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From New Public Management to Public Sector Management Reforms during the pandemic. The effects of Covid-19 on public management reforms and effectiveness

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Abstract. The current paper presents some aspects and criticisms from the theoretical literature concerning the New Public Management (NPM). The article also critically examines whether the NPM model is appropriate and the drivers that affected its efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector especially in Greece, during the current pandemic. The research concluded that the process of managerial reform and the specific criteria in order to evaluate NPM's effectiveness are not completed yet and that there are some key barriers such as the statist perception of citizens and politicians, the corruption of public, the fragmented organizational structures, the resistance to change that hinder the success of change and of NPM's effective implementation in public sector. However, Covid-19 was a situation that helped many aspects of NPM such as digitalization, digital transformation, e-governance etc. to effectively be introduced and implemented in public governance of Greek organisations.

Keywords. new public management, management reforms, public sector reforms

1. Introduction

The effects of Covid-19 on public management are unquestionable, the opinions on whether or not the NPM tools worked are still ambiguous, but the promotion of digital transformation, the need for proper functioning in a long-term crisis, the need for data, for coordination and cooperation but also to enhance public confidence are common findings and factors for a broad and modern administrative reform.

Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) refer to the term of New Public Management as “a revolution” rather than radical changes in bureaucracy and services and define it as “a cluster of ideas and practices (including reinvention and neomanagerialism) that seek, at their core, to use private sector and business approaches in the public sector». According to Indahsari and Raharja (2020) New Public Management (NPM) is considered as “an approach in public administration that applies knowledge and experience gained in the world of management and other disciplines to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service performance in modern bureaucracies”. A first element that arises from these definitions is that new public management focuses on public sector management methods and techniques which are mainly performance-oriented and not policy-oriented. So, NPM

includes techniques and practices which have their roots to the private sector, and they are increasingly seen as a global phenomenon of reforms with emphasis from traditional public administration to public management. Public sector reform has been a common experience around the world despite its various forms (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Usually as scholars and professionals we refer to the reforms of the last decades as "new public management" (NPM), which, for Hood (1991), was an exemplary shift from the traditional model of public administration.

During this time several countries became role models for the NPM, notably New Zealand and Australia, which underwent significant public sector change to escape the bureaucratic example of public administration. More recently, however, "cracks" have emerged and the search for a new way of thinking and applying the practice of public administration has begun, in part to address NPM's alleged weaknesses. In the late 20th century, a multi-system public administration model was consistently integrated into many countries, reflecting the outcome of a series of reforms aimed at cutting off the traditional model of public administration supported by the Weber bureaucracy (1946), Wilson's (1887) and a scientific management model of Taylor's work organization (1911). At least in part, the NPM was a reaction to the perceived weaknesses of the traditional bureaucratic example of public administration (O'Flynn, 2005; Stoker, 2006) and included a critique of monopolistic forms of service and an argument for a wider range of service providers and a more market-oriented management approach (Stoker, 2006). The values of the new public administration soon expanded, as it became clear that a successful reform would have to include more economic parameters. The term "governance" is used to indicate the complexity of reform processes and to emphasize the role of the people. The two main values they pointed out are "legality" and "accountability". In addition, emphasis was placed on the competence to make rational decisions and their proper implementation, as well as on "respect for the law and human rights".

These reforms are characterized by various kinds of decentralization of management within public organizations, including the creation of autonomous bodies and decentralization of budgets and financial control. There is also an increasing market involvement and competition in the provision of public services (e.g. mechanisms), as so as an emphasis in performance, outputs and customer orientation. So, we can see that NPM reforms combine economic, social, political and technological factors. A common feature of the countries that adopted the NPM is the previous experience of economic and fiscal crises, which brought the need for efficiency and for finding ways to reduce the cost of providing public services. New Public Management (NPM) reforms according to Atreya and Armstrong (2002) are being implemented both in developed and developing countries as a response to economic pressures and the changing demands of societies (Atreya & Armstrong, 2002). The research findings of Sriram, Misomnai, Metasuttirat & Rajphaetyakhom (2019) showed that New Public Management's philosophy and foundation focuses on empirical and logical positivist. Furthermore, the elements of NPM included a catalytic, community-owned, competitive, mission-driven, result-oriented, customer-driven, privatized, anticipatory, decentralized, and market-oriented government. Most scholars conclude in a common definition of NPM which is the "attempt to implement management ideas from business and private sector into the public services" (Haynes, 2003; Pollitt, 1993).

Consequently, NPM has a series of recognizable core characteristics, or themes (Lodge & Gill, 2011). The public sector is facing an increasingly urgent challenge today. There is a great need to find ways and put the measures for its reform in depth with long-

term results. These reforms depend on a newly structured public administration to complete them. The present study analyzes the most important reform trends with main emphasis on NPM and its consequences as so as on the factors that influenced them, ending from the traditional system of government to the new public administration and management and to the creation of public value (Xanthopoulou, 2019; Xanthopoulou, 2020; Xanthopoulou & Plimakis, 2021). Furthermore, a short discussion on more contemporary reforms is included, mainly focused on the digital transformation of the public sector and the entrance of new technologies as an answer to the current pandemic.

2. Contemporary reforms. The entrance of private sector for public value creation

Economic activity in Greece is characterized by the operation of public enterprises, organizations and services, units of strategic importance for economic and social development. A necessary condition for their proper operation is the creation of a modern and effective system of administration and management, within the countries of Western Europe, adapted to the Greek culture and practice and supported by capable people (executives) capable and, above all, scientifically trained and Efficiently. The Greek government's business activities cover a wide range of private goods, resulting in similarities between public and private companies. Different goals and objectives and ownership are the elements that differentiate the public from the private economic units. More specifically, the main purpose of private companies is to maximize profits, while at the same time making public the maximization of the social welfare function. Thus, we can see a first distinction between public and private goods. In addition, the boundaries between the public and private sectors are becoming even more distinct due to the increasing involvement of private and non-governmental organizations in matters of public administration and public policy. A typical example is private-public partnerships, where the public sector, for example, outsources specific services. In addition, the definition of the public sector varies from country to country. In Western democracies, there are also differences related to methods of intervention and policy areas. The discussion of the different types of capitalism emphasizes that in every social transformation the intervention of the state is different due to the differences in the history, culture and social capital of each country. The reform effort that began in the 1990s, known as the "New Public Management" is based on classical economic theories, and more specifically on the theory of individualism. It follows a liberal logic of liberalizing markets from government commitments and public sector reforms with increasing private sector involvement, as well as practices inspired by private companies. The key values that govern this regulatory trend are: "economy", "efficiency" and "effectiveness".

- *Economy*: One of the main reasons for the reform is the need to save resources and therefore the economy is one of the key values that govern any reform. The development of the welfare state in Western societies and the increase in its spending led to cost reduction strategies, especially in the 1990s, when economic pressures intensified. The finances, therefore, relate exclusively to the reduction of public sector expenditure.

- *Efficiency*: Efficiency is a value inspired by the private sector that concerns both public organizations as units and the public sector as a whole. One of the most classic definitions is that of Etzioni (1964), according to which the effectiveness of an organization depends first on the degree to which it achieves its goals and secondly on the resources it uses to produce the desired result. Thus, according to Etzioni (1964), profitability also includes the concept of efficiency (if the organization achieves its goals), but also the

concept of productivity (resources that an organization has to achieve its goals). McKean (1958) observes that the pursuit of profitability is equivalent to both increasing positive results and achieving goals, reducing negative impacts and reducing costs

- *Effectiveness*: Effectiveness is the third core value found in the reforms inspired by the New Public Administration. As can be seen from the previous definition, it is an element of effectiveness and focuses on whether a policy or program achieves its objectives.

The values of the New Public Management soon expanded, as it became clear that a successful reform would have to include more financial parameters. The term "governance" is used to denote the complexity of reform processes and to emphasize the role of the people. Two key values they pointed out are "legitimacy" and "accountability". In addition, emphasis was placed on the ability to make rational decisions and their proper implementation, as well as on respect for the law and human rights. The liberal values of the new public administration can be summarized as follows:

- *Legitimacy*: which refers to the democratic process and the right of the people to agree or disagree with the actions of the public state. Emphasis is placed on the existence of mechanisms that allow the government to be challenged.

- *Accountability*: directly related to legality. It refers to the responsibility of politicians and civil servants regarding their actions and the use of public resources. It is a symbol of "good governance" and is a vital condition for ensuring transparency.

In recent decades, we have seen four major reform trends:

- i. Market strengthening, including the partial or total privatization of selected public services and public enterprises, the adoption of private sector practices in the public sector
- ii. Strengthening the participation of civil servants in decision-making and empowering citizens
- iii. Regulatory reforms based on deregulation
- iv. Flexible governance that proposes the creation of more flexible structures that can respond to modern challenges more efficiently and quickly.

A key practice of administrative reform is decentralization, which can take various forms, such as political and / or administrative decentralization, territorial, competitive, internal or external decentralization, and horizontal or vertical decentralization. Other practices include the introduction of new forms of control, such as the establishment of independent authorities, evaluations, controls, the use of indicators and measurement in the public sector. Reforms are also being seen in human resource management through forms of flexibility, performance-based pay and decentralization. Finally, a modern practice is e-government, which uses information technology to improve governance as well as to enhance citizen participation in the democratic process. Public enterprises and organizations are the backbone of the economic system, as they produce goods and services that are necessary for the smooth operation of other sectors of the economy. Depending on the degree of participation and intervention (ownership) of the government, they are divided into:

- Public enterprises which are completely dependent on the government. Their main features are dependence on government agencies and relative financial independence.

- Public enterprises operating as public limited companies with 51% state ownership or semi-autonomous enterprises. They operate on the basis of private financial criteria, are financially accountable and are controlled by public holding companies. Their characteristic is flexibility and flexibility in decision making. Decisions on current

operational issues (production, procurement, recruitment and staff development) are taken by the company's management, while strategic planning, scheduling, pricing policies are taken by the Central Management.

-Public enterprises operating with full administrative autonomy or fully autonomous enterprises. They are fully financially independent, operate on the basis of private economic criteria and are governed by private law. Their main advantage is the flexibility and implementation of their decisions and their disadvantage lies in the fact that the public interest for which they were created is not protected.

The current socio-economic conditions, with special requirements and working relationships that increasingly occupy the human resources of public enterprises, lead to the need for clear decoding and exploration of specific concepts to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings within the unit environment. The in-depth, scientific (without rejecting the technocratic) analysis of the terms that support a rational and flexible system of critical situations and are a pillar of an anthropocentric view of things is a necessity and strengthens the profile of a person who believes in empowerment, lifelong learning self-management, give a qualitative dimension to the whole process. The keywords that give a different dimension to the performance of public administration executives are good governance, efficiency and cooperation.

3. The New Public Management- A critical review on its outcomes

The new revised administrative perspective in public administration deviates from the costly bureaucratic model that emphasized pyramid organization, linear cause-effect relationship, restrictive interpretation of rules, inputs and outputs, without worrying about output / results and shifts the interest in network management, responsibility, results and consultation with society and organizations (NGOs, private law organizations, citizens' associations, etc.). It is indicative that 6.8% of GDP in our country was devoted to bureaucracy when the EU average was 3.5%. Since 1990, the adoption of new public administration standards has been established. The first trend, mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom, refers to the integration of a package of measures that will keep the public administration in the majority of public services, privatize what is best done by the private sector or organizations, a transition from a single management system to a fragmented one, with an emphasis on specialization and the division of responsibilities. The transition from a public administration based on the application of the principle of bureaucracy in respect of rules, legality and procedure to a professional public administration that emphasizes flexibility, good use of public resources, quality and delivery is the focus of reform through modern management tools such as targeting, quality, performance monitoring through indicators, internal control, process redesign and digital management. Some researchers state that democracy requires bureaucracy, the rule of law, the legally sanctioned regulation of markets, the preservation of equity, and competent bureaucracies subject to control by statute and by judicial institutions as Kalimullah, Alam & Nour, (2012) write. For instance, Weber viewed a system of bureaucratic rule in the modern state as inescapable. For more than 30 years, New Public Management has been the most popular label for public sector reform (Reiter & Klenk, 2018), however, more than 15 years, this reform has also been heavily criticized. Specifically, there is a growing trend to consider the called post-New Public Management due to the failure of NPM. These waves of criticism have common elements in many aspects and differ only in terms of their main emphasis on the assumption that NPM is obsolete (Reiter & Klenk, 2018; Çolak, 2019).

Post-NPM considered as a post-NPM trend, is not the only concept that indicates the end of NPM (Reiter & Klenk, 2019), but it is closely related to other concepts, such as 'whole of-government', 'joined- up government', the 'Neo-Weberian state' or 'digital-era governance' (De Vries & Nemec, 2013; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), however these trends in reforms resulted a more complex and hybrid public administration (Lægreid, 2017). Lægreid (2017) states that Post-NPM is something more than an alternative to NPM. It complements the specialization, fragmentation, and marketization characteristic of NPM reforms with more coordination, centralization and collaborative capacity (Christensen & Laegreid, 2008). No one can claim a monopoly on NPM ideas. Osborne and Gaebler (1995), for example, focus on public sector reform and innovation. Pollitt (2001) added market orientation and the idea of shifting value from justice and security concerns to efficiency and individualism. NPM is not a well- defined idea (Wegrich, 2009). Van Thiel et.al (2007) also recognizes that NPM is not a unified set of ideas that have yielded enjoyable tools. NPM is a hybrid as noted by Christensen & Lægreid (2002) and is a term used to describe a combination of trends. This is why different (alternative) terms are used to describe the public reforms that took place in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s (Van de Walle & Hammerschmid, 2011).The United Kingdom has made a significant contribution to the development of the concept of the new public administration (NPM) and can be described as its "birthplace" (McLaughlin & Osborne, 2005). Indeed, the semantic article that coined the term NPM was a product of the British experience (Hood, 1991). The work of Osborne and Gaebler (1995) also contributed significantly to the elaboration of the concept, which soon spread to the United Nations, Australia and New Zealand, then to Scandinavia and mainland Europe. Financial institutions, such as the World Bank, also spread NPM principles, concluding that governance issues are vital to economic growth and investment expansion. The idea that policies that have worked in one political context can be transferred to others also seems to have been implemented here. This is known as "policy transfer" as defined by Dolowitz (2003) as "the process by which the policies and / or practices of one political system are fed and used in the policy-making space of another political system" (Dolowitz, 2003: 101). Researchers have challenged the idea that NPM is a completely new practice (Hood & Jackson, 1991), others have argued that its reforms are limited to a few countries and not globally (Flynn, 2002), while others have argued that NPM does not involve substantial changes in the day-to-day operation of the public sector (Pollitt, 2000).

The NPM therefore embodies a series of reforms inspired by the idea that private sector management techniques and market mechanisms increase public sector efficiency. Such NPM-type reforms include, for example, quantification, introduction of performance management systems, increase of civil servants' accountability, introduction of public sector purchasing mechanisms, introduction of quality management techniques, among others (Maesschalck, 2004). Despite the use of the NPM model in many reforms, the term still lacks conceptual clarity. It was originally a term used to describe public sector developments in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy (Barzelay, 2002). The NPM has its theoretical foundations in two schools of thought, namely the theory of public choice and the role of management. The combination of the two elements has potential contradictions in public choice theorists who support market forces and accountability, as opposed to emphasizing greater autonomy for managers. A key component of the New Public Governance model is Performance Management and has become a central and critical issue for political leaders and public and private sector managers (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008;

Larbi, 2006; Mupazvirih, 2003; Radin, 2006). With the support of international organizations and other advocates, until the mid-1990s, the NPM became the dominant model in public administration (Cejudo, 2008). However, its implementation in developing countries remained unpublished. A concern in mainly developing countries was that public sector reforms could lead to unfair social consequences, a view expressed by several authors (Bale & Dale, 1998; Batley, 1999; Kiggundu, 1998; Manning, 2001).

Governments have limited resources, which require reliable and accurate information to make the best use of them. Evaluation is one of the most important tools for gathering relevant information; however the purpose of evaluation varies between different countries / organizations. The important goals set by the OECD (1999) are to improve decision-making by policy makers, to allocate resources and capital more efficiently, and to strengthen public policy accountability. Evaluating the government reform program is a complex task due to the problems associated with setting reform goals, the methodological limitations in measuring the results of the reform, and the problems associated with data collection and interpretation. The objectives of public reforms are mainly expressed in qualitative terms as opposed to private sector reforms which are mainly expressed in quantitative terms. Another problem with public reform is that we cannot create an effective cause-and-effect relationship because different variables are involved together in a reform process (Boston 2000, OECD 1999; Savoie, 2006). Other researchers argue that convergence between the private and public sectors is not a realistic scenario (Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010), while others such as Hunt (2020) report that collaborating with private providers is the key to fighting pandemics, as in case of the Australian Government (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020). Similarly, we point out that the transformation of public infrastructure and services, for example through partnerships with the private sector (PPPs), has successfully dealt with the failures of government projects, controls, financial crisis resistance, fiscal austerity, etc. (Whiteside, 2020). NPM is based on a concept of service, decentralization and clear assignment of roles to managers. This could lead to situations where decentralization leads to a form of concentration by public administrators. Kanfo (2020) in his article, shares an interesting view that these ideas were translated for business studies and public administration, in order to radically change both fields and "become more scientific" (Kanfo, 2020). For others (Pollitt, 1990; Armstrong, 1998; Painter, 2005; Cheung & Lee, 1995), NPM very simply describes the nature of the public sector, which is characterized by more complex objectives, levels of accountability, and a lower degree of freedom than private sector. Another critique of the use of private sector management principles and their application in the public sector is characterized by a completely different context (Minogue, 2001; Ormond & Loffler, 2006). Since its inception, the NPM has been criticized by many public administration scholars who have argued that it is not a real theory and that its theoretical foundations are inconsistent (Vabø, 2009; Haque, 2007). NPM is usually characterized by its deniers as a form of managerial character and management mania.

Critics have also expressed reservations about the degree of transparency that can be achieved in contracts. In addition, citizens' expectations of the government may be quite low, for example in developing countries, and citizens may have no intention of complaining about the quality of services. When a particular service is missing, how can one talk about service quality (Manning, 2001; Turner & Hulme, 1997; Hughes, 2003; Pollitt & Dan, 2011) In addition, the NPM literature deals much more with efficiency than with equality. The terms used by NPM such as customers, users, etc., instead of citizens with rights and obligations also raise doubts about its successful integration into the public

sector. Also the overestimation of the role of the market as a panacea, especially in its early stages, the separation of politics from administration and management resulted in the 1990s, the New Public Administration (NPM) is now in decline.

The key to NPM-type reforms was its failure to implement the announced ideas (promises) (Ferlie, Fitzgerald & Pettigrew, 1996; Maor, 1999). It was found to be desirable at a time when public services and public goods are generally provided through collaborative networks involving governmental and non-governmental actors. (Evans, 2009: 38-39). Others criticized the theoretical shallowness of the NPM to the extent that it was merely a "collection of techniques" (Common, 1998). It has even been described as an advertising campaign without much substance. NPM, in many cases, equates to "increased management" (Martin, 1983) and bureaucracy. Hood (1991: 9), noted that "Despite claims to promote the 'public good' (cheaper and better public services for all), the NPM is said to be a vehicle of particular advantage. Maor (1999) argued that politicians have lost control of policy implementation because of NPM reformers, and public choice theory has also been challenged, with Boston, et al. (1996) noting that personal interest is questionable as the a priori assumption that private sector organizations are better managed than public ones is also questionable. Many authors (Common, 1998; Halligan, 2020; Lindquist, 1997) argued that the results of the NPM movement showed the weaknesses inherent in it. Analyzing the Australian Reform, Considine (1999) stated that the management revolution has indeed brought small achievements. The cost is high and the means used were controversial. Reform techniques were costly and indeed increased costs, and cost-saving efforts did indeed destroy service quality and innovation. The reforms focused on the short-term benefits and lost the key reforms needed. The result was "increased central control and greater homogeneity" (Considine, 1997: 109). In assessing reforms in New Zealand and Australia, Halligan (1997) refers to high social costs, high employment, economic inequality, and growing distrust of political power, among others. Halligan (1997: 43) concluded that "15 years of reform did not bring relief from change, but simply laid the groundwork for more" in Australia. Regarding reforms in the case of Canada, Lindquist (1997) argued that the impact on civil society and the quality of public speaking in governance as a result of reforms is unsatisfactory. However, the NPM was not a complete failure. It is worth noting his desire to reduce government spending, to decentralize power over central control, to citizens' rights in bureaucratic states, and to provide opportunities for individual initiatives and experimentation. The two major evaluation reports, one of Schick's report on New Zealand reform in 1996 and the Task Force on better governance in Australia in 1992, outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the NPM reforms. The Management Improvement Working Group (1992) concluded that the direction of the reforms was right and that it had many positive results. Schick (2000) noted that we can predict that the government of the future will be organized in very different directions than it is today. The literature on the impact of reforms on OECD data is weak. Exceptions are Propper, Sutton, Whitnall & WiNPMMeijer, (2010) and Kelman & Friedman, (2009) who deal with two more professional and science-based public services - healthcare and education, in countries that maintain high-performance databases, particularly from the United Kingdom and the United States. There are several secondary studies that generally discuss the mechanisms of NPM reform, citing secondary data, but only a few have begun to collect primary data on specific effects on service users and citizens in general (Pollitt & Dan, 2011).

5. After New Public Management: The role, contribution and crisis of public management during the pandemic

Public administration is often criticized both for the speed with which it responds to its mission and for its effectiveness. In particular, on the issue of efficiency, views are expressed, not only in the context of an ongoing debate, but also at the level of administrative theories (see New Public Management), according to which most functions performed by public administration should be delegated to individuals. The state should be limited to the minimum minimum of its intervention, such as in the fields of national defense, foreign affairs or internal security and public order. The dynamics of this sometimes leveling critique are usually softened in times of crisis such as the one we are going through on a global level, due to Covid19. The state then has to find ways and resources to intervene, healing any weakness that arises from the crisis-damaged market. The current pandemic crisis is an important opportunity for a rational examination of this problem. Assessing the efficiency of public administration in all its dimensions, especially in times of crisis, becomes a complex and multifactorial issue. The pandemic has brought public administration with many challenges. Some of the challenges were known in the past, but the mobilization of the administration in the new conditions of public health risks, made such challenges critical. In particular, increasing the efficiency of the administration was necessary in the face of the sudden need for rapid and effective responses to the dispersal of Covid-19. The old, well-known lack of coordination between the competent public services had to be overcome in a short time. It would be potentially dangerous to take public policy measures without sufficient documentation, i.e. in the absence of evidence-based policy making (Mouroutsos, 2020).

Overall and compared to other countries, the Greek government rather showed determination and good timing in dealing with the situation (Papaioannou & Georgopoulou, 2020) and the public administration responded well to the challenges set for it (Diellas, 2020). The pandemic has dramatically changed the socio-economic environment and the health and safety environment in which public administration operates in the modern world. Today, in the midst of a pandemic, "planning and preparing for the unpredictable and the unknown, dealing with emergencies and responding to citizens' demands and expectations are critical and difficult tasks for state authorities" (Christensen & Laegreid, 2020). As in other crises in the past, the public administration, but also economic entities (companies) and individuals (professionals), found themselves in an unbalanced business environment. An environment characterized by variability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (in the literature it is called VUCA environment: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (Van der Wal, 2020). According to a recent United Nations text (Kauzya & Niland, E., 2020), in 2020, in the face of the pandemic crisis, "the civil servant is at the heart of the crisis strategies and plans to reduce the impact of the pandemic". Countries with high administrative capacity, even before the pandemic, were in a better position than others to limit the spread of the pandemic (Christensen & Laegreid, 2020). Among different public administrations, in the current crisis due to Covid-19, those public administrations that had learned from their experiences in dealing with previous crises (epidemiological, financial, etc.), had more organized and more flexible structures (Schomaker & Bauer, 2020). As is well known, in Greece after February 2020 the government and the administration reacted to the pandemic relatively early, with restrictive measures for the operation of public services and private companies, traffic restrictions and support measures for businesses and employees (Diellas, 2020;

Papaioannou & Georgopoulou, 2020). A number of Legislative Acts have been issued for the protection of civil servants and the smooth running of public services.

Due to the unprecedented health crisis and the criticality of the situation, intensive preparation and cooperation of all public services was required. The elaboration of a regulation, the examination of the consequences it has on the overall system, the formulation of regulations and especially the implementation of a policy grid (Weible et al., 2020), could not be done only by the mandate of the respective political leadership. Nevertheless, the Government, knowing the pathogenesis of the Public Administration and the huge problem of the bureaucracy in a short period of time, implemented the integration of the existing information systems where 501 public services were successfully integrated in gov.gr and new ones are added every day. They have already reached 520. So we went straight under a state of emergency, to the new digital age where the digital initiatives taken were a useful weapon against the pandemic, but at the same time they are tools that will improve the lives of all of us the next day. The rapid steps of digital transformation that began in mid-March 2020, due to Covid-19, have not yet been captured in either structures or statistics. These, in turn, show the magnitude of the challenges of digital transformation, which requires human resources with digital knowledge and skills. Digital knowledge, skills and abilities are now, at the beginning of the 21st century, a prerequisite for individual and collective well-being. In particular, the digitization of the public sector has been accelerated with the addition of three services related to a large volume of transactions (authorization, responsible declaration, intangible and remote prescribing). At the same time, the Government, under the supervision and planning of the Ministry of Digital Governance, proceeded with the plan of the new era of digital governance in the public administration of our country through specific measures that would facilitate the daily life of the citizens, rather in the midst of a pandemic crisis residents were locked inside their homes and transactions with a physical presence with the public were of great difficulty, especially to people belonging to vulnerable groups.

Of course, many procedures and special actions (eg, at the Tax Offices) have not been digitized. However, the dramatic situation created by the spread of the coronavirus has acted as a catalyst for developments in public administration. The abrupt digitization of state-citizen relations, with the entry and registration of many computer users on different digital platforms, obviously implies the declaration of various personal data and new possibilities for processing such data by a number of public bodies. There are such and other reasonable concerns about the limits of state intervention in the individual freedoms of citizens and the restrictive measures imposed on the protection of public health (Vlachopoulos, 2020; Kontiadis, 2020). The Council of Europe has expressed similar concerns (Sigma-OECD, 2020).

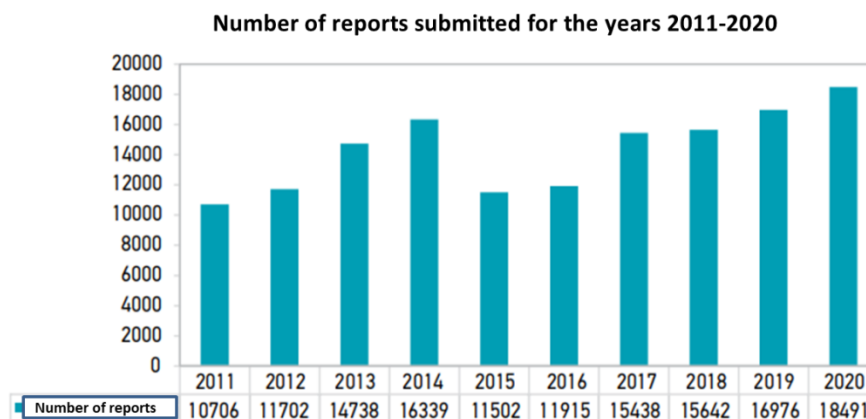
The use of New Technologies and Digital Governance was the reform response to the current Covid-19 pandemic. "E-Government" is defined as the method by which governments use the most innovative information and communication technologies (ICT), in particular web applications, to provide citizens and businesses with easier access to government information and services, improving the quality of provide greater opportunities for participation in democratic processes and institutions (Malodia, Dhir, Mishra & Bhatti, 2021). Better use of e-government aims to facilitate the interaction of public services, interoperability between software systems, information exchange and automation of public administration activities, better service to citizens, etc. The pandemic changed needs abruptly, and so did the priorities. The Ministry of Digital Government was called upon to help curb the coronavirus, ensuring that citizens, especially the most

vulnerable groups, do not join public services, waiting for the certificates and attestations required by their daily lives. In this way, everyone was given the opportunity to handle their affairs with the State, staying at home. That is why the single digital portal gov.gr was activated, allowing citizens to carry out a series of procedures, such as the issuance of responsible statements and authorizations, from their computer or mobile phone, without forcing them to go to the various counters, at risk their health and the health of others. For the same reason, the operation of the Citizens' Service Centre (CSC) was modified, giving for the first time the possibility for the citizens to process their urgent requests by phone, while the delivery of the documents will take place at the address of the citizens by post and free of charge, thus protecting both employees as well as citizens. For the reforms that took place such as gov.gr, the intangible prescription, the interconnection of e-EFKA with the Citizens' Register, etc. had been preceded by several months of coordinated preparation. The outbreak of the virus, however, hastened their necessity and narrowed the timetables for the implementation of the program. Time has thickened and with it the need for an effective presence of the state in the new conditions that have been created. For the first time in modern history we are called to communicate, work and be entertained almost exclusively through technology. At this juncture, the digitization of the State is becoming even more imperative, not only for the fight against coronavirus but also for bureaucracy.

5.1 The Greek experience from the application of NPM

During the year 2020, 18,491 reports were submitted to the Ombudsman. The number is the highest of the decade, and confirms the upward trend in reporting for the last five years (Figure 1). The continuing significant increase that is observed can be attributed, to a significant degree, to the occurrence of the pandemic Covid- 19 and the problems created due to it in the citizens' transactions with the Administration.

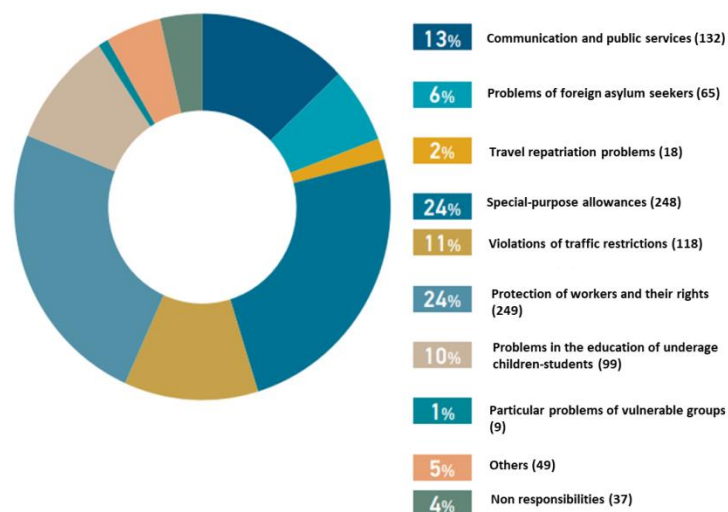
Figure 1



The measures taken by the State to deal with the pandemic caused by Covid - 19, had a strong impact on the daily lives of citizens. As a result, the Ombudsman, in the year 2020, received a large number of reports concerning the more specific, due to the pandemic, dysfunctions of the public administration and its services (Figure 2). More than a thousand (1,024) reports were submitted by the citizens on issues related to the effects of the pandemic. Of these, almost half of the reports (48% of the total) concern problems in the protection of the labor rights of the citizens (continuation of the insurance coverage, protection of the beneficiaries of the OAED programs, communication with the system

“ERGANI”, Etc.) and in the implementation of assistance measures (allowances and special purpose allowances, exemption from rents, etc.). A significant number of reports (13% of the total), concerned the difficulty of citizens accessing or communicating with public services, as well as the delay of the latter to process the current cases and the new requests submitted to them (delays in processing requests, postponement decision-making bodies, etc.). Interesting is the number of citizens who protested against the traffic restriction measures (11%), especially for the fines imposed due to the violation of these measures. Also important (10%) was the number of reports related to the education of pupils and students, such as the use of masks in schools, the inability to implement distance education, the problematic process of distributing books, etc. Foreigners living in Greece, especially asylum seekers, also faced problems regarding the process of issuing - renewal of residence permits, processing of asylum applications, living conditions in the Reception and Identification Centers, etc. (6%). Finally, note the number of citizens (2%) who have faced the problem of repatriation or transfer abroad, due to restrictions on movement between states.

Figure 2
Citizens' reports submitted to the Authority due to the 2020 pandemic



In Greece, during the last five years, various programs and actions in the logic of NPM have been implemented. The reception of the NPM was cautious, while there was a significant time lag in the acceptance of its proposals, and this is due both to the general economic, social and political backwardness in relation to the advanced countries, and to individual causes, such as the educational deficit, the economic hardship and political timidity. The most important driver of reform is, without a doubt, the European Union. The mobility observed at European level, after the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, had a positive effect on the Greek public administration, after "frozen" reforms, such as the Common Quality Assessment Framework, the efficiency of public organizations or the analysis of the effects of regulatory reform seem to be re-emerging. The reform actions that met with a favorable reception refer to the improvement of the quality of the provided services and are contained in the programs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Quality for the Citizen" and "Politeia", as well as in more specific programs of the competent Ministries, most importantly "TAXIS" of the Ministry of Finance to improve the services provided by the tax authorities. Digital transformation has emerged as a condition in the last decade, with the aim of redesigning public and private sector services to improve the

daily work of employees and civil servants, while effectively meeting the needs of citizens (Karamalis & Vasilopoulos, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has caused many problems, not only in public health, but also in public sector organizations worldwide. Greece had to take significant and rapid steps towards the digitalization of many of its businesses both to protect citizens from the pandemic consequences and to provide services more efficiently and in a timely manner. Although there are many studies that discuss the potential in the private sector (Teece, 2017; Helfat & Martin, 2015; Xanthopoulou & Kefis, 2019; Xanthopoulou & Plimakis, 2021), only a few studies examine the dynamics and innovation in the public sector. Breznitz (2007) and Block (2008) report that there are many public bodies and agencies, and even entire countries that manage to change the way they work and provide quality services to citizens. Similarly, Janssen et al. (2012) report that e-government is an area of growing interest for public sector executives through Open Government Data (OGD), as it allows government agencies to communicate to the public the data they collect in an accessible, comprehensible and redistributable way. The OECD in its latest report states that Greece ranks very well (9th), ranking it above the OECD average and countries such as Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and Norway among others (OECD Government at a glance, 2019). Heeks (2006) highlights three important contributions of e-government, namely the process of government, connecting citizens and creating external interactions by studying case studies from Chile, South Korea, Honduras and the Philippines.

The Greek experience from the NPM applications so far does not differ substantially from the experience of other countries. The negatives of the Greek case record the extent of customer relations and the discontinuity in the exercise of policies. Nevertheless, we consider that the prospects of success of NPM in Greece are positive. The main factors that lead to this crisis are the course of the economy, the knowledge and experience from the management of Community programs and funding in selected areas of administrative action and the improved integration of Greece in international organizations. Undoubtedly, the NPM has contributed to the implementation of the objectives of the administrative reform, although the questions rose by its innovative proposals and applications are often more than the answers, but this happens every time a new approach to unresolved problems appears. Despite any scientific and methodological reservations towards the NPM, its acceptance by different political-administrative systems at the initiative of the governments indicates, among other things, its usefulness for the political system (Lynn, 2006). The majority of those involved in the NPM do not accept the critical academic claims that its predominance is a confession of the weakening of the state and the imposition of the market on politics. On the contrary, it is argued that the new model of governance contributes to the revitalization and strengthening of the political system. In particular, with regard to the withdrawal of the state from the regulation of the functioning of the markets, which the NPM supports, this does not lead, as many proponents of state intervention argue, to the weakening of the state in general, but rather to the degradation of the executive and at the same time strengthening its executive role, which secures the other social subsystems from a possible uncontrolled expansion of the economic subsystem to their detriment.

Key factors hindering the success of the NPM are the statist perception of citizens and politicians, the corruption of public organizations and certain officials, the fragmented organizational structure with the consequent dispersion and overlapping of responsibilities and pluralism (Ridley, 1996). The resistances of the bureaucratic model have proved to be particularly strong, which in the beginning were underestimated and perceived more as technical obstacles and less as socially and organizationally integrated perceptions and

attitudes. This resistance highlighted the administrative culture as an important parameter of the success of the changes, since it was revealed that the reason that led the reforms to a deadlock was, for the most part, the adoption of the bureaucratic model by the employees. Today, especially in the face of the uncertainty caused by the current pandemic, the adoption of the principles of "learning organization" is considered an integral part of the reforms and a necessary condition for their success, as it became clear that both the organization and the employees, they have to "learn" something they knew and learn something different, something new. Among the obstacles to NPM's progress should be mentioned, in particular, the attitude of politicians towards administrative reforms, which is often ambivalent and contradictory. While they appear to support the NPM reforms, which have the effect of limiting their interventionist role, they also seek to maintain or even expand their control over the public administration through the reforms. In these cases, the NPM reforms acquire a formalistic character that emphasizes the legal depiction of their external characteristics, bypassing their operational character, and seem to be a "setback", as they create and consolidate a new "reformist" bureaucracy. The "fatigue" of the subjects of the reform, the integration of the reforms in the bureaucratic scheme and their gradual weakening due to the "continuous reform" are recorded as significant obstacles to their consolidation.

The antidotes are the maximum possible clarity of goals and actions, the recognition of collective and / or individual success, and the exchange of experiences from reforms between those that have produced results and those that have failed. In addition, pluralism, confusion of responsibilities between the various levels of government and organizational fragmentation in order to secure trade union interests have always been the main obstacles to administrative reforms and the same applies to the implementation of the NPM. Among them, corruption is particularly prevalent today, and the reason must be sought in the expansion of the economic subsystem in the field of politics and state activities and the lack of rules that set clear boundaries between the two.

Conclusions

From the above review we can conclude that a combination of factors coincided to produce a seemingly irresistible push for public service management reforms in developed market economies. Changes in the political context, fueled by new ideas, and the search for efficiency and effectiveness in public services have been key drivers of change for more market-oriented policies. In order for the markets to function well, then there was a need to renew the organizational and administrative rules and to modernize the structures, so that the public administration institutions could help the economy to be competitive. This exemplary shift to Western countries since the late 1970s has surpassed crisis states in developing regions, especially in countries that have launched structural adjustment programs supported by the IMF / World Bank. This was required by the severe economic and fiscal crises in these countries and exacerbated by political and political instability.

There is no single accepted explanation for why the NPM was merged and why it succeeded (see Hood 1990b, Hood & Jackson 1991, Chapter 8). Many academic commentators have linked it to the political rise of the "new right." This in itself does not explain why these doctrines were in favor, nor why the NPM was so strongly adopted by the governments of the seemingly opposite in the New Right ", mainly in Australia and New Zealand. NPM implemented in its complete form in the United Kingdom (UK) between the years 1945- 1979. This was a period of great emphasis on the organization of the welfare state, a period when expectations were high that the state would be able to

respond effectively to the economic and social needs of its citizens. This administrative model was expected to be the tool of governance, which could ensure justice and equal treatment of citizens. Inevitably such a vision was doomed to failure, as social needs always require higher resources than available. The welfare state in order to meet the increased needs of the citizens proceeded to establish regulations and impose high taxes. In the last days of the hegemony of NPM both the welfare state and the model itself have been heavily criticized (initially by academic scholars and finally by the political elite). Chandler (1991) argued that the NPM as a model of administration was coming to an end at a rapid pace, while Rhodes (1997) claimed that this model had become a mere spectator of what is happening in the field of public administration and politics. In fact, in the early 1980s, in the context of the growing popularity of New Right ideas, the prevailing view was that the state should intervene less in society, and large bureaucracies had to be reduced so that individuals could once again take responsibility for their own prosperity and not depend on an overprotective overblown state. These processes gradually paved the way for the rise and prevalence of the ideas of the NPM. It is generally accepted that the process of managerial reform and the specific criteria in order to evaluate NPM's effectiveness are not completed yet. However, as more countries adopted the reforms, it was the traditional model of public administration that seemed more and more dated (Hughes, 2003).

Finally, NPM reforms, understood as a style of organizing public services towards the efficiency and efficacy of outputs, have been controversial. As write, "they have been accused of importing practices and norms from the private sector that could collide with core public values, such as impartiality or equity". All in all, the failure of NPM orthodox motivational models has encouraged the adoption of new motivational schemes, known as "new public service", "new public governance", or "post-NPM", and, in particular, to what Perry and Boruvka (2020) refer to as the "Public Values Governance Model" (Lapuent& Van de Walle, 2020). All over the world, public organizations have adopted the two central NPM goals: efficiency and effectiveness. And, no matter the extent of specific NPM reforms, performance in the public sector is nowadays universally seen as output and outcome, instead of the previous view of performance as input and process (Andersen, Boesen, & Pedersen, 2016). Undoubtedly, the NPM has contributed to the implementation of the objectives of the administrative reform, although the questions rose by its innovative proposals and applications are often more than the answers, but this happens every time a new approach to unresolved problems appears. Despite any scientific and methodological reservations towards the NPM, its acceptance by different political-administrative systems at the initiative of the governments indicates, among other things, its usefulness for the political system. The majority of those involved in the NPM do not accept the critical academic claims that its predominance is a confession of the weakening of the state and the imposition of the market on politics. On the contrary, it is argued that the new model of governance contributes to the revitalization and strengthening of the political system.

Key factors hindering the success of the NPM are the statist perception of citizens and politicians, the corruption of public organizations and certain officials, the fragmented organizational structure with the consequent dispersion and overlapping of responsibilities and pluralism. Resistance to change has highlighted the management culture as an important parameter of the success of change, as it has been revealed that the cause of the reforms at a stalemate was, for the most part, the adoption of the bureaucratic model by the employees. Among the obstacles to NPM's progress should be mentioned, in particular, the attitude of politicians towards administrative reforms, which is often ambivalent and contradictory. In addition, pluralism, confusion of responsibilities between the various

levels of government and organizational fragmentation in order to secure trade union interests have always been the main obstacles to administrative reforms and the same applies to the implementation of the NPM. The answers regarding the usefulness of the NPM reforms differ. In the 1980s, led by the transatlantic states of the United States and Canada and Europe by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the NPM proposals were seen as a panacea, both theoretical and, above all, administrative and political. The problems that NPM came to solve at that time were problems of rational management of resources. It is a fact that the rationalization attempted through the measures and actions of NPM, especially at the local level (municipalities, communities) has substantially improved the financial management of local authorities.

It is worth noting that massive health crises are no longer part of natural phenomena, but can be seen as destabilizing events for world society (Baecker, 2020) and as man-made disasters (Leggewie, 2020). In the present health crisis of Covid-19, historical dimensions could be attributed, as history is the product of collective work, a result of consultative action of social and political actors (Gauchet, 2016). The pandemic is a multifaceted process linked to other crises that emerge in other systems (economy, politics, family, culture, technology, media, etc.). As in other crises in the past, the public administration, but also economic entities (companies) and individuals (professionals), found themselves in an unbalanced business environment. An environment characterized by variability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. In various countries affected by the spread of Covid-19, the public administration has sometimes reacted spasmodically and inefficiently and sometimes intelligently and effectively. The digitization of services as the most modern reform effort towards citizens and businesses to create public value had progressed before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. taxis, e-efka). But digitalization took on a new impetus after the pandemic, when restrictive measures dramatically changed the working conditions of employees and their communication with citizens and businesses. Further digitization of even more services is appropriate for many reasons that are not necessarily related to the pandemic. With digitization, faster communication of the management with the management is achieved and thus the response times of the management can be reduced.

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