

CHAPTER EIGHT: Management and Governance

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the book and clusters the trajectories into four main types: maintain, modernize, marketize, minimize. These are what we call 'the 4Ms'. Obviously these pure types are not observable in reality, but emerge as mixtures (maintain and modernize, or marketize and minimize) and as hybrids (unpure types). Also the trajectories of countries changes over time – if you look at the Swedish country file, for example, you can see that the popularity of market-type mechanisms has fluctuated over time.

Exercise

Take a selected country, go through its country file (Appendix B) and try to map to what the mixture of the 4Ms has been and how it has changed over time.

Responses

This is admittedly a difficult exercise. In most cases one soon realizes that, first, there is a considerable mixture and, second, that some reforms are much more important than others, so one cannot simply count the reforms one-by-one and come out with a meaningful total under each of the 4 Ms. Thus to characterize the reforms in a given country entails some value judgements and interpretations – the act of description is itself far from straightforward.

Thus the book has, in a way, come full circle. We see at the end that the act of comparing public management reforms involves difficult issues of definition, classification, conceptualization and evidence. You may remember that, in chapter 1, we started with problems of defining ‘public management’ and ‘reform’. Even in chapter 5 when we were looking at what one might think of as the ‘hard stuff’ of ‘results’, we found that issues of definition and conceptualization soon intruded. We would be bold enough to assert that studying public management reform in any depth cannot really be done in any other way.

This is definitely *not*, however, to abandon the idea of evidence altogether. Whilst we have been quite critical of the available evidence and have pointed to the large doses of faith and rhetoric which seem to have fuelled many reform programmes, we are even more convinced that serious debate about reform can only proceed if we redouble our attempts to gather relevant, systematic and reliable evidence. Purely doctrinal debate (markets are the answer!/markets are never the answer!) or largely abstract theorizing (often using only one or two variables) seem to us equally arid. We much prefer the richness and sometimes confusion of taking a direct look at what politicians and public officials say and do. That is why chapters 4 and 5 are the longest chapters in the book, and why the appendices are so extensive. We believe that, through all the conceptual arguments and data ambiguities, some broad patterns are visible. These are the fruits of comparative analysis.