share a similar view about the nature of the problem or its magnitude.

**Nature of the solution to implement.-** The data, which cannot be presented in this summary, indicate that the GOH is talking about its intentional to implement NPM, while simultaneously denouncing the validity of local elections, among other things. The government seems to be employing a delaying strategy, which seems to be in action, evident from governmental views such as "*We denounce what's being done*"; "*We contest the installation of those local assemblies elected under alleged vote rigging*"; "*We are reflecting on this decentralization policy*". No articulated conception or technical disposition on the potential of the policy has been observed. As for peripheral actors, this decentralization policy is a solid milestone. Its interest level has reached a point where

alliances are being built and mobilization and education campaigns initiated against the perceived unwillingness of the central government: “*We are building some alliances for better implementation*” or “*Mobilization and education are taking shape*”. Backed by the fact that decentralization has been built into the national constitution, peripheral actors seem to feel a sense of accomplishment and yet victory is not complete. The two groups have displayed antagonism towards one another due to their respective positions and interests relating to the institutional power of decentralization.

**Desirable situation.-.** The GOH envisions an institutional framework which displays the main characteristics of the legal-rational State structure in place in most western countries. It depicts “*A united and supportive democratic State*” where “*participation for national development*” is promoted and managers as well as politicians are both “*collectively and individually accountable*”. It calls for “*A decentralized State*” “*governed by the rule of law*”. The peripheral actors are more articulate on depicting their desirable institutional framework. They want a “*visionary State, a supplier of public services*” that values “*Participation, consultation and consensus*” and limits itself to the role of “*... dispatching resources*” to local entities. When it comes to the desirable situation, the positions taken by the two groups are not so far apart. In their personal views, the two groups do not seem to anticipate the benefits of a “*cooperative and supportive State*” to be equally advantageous. A second key missing point in their “*power struggle*” is a timeline outlining when the benefits will be shared. Third, chances are that those individual actors who put individual benefits ahead of collective benefits will be around at the completion of the whole change process. Thus, their vision would be better served by putting forward the best interests of the collective. In sum, **the qualitative data confirms the first research hypothesis on the grounds of a conflicting vision about the nature of the problem and its appropriate solution.** In terms of the desirable situation, the expressed visions are not far apart.

## VII. DISCUSSION

The findings referred to in the preceding section can be summarized into six meaningful categories. First, there are seemingly irreconcilable views between the three main internal stakeholders on the three moments of the change process that NPM is likely to generate. They do not seem to agree on the conclusions of the diagnosis of the existing system, neither would they be in agreement about the choice of the appropriate problem solving mechanisms. Their opinions seem to come together around the expected institutional structure any change process should ideally lead to. For example, with regard to the principle of decentralization, the central government decision-makers see it as “a gateway to the control of the administrative system” through international cooperation. Therefore, they believe they have a patriotic duty to make a “denunciation” of this strategy and choose the best ways to establish the “rule of law..., a strong unitary State..., a democratic and non-centralist State”. In contrast, the other two internal stakeholders, the peripheral actors, equate the principle of decentralization to a constitutional obligation and a “bailout

institutional plan” that could lead to a “visionary State, a supplier of public services.” In order to implement the decentralization strategy and reach the desirable institutional framework depicted as an “effectively cooperative and supportive State, submitted to the nation and driven by the local entities...” they intend to build “alliances” and continue to raise “awareness and educate”.

Therefore, in terms of applicability of the NPM principles, the divergent visions erect the first obstacle that emerges from the mere legitimacy of governance (Ewalt, 2001). Michel (2000) has studied the relationship between legitimacy and institutionalization, and his research findings substantiated the claim that in order to effectively manage any organization, an appropriate level of legitimacy must be in place, since the course of actions to be decided upon has to be accepted and consented on by employees and the consumers alike. Since NPM’s principles are highly institutional, and so their implementation process in Haiti requires, three preconditions of legitimacy, namely (1) the launch of an orderly restitution campaign of the NPM vision, (2) the implementation of an extensive program of education on governance, and (3) to conduct consistent training and capacity building. Those preconditions must address the idiosyncrasies of all groups of actors or stakeholders.

Secondly, the findings point toward a culture of centralization of the State and a quasi-omnipresence of political interferences into the fields of actions known to be essentially administrative jurisdiction. The data have indicated that the sole principle of decentralization created a high level of panic among the political decision makers, so much so that they have seen the threat of a “disintegration of the country and the demise of the unitary state.” This uncertainty is real for the actors involved. It forms an important challenge to overcome.

Third, the descriptive statistics indicate that a distance does exist between the NPM principles and current practice within the Haitian administrative system. They also draw out the perception that public servants tend to consider themselves as being subjected to the nation rather than partisan government officials. This perception lays the ground for the applicability of NPM principles to the Haitian administrative system. However, the decision making power still rests with those government officials who continue to be in conflict with the other internal stakeholders (peripheral actors and public servants) over the ultimate vision. Ultimately, NPM, a source of inspiration for the National Commission for Administration Reform’s (CNRA) institutional framework proposal, have yet to overcome the hurdle posed by central government.

A fourth area relating to human resource management was observed between 2007 and 2008. The new practice of human resources management within the Haitian administrative system is seen to be at an embryonic stage. According to the respondents interviewed over that time period, mostly senior public servants, “recruitment, development and retention are still determined typically on the basis of a distribution of favors.” Despite the written laws, procedure, and official discourse, no human resource planning effort has been observed during our data collection period. An additional key

finding is linked to the overall profile of the results from the three research activities. They corroborate the fact that during the twenty year period in which the data is drawn several efforts to adopt NPM principles have been made. For example, between 1982 and 1985, two milestones laws were adopted: (1) the Law on Civil Services and (2) the Law on Standardization of Norms and Procedures for the National Public Administration.

On the basis of this preceding fifth category of substantiated observation, the existence of a legal and institutional framework has been identified. In spite of that favorable precondition, the matter of continuity in administrative action remains to be settled. The observed episodic cycle of policies is not likely to ensure the successful implementation of the NPM principles. The anticipated effects of this course of action are (1) the transformation of the public sector into a professional entity capable of attracting and mobilizing a critical mass of expertise capable of supporting change in line with the NPM principles; (2) a clearer demarcation line between the area of political actions and the field of technical or administrative decisions; (3) a strategic management of human resources, (4) the institution of the fundamentals of the strategic governance envisioned by the CNRA, (5) the restoration of continuity in administrative actions, and (6) the bridging of the structural gap depicted as a dichotomized structure throughout this article.

Finally, the sixth key observation stems from the ontological nature or the scope of the constitutive impact of the NPM principles. The historical context of emergence and implementation of those principles indicates that they are often embedded in voluntary programs of institutional change. (David, 2009; Brinkerhoff, 1987). As a result, policy makers must be convinced of their institutional power and make a conscious decision to adopt a new approach to governance. Thus, it is fair to conclude that an irresponsive organization is not functional (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). The Haitian administrative system exhibits a similar dysfunctionality in its fabric. The substantiating data are based on the episodic production and keeping of the official rules without an undeviating experimentation which could secure its functionality and its openness as an organized system. In other words, the production of new references, reflecting more or less the NPM's principles, did not appear to exhibit the quest for improvement resulting from a symbiotic interaction between the administration system and the public service consumers. Instead, three trends emerge from what has been described as an everlasting cycle of cosmetic management (Michel, 2000): (1) the formulated strategies are mostly contextual and sporadic responses to international obligations; (2) they display a certain level of strategic awareness that suffers from continual disruptions; and (3) a lack of practical skills needed for the implementation stage.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

This article has reported the findings of a three stage study on the extent to which the New Public Management could be implemented within the Haitian administrative system. It has provided a better understanding of that system which displays

both a positive basis for change and huge grounds for resistance. In spite of its acknowledged power to shift managerial paradigms from the traditional to the modern, NPM may face serious idiosyncratic challenges in the managerial context of the Haitian governance. Findings on the two fronts recommend, among other observations, six key broad categories of important factors or potential hurdles to be dealt with in the process of adapting the NPM's principles to the Haitian case – sketching out the applicability of NPM in that specific context.

Furthermore, this profile allows for the conclusion that the applicability of those principles in this context must overcome some serious political and technical hurdles. Four of such major barriers are worth mentioning. The first barrier or hurdle is the lack of strategic awareness of decision-makers at central government level. This type of awareness is expected to enlighten policy actors and encourage them to embrace a strategic approach to managing public services. This hurdle is linked to the challenge of cultural change among all stakeholders and decision makers. By extension, it also involves actors from the periphery whose formation may turn out to be a choking point. A second hurdle refers to the administrative discontinuity. The third barrier relates to the issue of scarce capacity in terms of human resources, covering technical capacity, availability and the tendency for personal interests to be pursued in the process of striving for institutional goals. A final hurdle relates to the historical legitimacy of the state which has been discussed above. The national management model has historically been shaped by the personality and preferences of the leader. The delegitimization of the chief causes the state he represents to experience the same fate, as the citizens withdraw their consent or acceptance. In such a context, de-personalizing power through institutionalization becomes a risky but necessary endeavor if the NPM principles are to be implemented effectively.

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