

The Idea of Management in Government: Evolution of the Concepts and Implications for Reform

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Abstract

Debates about public-private similarity and dissimilarity go on due to “isomorphic mimicry” and unexpectedly lower results with management in government or public sector reforms. The fundamental concern about the government globally is how to make government work better for citizens more effectively, efficiently and economically while creating more value for the public. The core objective of this article is to develop a theoretical proposition of the “Management in Government” (MIG) discourse in a contemporary context by discussing its roots, evolution and convergence with modern management. To achieve this objective, we comprehensively followed and reviewed the literature focused on the emergence and evolution of “managerial effectiveness” and “operational efficiency” through historical analysis. This is important because the quality of reforms in government both in terms of design, implementation, and success, depends largely on this proposition and alignment. If reforms are to work, the theoretical foundation of management in government has to be based on the belief that “management in government” can be improved, despite debates around the concepts and constructs. Thus theoretically, it has become imperative that “management in government” is discussed as a functional discipline within management having customized the systems, processes, and mechanism, including people management.

Keywords

Government, governance, public administration and management, public sector reforms, management in government

Introduction

This is a conceptual review paper centering on management in government - the root and evolution of the discourse around the concept. Fundamental concern on the ground is how to make government work better for citizens more effectively, efficiently and economically while creating more value for public. The core objective of this article is to provide an analysis of an issue –

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which may also be called an integrative review (Snyder, 2019) – and to develop a theoretical proposition of the Management in Government (MIG) discourse in the contemporary Public Sector Reforms (PSR) context. This is important because the quality of reforms in government both in terms of design, implementation and success depends largely on that proposition and alignment (Khaled, 2011). At the deeper level, when it comes to developing a theory of MIG, generally recognized as “public administration” and/or “public management” (PAM), critical questions arise regarding the boundaries of “public” the boundaries of “management” and the appropriate epistemological frameworks or paradigms (Ferlie, Lynn, & Pollitt, 2005). These questions originate due to “isomorphic mimicry” and unexpectedly lower results with MIG or PSR (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2013) despite the unanimous goal of making government work better.

The reasons are a few if broadly categorized. Many policies turn out as friendly fires that are worse than no intervention at all (Sen, 2005; Khan, 2010). Also, there is a natural preference for QWERTY (type layout of a keyboard) meaning bias for status quo where managers resist any change to their status (Jahan, 2006). This is also called “institutional sclerosis,” a term borrowed from medical jargon sclerosis (hardening of tissues and other anatomical features), which means “inflexibility or hardening of institutions” in responding to changes (Olson, 2008). Bureaucratic organizations, systems and personalities, including a preference for rules and alienation create a resistant bureaucracy (Bozeman & Rainey, 1998). At the operational level, the lag framework identifying five types of lags (Gordon, 1981) as mentioned in Khan (2010) in the public sector is interestingly very similar to a framework called SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1988) that is widely used to explain “service quality gap in customer satisfaction” in the private sector.

Therefore, there is an ample evidence of reform failure despite sophisticated theoretical refinement. In fact, there is little explicit evidence of what works in public sector management and reforms (World Bank, 2011). All are on watch what really works – why and how, or do not work. Therefore, the theoretical refinement of MIG remained a continual process. This article falls in line with that continuity.

To review the historical evolution of the “management idea” in public sector or government, we anchored in authoritative and integrative sources like the Oxford Handbook of Public Management and Sage Handbook of Public Administration. From there, we got the hints and links of other literature which dealt with this particular subject matter of MIG. Also, we consulted a number of textbooks and reference books that captured the subject matter in an organized body of knowledge (BOK). The purpose of an integrative review is to assess, critique and synthesize the literature on a research topic in a way that enables new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to emerge (Torraco, 2005) or in the case of mature topics, the purpose is to overview the knowledge base, re-conceptualize and to expand on the theoretical foundation of the specific topic as it develops (Snyder, 2019).

Any theoretically comprehensive discussion of MIG/PAM is to start with “governance” which has become an ontological basis of multifaceted discussion around good governance where the government is just one actor along with citizen groups, social groups, media, international actors and others. So, in the following section, we start with governance as a concept. Then we analyze the concepts like administration, management, along with a brief historical review of the field and discourse. Finally, the paper is concluded with the implications for such theoretical analysis and refinement.

Governance and Government

Governance is a much-talked-about phenomenon of the last three to four decades and has undergone significant constructions and deconstructions through continued discussions, emphasizing the multi-stake and multi-institutional interconnectedness of the actors in governance, from both positivistic and normative perspectives.

In the mid-1970s, Cleveland (1972) used the phrase to state that the people wanted “less government” and “more governance.” Later for the practitioners and academics, the catchword governance has become a virtual synonym for public management and public administration (Federickson, Smith, Larimer, & Licari, 2015).

“Governance” – as defined by Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill (2001) as the “regimes, laws, rules, judicial decisions and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe and enable the provision of publicly supported goals and services” – holds a strong interest for public administration scholars. Paproski (1993) explains the concept of governance as the process of interaction between the public sector and the various actors or groups of actors in “civil society.”

Some discourses focused on the “steering” characteristics of governance as distinct from the government (Peters & Pierre, 2000). Stoker (1998) noted that governance involves establishing rules for a community. Schacter (2000) draws upon the definition developed by the Institute of Governance, which sees governance as the art of steering societies and organizations. On the other hand, Kettl (2002) describes governance as “a way of describing the links between government and its broader environment.”

According to Hope (2002), governance is the exercise of a number of factors including political accountability, bureaucratic transparency, freedom of association and participation, a predictable legal framework and so on, for the development of pluralistic forces including civil society and capacity development. Governance occurs through interactions among structures, processes and traditions.

The World Governance Index states that governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised and it

² <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home>

“includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies” (World Bank, 2011). The United Nations Development Program identified core characteristics of good governance being participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, gender equality, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, strategic vision, non-discrimination and inclusiveness, and identified three stakeholders – the state, the private sector and civil society. A synoptic review of governance concepts identifies the state, political institutions, civil society, and the market as the institutions of development of governance (UNDP 2011; Zafarullah & Huque, 2006).

So, it can be said in line with UNESCO (2006) report presenting some basic definitions that the term governance is rather “an organizing concept” presenting a shift from the more bureaucratic state to a less bureaucratic or administrative, less hierarchical, and less centralized, more open, more accountable, more transparent, more performance-oriented, and more citizen-oriented state.

Similarly, with more emphasis on governance, “the administrative state” is now the “third party” government, outsourced, less bureaucratic, less hierarchical and less reliant on central authority, and accountability is increasingly about performance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, & Licari, 2015).

Governance as Networks and Participatory Democracy

Since governance involves multi-stake and multi-institutional interconnectedness of the actors, both from positivistic and normative perspectives, “networks” have received sustained attention in modern organization theory, as well as in public management where governance relates to a complex network of actors.

Ferlie, Lynn, and Pollitt (2005) explained that society is an increasingly diverse, complex and fragmented entity. Therefore, many theorists suggest that governance cannot be accomplished by any single institution, that is, the state requires the coordination of public, private and non-profit sectors. What once was the preserve of government is now the function of highly complex networks of organizations. Coordination in these networks is based on equality and participation (Chisholm, 1989). Theorists in the Netherlands and Scandinavia see government as only one kind of actor in a field containing many other institutions with some degree of autonomy (Newman, 2001; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000)

All these mean greater democratic participations. In administration, as in politics, democracy requires constant defense against bureaucratization, the machinations of special interests or the tyranny of the majority. But that has its own cost and must be balanced against the bearing capacity of democracy (Kariel, 1966). In general, more democracy is better than less, and more participation is better than less. The default option should be thus to provide opportunities for participation to the desired extent, and unless other considerations render it impractical.

Public management, obviously is tasked with implementing public policy and delivering government services as effectively and efficiently as possible. A public management worthy of trust must produce outcomes that are both efficient and democratic. (DeLeon, 1990; 2005; DeLeon & Denhardt, 2000).

Hence, again, it has become a widely accepted fact that ultimately the quality of governance will depend on the interactions and smooth inter-workings among all these actors in the network - state, civil society, private sector, social sector and various other interest groups.

Good Enough Governance: The Paradox of Governance-Development Relationship

The basic premise throughout the last decades of the last century was that good governance and institutions will lead the “wealth of nations” through modern economic “development stages.” This seems fine in the case of “Now Developed Countries” which took years to build the modern civilized institutions (Khan, 2010). However, the paradox starts when we find evidence that growth and development are still possible without fully developed institutions and relatively low performance in “governance” composite indicators (China, India, Bangladesh, and some African countries, for example).

One argument goes too far extent that good governance does not necessarily lead to economic development; rather, the other way round-economic development stimulates demand for governance reforms (Chang, 2002) – South East Asian Countries (ASEAN countries) or Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), for example. They experienced development first and fast, then they gained in governance.

In the race for good governance, as prescribed by major donors, some developing countries went far beyond the limited capacity of their institutions. When this is the case, the inevitable consequence is isomorphic mimicry where the organization “looks like it is in form,” but it does not work “as function” (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2013). So, some suggest “Good Enough Governance” – a condition of minimally acceptable government – may do in place of “Good Governance” (Grindle, 2004). It means that development may take place without full good governance with “a few major” reforms and “some” key institutions in place.

Back to the main discussion, we are not going into details of this debate of government and development at this point. In summary, it can be said that governance or good governance is a much broader concept where it is expected that all stakeholders – government, citizens, business and other organizations and groups – will work in harmony and collaboration under certain rules, regulations and norms. Among all these, “government” is a major actor in the governance eco-system. Good MIG is a normative or ideal goal of government, at all levels, for value for citizens. Keeping on track, we now move on to analyzing the public administration and management (PAM), recognized as one of the most important factors in the theory of government.

Management in Government: Roots, Paradigms, and Evolution

While governance has many components, “government” is a key one, and the idea of MIG or public administration (PAM) has become a distinct discourse in the academic and practicing world. Here, the government comes from public administration, and management comes from business administration. So, if it is a matter of applicability of MIG as a sector, it would be useful to have an in-depth review of traditional public administration, and how it embraced or integrated more “management” ideas and concepts.

Oxford Handbook on the subject matter of “public management” states four distinctive starting roots in the history of “public administration,” as separate from political science (Ferlie, Lynn, & Pollitt, 2005). For example, the most recent one lies in the 1970s in America, in the curriculums and research of the new public policy or management (NPM) schools in Europe, in efficiency-driven managerial reforms originating in Great Britain and New Zealand (NPM root). Secondly, the field has its roots in the call for modern politics/administration dichotomy or scientific study of the modern administrative state (Wilson, 1887; Goodnow, 1900) beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thirdly, the origins are also to be found in the systematic study and practice of cameralism and Staatswissenschaften beginning in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany and Austria. Also, the field is rooted in early appearances of bureaucratic government and of administrative doctrines and “best practices” in ancient China and in medieval regimes in the Orient and the Occident.

Therefore, “managing the affairs of government” as an area of discourse, can be traced back to early recorded civilizations like Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Chinese and Indian civilization. Ancient China is known to have developed the first meritocratic system of civil service. Fast forward, later we see organized MIG bureaucracy at work in Europe, like in Prussia, Germany and in British colonial administration, ICS (Indian Civil Service) being one of the most famous in the world. However, we will focus on the emergence of modern public administration as an organized discipline, at the turn of the 20th century, when it took its modern shape, particularly in the USA, but also in the UK, and subsequently in the developing countries MIG/PAM reforms and initiatives.

When we talk about the subject matter of MIG/PAM, different words are found in the discourse: Public Administration, Civil Administration, Civil Service, New Public Administration, Public Management, New Public Management, Public Sector Management, Open Government, Digital and Electronic Government. Over the years, the focus shifted due to the emergence of new issues and problems, and scholars re-conceptualized public administration accordingly.

Frederickson (1980) proposed New Public Administration (NPA), Hood (1991) identified the characteristics of New Public Management (NPM), Moore (1995) highlighted strategic MIG for creating public values in a public value model, while others (Dunleavy, Margetts, Tinkler, & Bastow, 2006)

enthusiastically predicted the advent of Digital Era Governance (DEG or E-Government). These are understood if seen from a historical point of view, how and when the paradigm shifted.

Paradigm Shifts, Management Debate and Evolution

The history of MIG discourse, known academically as “public administration,” can be divided into several “paradigms” in its evolution (Henry, 2009):

- Paradigm 1: The Politics/Administration Dichotomy, 1900 – 1926
- Paradigm 2: Principles of Public Administration, 1927-1937
- Paradigm 3: Public Administration as Political Science (back to), 1950-1970
- Paradigm 4: Public Administration as Management and NPM, 1950 - 1970
- Paradigm 5: Public Administration as Public Administration and New Public Administration: 1970 – Present
- Paradigm 6: Governance, 1990- Present

Woodrow Wilson, PhD, an academic turned politician who later became 28th president of the United States, is attributed to be the father of modern Public Administration. Wilson (1887) posited “one unambiguous thesis” that Public Administration is worth studying, as “managing state affairs.” The politics/administration dichotomy was also contended by Goodnow (1900) as two distinct functions of government – Politics and Administration.

Once the Politics/Administration Dichotomy is well established, scholars attempted to develop a body of administrative discipline and principles, which came into reality with the first textbooks (White, 1926; Willoughby, 1927). Soon arrived POSDCORB (Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting) from Gulick and Urwick (1937), an aide of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, while they were working on improving the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of government. Interestingly, POSDCORB is equally shared in the history of management thought in business and served as the predecessor of the modern-day business management framework of POLC (planning, organizing, leading, controlling). In the meantime, referring to Taylor’s Scientific Management and Fayol’s General Principles of Management became common in MIG/PAM.

In parallel to principles of administration or management, both in public and private sector, arguments against management principles also started to gain theoretical ground through Chester Barnard’s *The Functions of the Executive* (1938) leading to Herbert Simon’s *Administrative Behavior* (1946). Scholars like Dahl (1947) and Waldo (1948; 1979) also questioned managerial principles. These scholars argued that, for most principles, one could find an equally plausible and acceptable contradictory principle.

Because of these debates and counter-arguments, there had been a tendency to ignore this newly emerged discipline of MIG/PAM in its motherly and vast political science departments. But as a reality, running or managing government affairs were so distinct from traditional political science that MIG needed

academic legitimacy anyway. And so, as Henry (2009) put it succinctly, “public administrationists” among the “political scientists” searched for an alternative anchor point and they found it in management, sometimes called administrative science or generic management. They believed that a body of knowledge – operation research, statistics, economics, accounting, organization theory – exists that is common to the fields of administration (Perry & Kraemer, 1983). New Public Management (NPM) epitomizes this line of thought that transplanted concepts like performance, objective, target, indicators and strategy in the public sector, drawing from business management (Ferlie, Pettigrew, Ashburner, & Fitzgerald, 1996; Pollitt & Boukaert, 2000). Thus, NPM formed the intellectual basis of modern-day public sector management or public management across the countries and donors.

On the other hand, while “arguments against principles of administration” hid it back to “political science,” there came in the first Minnowbrook Conference in 1968 in the USA, under the patronage of Dwight Waldo (O’Leary, Van Slyke, & Kim, 2011), on New Public Administration (NPA). Public administration discipline reemerged as Public Administration, as an autonomous field of study and practice, breaking out from both political science and business management (Henry, 2009). In 1970, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) was founded and became the professional umbrella for discussing MIG affairs, among other issues of public administration. It revealed a growing preference for a normative theory which was rather a sign of independence from the business-like management since management always has been technical rather than normative.

After the 1980s, no discussion in public management or MIG can start without mentioning governance as the world of MIG thought moved towards governance, or configuration of laws, policies, organizations, institutions, cooperative arrangements and arrangements that controls citizen and deliver public benefits. A unique analysis (Hill & Lynn, 2004) of more than 800 empirical studies, covering a range of disciplines, found a general shifting away from “hierarchical government” to more of “horizontal governing.” Thus, the emergence of governance is found to be amply documented.

Different Approaches and Perspectives of MIG (Public Administration)

Broadly speaking, when MIG is concerned, the discourse is divided into political science and public administration. While the former is more focused on formation and legality of government, the latter is concerned with structure and mechanism of civil service and administration. Again, within the public administration, some are more focused on “public” administration, while others are embracing “management” in the “administration” of government as “management” pressure for better citizen service is mounting from the stakeholders.

Rosenbloom (1998) presented public administration as the combination of three approaches which is pretty well-fitting. Those are Managerial approach

(including the New Public Management or NPM), Political approach and Legal approach

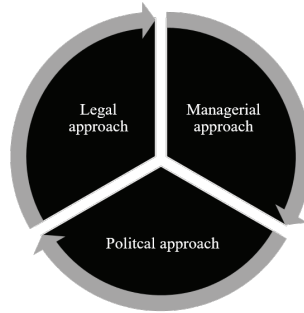


Figure 1. Approaches and Perspectives of MIG

Source: Rosenbloom (1998).

The first one is viewed as a managerial endeavor, similar to practices in the private sector. The “managerial approach” has two subsets, traditional (or orthodox) public management and contemporary reform-oriented new public management (NPM). The second one, stressing the “publicness” of public administration, has emphasized its political aspects. Still, the third one, noting the importance of sovereignty, constitutions and regulation in public administration, has viewed it as a distinctly legal matter.

Each of these approaches tends to stress different values and procedural and structural arrangements for the operation of public administration; each views the individual citizen differently.

Public Management as Structure, Craft and Institution

Public management, when it is called so or interchangeably with public administration, has been analyzed from three dimensions, as structure, as craft and as an institution in “Public Management” chapter of Sage Handbook of Public Administration (Lynn, 2011; Pierre & Peters, 2003).

Public Management as structure deals with formal means and structure of government - overseeing the exercise of state authority by public managers, involving two interrelated elements, lawful delegation of authority and external control over the exercise of delegated authority. Public Management as “institution” holds that public management becomes a primary institution for preserving the balance between the state's capacity to affect the public interest and the citizen's power to hold officeholders accountable. Public Management as craft saw the increasing emphasis placed on “crafts” practiced by specific individuals in specific managerial roles.

Craft movement, most closely aligned with “management,” gained ground with *The Functions of the Executive* (Barnard, 1938), which laid the groundwork for new perspectives of performance and managerial responsibility like *Management in the Public Service* (Millet, 1954) and *Administrative Behavior* (Simon, 1946; 1976).

The newer literature within the craft perspective is based on case studies as seen in Graham Allison, who asserted that public management as a field of knowledge should start from problems faced by practicing public managers (Allison, 1979). Among the numerous examples of this perspective, Heymann's (1987) *The Politics of Public Management*, Reich's (1990) *Public Management in a Democratic Society*, Moore's (1995) *Creating Public Value*, Behn's (2009) *Leadership Counts* are representative.

Light's (1998) *Sustaining Innovation* and Bardach's *Getting Agencies to Work Together* (1998) attempted to deduce best practices from closely observed successful stories. Other contributions -such as Cohen and Eimicke's *The New Effective Public Manager* (1995) and Haass's *The Bureaucratic Entrepreneur* (1999) - feature numerous prescriptions and principles based on the experiences and reflections of effective practitioners. Thus, the conviction that “management counts” or “management matters” made the “craft” literature heavy with prescriptions (Lynn, 1996).

Study of Management in Government: Public-Private Debate and Convergence

In today's academia, Political science and Economic Sciences are two major disciplinary umbrellas in the social science division. While Political Science had been established as a mother discipline from much earlier times, Public Administration became a distinctive new sub-discipline in political science in the late nineteenth and early 20th century, and later became established as a separate entity around the universities. On the other hand, Economic Sciences became an established discipline after Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Business Administration came out of industrial economics and became established in the early 20th century, as organized industry needed trained “managers.”

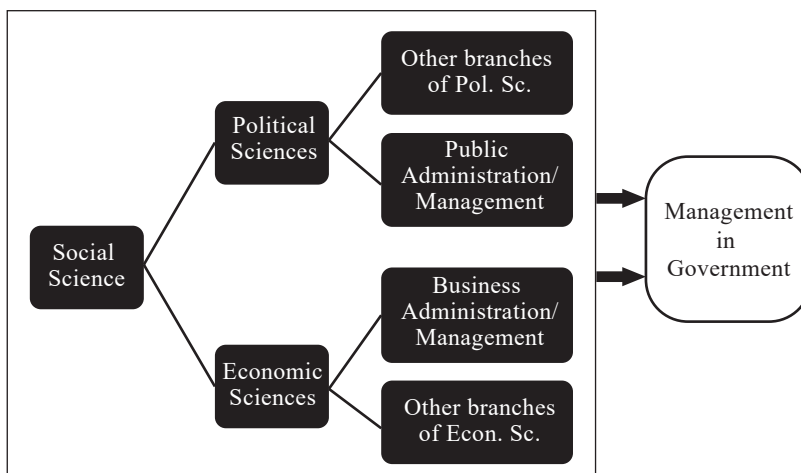


Figure 2. Disciplinary positioning of MIG

Source: The author.

So, Public Administration is a relatively new discipline originating from political science, whereas, Business Administration also originated almost at the same time, from economic science. As of now, both Public Administration and Business Administration are established disciplines of social sciences.

Interestingly, on the one hand, public administration has produced an established discourse of “management” in government, among many other facets of government; on the other hand, business administration has considerable discourses on “universality of management” in different sectors and scopes, including public sector or government. Some regarded public management as synonymous with public administration (Lynn, 1996; 2003) without any major theoretical challenge when it comes to MIG (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). In practice, however, as Flynn (2007) mentioned, both activities – administration (following rules) and management (using discretion) - occur in public services or government.

Applicability in Public-Private Debate: Continuation and Convergence

Despite the dominance of “craft” discourse as analyzed in the sections above, the debate continued whether public management or MIG and private management or management in business (MIB) can be studied from the same ontological and epistemological perspectives. As early as in 1940, as evident in the Finer-Friedrich debate, some argued that public managers should be subject to minute legislative control while some countered that the best means for ensuring that public managers are responsive to the citizens, is the professionalism of the manager (Stewart, 1985). However, White (1926), who wrote the first text on public administration, argued that the study of administration should start from the base of management rather than the foundation of public law. Interestingly, the pioneers of administrative science and business management, like Taylor, Fayol, Gulick, Urwick, Gantt, Galbraith, Chester Bernard and Simon are equally featured in the same way in public administration textbooks in the contextual discussion of the historical evolution of the discipline.

At the turn of the 20th century, whereas the management of business enterprises got the name of Business Administration, management of government affairs got the name of Public Administration. As a matter of fact, pioneers of management in business are also equally shared as organization theorists in MIG as evident in twentieth-century literature.

On one side, scholars and practitioners want to emphasize the similarity of management as an idea and thrust. On the other extreme, some want to emphasize the dissimilarity of organizational ownership, structures, stakeholders and legal context. They argued that public managers should use discretionary power, uphold freedom, justice and the public interest’ with the necessary professionalism, dedication, self-esteem and legitimacy to act as the constitutional center of gravity, and resist any implementation of policies contradicting these universal values (Rohr, 1986; Denhardt 1993; Wamsley, 1990; Frederickson, 1997).

Graham T Allison stressed the need for a distinct “public management knowledge” body, though public management can learn from private (business) management (Allison, 1979). The basic elements of the argument that public and private management are “fundamentally unlike” in all important respects and the extent of the differences between the two sectors has been well documented empirically (Rainey, 1997).

When the scholars and practitioners want to stress the differences between public sector (government) and private sector (business organizations), they emphasize matters like ownership, various interest groups, greater accountability to internal and external public, and procedural steps. Public Management, if it is overemphasized to be different, then actually it implies that it is accountable to the ruling party, which is in turn accountable to the electorates or constituencies; that public management is to be more open to scrutiny by media and general citizenry in matters of hiring, firing, and managing the people, and what they do.

To citizens, it does not matter. People, as users of services or workers, are not concerned about public or private; they are more directly concerned with quality and accessibility of services as users and income, and security as workers (Flynn, 2007). So, in each country, MIG is important and relevant to serve citizens by managing the total structure and regulations of the state machinery under the scope of public sector.

Despite the difference in many dimensions, the prevailing consensus among scholars and experts on management holds that the distinction of private and public is not worth much. Many scholars have argued that the “sectors” involve such vastly diverse sets of management settings that distinctions such as public, private and non-profit confuse and mislead us. In addition, over the years, major organization theorists have proclaimed that public and private management show more similarities than differences (Simon, 1976; 1995; 1998).

Across the private and public, in varied organizations, managers face common challenges such as leading, motivating, and decision making. So, there is a need to build a general, broadly applicable body of theory, and not one specific to such categories as public, private or non-profit. That is why as Daft (2004) mentioned that texts on organizations and management often include examples and cases drawn from all sectors – business, government and non-profits – for management learning. A worldwide trend of privatizing governmental activities and governmental-owned enterprises has proceeded on the premise that the public organizations operate less effectively and efficiently, and that privatizing them will remedy their malaise. Said that well-designed comparisons of public versus private management can contribute to the analysis of a variety of topics in management (Rainey & Chun, 2005).

Conclusion and Implications for Reform

The contribution of the paper to the existing PSR reforms discourse can be called as strengthening the argument for reforms in government from a

managerial perspective despite the debates and criticism of NPM approach. While the NPM, a private sector management motivated approach, needs to accommodate the sectoral differences of government, compared with private sector, the original essence of “management” holds the same, as objective-oriented, effective and efficient. If reforms have to work, the theoretical foundation of MIG has to be based on the belief that MIG can be improved despite debates around the concepts and constructs. The core interest of public administration and management is to manage the government's business of satisfying the needs of its citizens. That means, we mean management in the sense of being objective-oriented, customer-oriented (Drucker, 1995) or public value-oriented (more value for citizens). So, it is better to remain open to discuss “management” in “public administration” and “government” in “business administration.” Thus, a vibrant discipline can build up – MIG.

Therefore, we argue that these “differences” between private and public should not be used as an excuse for inefficiency, ineffectiveness or waste – that is apparently prevalent in government, particularly in developing countries and weak governments. We may resort to what Osborne and Gaebler (1992) suggested that asking for “entrepreneurial” or “better government” is less controversial than “good governance.” Thus, our interest lies in the discipline of management (Khaled, 2017), regardless of private or public, in the sense of managing for effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability, growth and value for citizens. That means, how government can (they should) become more efficient and effective regardless of the size and scope of government as agreed by the political offices or legislative branch of the government, that is the main concern.

Public administration is not business administration, but, strictly speaking, the business of public administration is managing the business and operations of government – doing more with less. The business and operations of government include, most importantly, understanding citizen needs and serving the citizens of the state effectively and efficiently. So, theoretically, it has become imperative that MIG is discussed as a functional discipline within management having customized the systems, processes and mechanism, including people management.

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