

REVIEW PAPER

# Innovative Approaches in Public Administration: Strategies and Tools for Achieving Sustainability

Yaroslav Zhovnirchuk<sup>1</sup>, Nataliia Larina<sup>2</sup>, Stoliar Yurii<sup>3</sup>, Tetiana Tatarnikova<sup>4</sup> and Volodymyr Sukharnykov<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration and Administrative Law of the Institute of State and Law VM Koretsky National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Policy, Educational and Scientific Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>3</sup>Department of Special Disciplines of the Law Enforcement Faculty of the National Academy of the State Border Service of Ukraine named after Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine

<sup>4</sup>The Ukrainian Scientific and Research Institute of Special Equipment and Forensic Expertise, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>5</sup>Black Sea National University named after Petro Mohyla, Mykolaiv, Ukraine

\*Corresponding author: scientistua@ukr.net (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1378-9923)

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## ABSTRACT

The study represents an attempt to comprehend the patterns and landscape of public management in the conditions of SDGs adoption and processes of their achievement. Existing models and approaches are analyzed and vectors of further developments in the field are outlined.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The study emphasizes the necessity of multistakeholder approach in shaping innovative tools of public management for sustainable development.

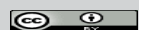
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The term “sustainable development” has been used since the 1970s to refer to the process of creating economic growth and lasting prosperity while protecting the environment. This approach advocates balancing economic, social and environmental goals. The concept of sustainable development of the region involves the efficient use of resources so that future generations can access them in their natural state. This means that management decisions must be made taking into account their long-term impacts on both local people and the environment. Sustainable development requires careful planning and collaboration between stakeholders from various sectors such as business, government, civil society, scientific communities, international organizations and other relevant actors.

Moreover, in light of the ESG agenda, the state has several key roles it acts as a consumer, investor and borrower. Each of these roles requires strict adherence to ESG principles, which, unfortunately, are not yet fully defined. Thus, one of the most important tasks of the state is to give them a clear definition at the normative level and consolidate them at the national level. It is also worth noting that the various levels of sustainable development management must also be clearly coordinated by the state at the institutional level (Kryshtanovych *et*

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*al.* 2019; Kryshchanovych *et al.* 2022a; Kryshchanovych *et al.* 2022b). These challenges require innovative approaches, effective strategies and tools to ensure that public governance patterns remain consistent with the evolving sustainable development landscape.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The ESG transformation of management is understood as such a change in management approaches that collectively ensures compliance with environmental (E - environment) and social (S - social) priorities, as well as the principles of governance transparency (G - governance). At the same time, the achievement of the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which most developed countries and leading corporations focus on, is based on the ESG concept. Thus, the concepts of "sustainable development" and "ESG transformation" are inextricably linked.

Many countries have made significant progress in integrating ESG principles into national governance, which includes:

- ♦ A largely formed regulatory framework covering both general issues of sustainable development and its individual aspects
- ♦ Development of an ESG navigator, which presents the main milestones in the development of the concept of sustainable development, leading international standards in the field of ESG, state regulations in this area, and recommendations to the main sectors of the economy on priority compliance with the SDGs
- ♦ Accounting by the state statistics service of the achievement of sustainable development goals according to a national set of indicators, including relevant indicators
- ♦ Identification of development institutions and methodological centers for sustainable development in the field of investment activities.

However, an important stage of this process is the introduction of ESG principles into public management standards, including regional ones, which, unfortunately, has not been achieved everywhere.

The sixteenth SDG, "promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,

ensuring access to justice for all, and creating effective, accountable institutions at all levels", highlights the crucial role that state institutions and public governance play in carrying out the SDGs. Establishing the institutions required to shift society toward sustainable development can be done in a number of ways (Kryshchanovych *et al.* 2022c; Kryshchanovych *et al.* 2023a; Kryshchanovych *et al.* 2023b).

In public management and administration, the people-centered approach has emerged as a crucial innovation. It puts people at the center of policy-making by allowing them to participate more directly in its creation, execution, and assessment. The demands and desires of the populace, not the government's organizational structure, determine how public services are delivered. They become collaborators, co-creators, and codesigners of public services through the use of people-centered models. In essence, the 2030 Agenda's goal of "participatory decision-making" has replaced the previous practice of governing for the people and instead of with them.

The United Nations (UN) set out to tackle its greatest issue in 2015 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These objectives provide the development of administrative ability new significance and are at the center of current discussions in the literature on public administration (PA) (Haque *et al.* 2021a; Santoro, 2019). Even though there have been several studies defining contemporary ideas in public administration, further research and analysis are still needed to fully understand how these concepts are implemented in the context of sustainable development (Shandryk *et al.* 2023). There are very few of these types of scientific studies these days, since the majority simply look at broad elements of the evolution of public administration or examine the true meaning of the term "sustainable development".

## RESULTS

Achieving the SDGs requires effective public administration for a number of reasons. First of all, it makes it easier to incorporate the SDGs into national development strategies and programs. To foster an atmosphere that supports sustainable development, governments must coordinate their policies and initiatives with the SDGs.

Incorporating the SDGs into national agendas and guaranteeing their integration across sectors and levels of governance is made possible by public management methods as policy development, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement (Pintér *et al.* 2017). Second, public management is essential for raising funds and supporting projects for sustainable development. Substantial financial expenditures are needed to accomplish the SDGs, and recruiting resources from the public and private sectors depends on efficient public administration. To guarantee the effective distribution and use of resources towards SDG goals, it entails creative finance methods, collaborations, and open budgeting procedures. Public management strategies that optimize the results of investments in sustainable development, such as impact investing, public-private partnerships, and performance-based budgeting, can improve resource mobilization (Haque *et al.* 2020).

In addition, public management plays a critical role in advancing participatory governance, accountability, and transparency all of which are essential components of sustainable development. Good public management systems make it easier for citizens to participate in decision-making, to be included in the process, and to obtain information. This helps citizens hold governments responsible for their actions. Public management practices support the effective implementation of the SDGs by strengthening public confidence and legitimacy via increasing accountability and transparency. Yet, a number of obstacles prevent public administration from playing an effective role in accomplishing the SDGs (Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023c; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023d). These difficulties include the requirement for multi-stakeholder cooperation, institutional capability deficits, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and resource constraints (Binns *et al.* 2017). Enhancing public management capabilities through technology adoption, information exchange, and capacity-building programs is necessary to overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, in order to maximize group efforts and expertise in accomplishing the SDGs, governments, civic society, and the commercial sector must collaborate and form partnerships.

Through the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national agendas, resource mobilization, accountability promotion,

and multi-stakeholder engagement, public management plays a crucial role in furthering sustainable development. In order to improve public management systems' efficacy and efficiency, countries must fortify their capacities, overcome obstacles, and implement creative solutions as they work to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Biglari *et al.* 2022). Governments can contribute to sustainable development to the fullest extent possible and build a bright, inclusive future for all by doing this.

However, issues with institutional capacity, resource mobilization, multi-stakeholder coordination, monitoring, and evaluation impede public management's ability to play a role in accomplishing sustainable development goals. Improving the efficacy and efficiency of public management systems in advancing sustainable development requires addressing these issues. To solve these challenges, policymakers and practitioners should concentrate on strengthening capacity, implementing governance reforms, coming up with creative finance solutions, facilitating inclusive decision-making processes, and establishing strong frameworks for monitoring and evaluation. By doing this, public management can make a significant contribution to the SDGs' achievement and build a future that is inclusive and sustainable for all.

Planning and performance evaluation processes related to sustainability pledges are more likely to be integrated in cities that face increased competition for growth, according to research by Deslatte and Stokan (2020). Governance concerns were the subject of several research. Abhayawansa *et al.* (2021), for example, provided an explanation of how this tension might impact governance and demonstrated how governments can provide value for society by concentrating on the SDGs. According to Filho *et al.* (2016), inadequate progress toward implementing the SDGs has been made in European nations due to a lack of coordination among various sectors and a lack of integration at different government levels.

Important elements supporting SDG implementation in local and regional planning have been covered in several research (Bardal *et al.* 2021). But only a small number of studies have looked at how local or regional governments incorporate the SDGs into their plans; the majority of prior research has focused on case studies or theoretical analyses

(Bardal *et al.* 2021; Guarini *et al.* 2021). These findings alert us to the possibility that politicians and public management may start using the SDGs as platitudes. As a result, it is important to figure out the actual meaning of the work with SDGs and the levers that can help LGs manage sustainability (Bardal *et al.* 2021).

LGs are at the center of SDG implementation even if national governments bear ultimate responsibility for attaining the goals (Saner *et al.* 2017). Local, regional, and national governments are required to join the global effort and connect their policies and programs with the SDGs and their targets, as indicated by Biermann *et al.* (2022). Additionally, the global goals should be represented in the specific efforts of the towns.

In their study on sustainable development goals in public administration within local landscapes, Bisogno *et al.* (2023) organized the 17 SDGs into five categories known as the “5 Ps” (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnership) in order to identify the activities carried out by local governments.

Goals 1–6 of the first SDG, People, are: No Poverty; Goal 2–8 of Hunger; Goal 3–4 of Good Health and Well-Being; Goal 5–6 of Gender Equality; and Goal 6–7 of Clean Water and Sanitation. Since LGs are in a unique position to identify those living in poverty, provide essential services, assist healthcare organizations and educational institutions in the fight against malnutrition, implement urban plans to ensure waste reduction and food security, and promote citizens’ well-being through educational initiatives aimed at closing gaps in healthcare services, they are expected to play a critical role in achieving these SDGs.

The second P, Prosperity, has six goals: Reduce Inequalities (Goal 10); Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11); Decent Work and Economic Development (Goal 8); Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Goal 9); Affordable Clean Energy (Goal 12). In addition to making up over 70% of all energy use and carbon emissions, LGs make up a significant portion of the global GDP almost 80% (Kanuri *et al.* 2016). Furthermore, by allocating funds for long-term sustainable infrastructures, LGs might promote industrial growth.

Three goals make up the third P, Planet: Life Below Water (Goal 14), Climate Action (Goal 13), and

Life on Land (Goal 15). LGs may encourage the sustainable use of natural resources by forming alliances with individuals and businesses in high-impact industries including forestry, agriculture, and fisheries.

Among the objectives of the fourth P, Peace, is Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Robust Institutions. In order to do this, LGs may be extremely important, particularly in the areas of combating corruption, increasing effectiveness and accountability to the public, enhancing transparency, and enabling unrestricted access to public data.

Lastly, LGs are essential to the advancement of the last P, Partnership, which encompasses Goal 17: Partnership for the Goal. By taking a comprehensive approach, LGs are encouraged to foster a common goal and guarantee collaboration amongst various stakeholders.

To explain the degree of implementation of the SDGs, the following model was estimated in the research of Bisogno *et al.* (2023):

$$SDG_k = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Ideology_i + \beta_2 Coalition_i + \beta_3^{kp} Pop. dependent_i + \beta_4 FRI_i + \beta_5 CEI_i + \beta_6 Balance_i + \beta_7 Investment_i + \epsilon_i \quad \dots(1)$$

where  $\beta$  is the parameter for estimation,  $\epsilon$  the error term, subindex  $i$  relates to every municipality of the appropriate sample.

The dependent variable, or  $SDG_k$ , is the extent to which the  $k$  SDG ( $k = 17$ ) has been implemented. This is denoted in each report by one of four colors: red, orange, yellow, and green, which stand for low, medium-low, medium-high, and high implementation, respectively. As a result, we designated numbers between 1 and 4 to indicate the lowest and maximum implementation levels. After that, the 17 SDGs are divided into five indicators according to the five crucial categories (or “5Ps”) that were mentioned above. In specifics, the authors added up SDGs 1 through 6 to create the People indicator, which could have values between 6 and 24; Prosperity grouped SDGs 7 through 12, with values between 6 and 24; Planet grouped SDGs 13 through 15, with values between 2 and 8 (one should bear in mind that some SDGs can be omitted due to country specifics); Peace included SDG 16 and Partnership included SDG 17, both with values between 1 and 4. Subsequently, five

equations representing the global indicators of People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnership were computed for Model 1.

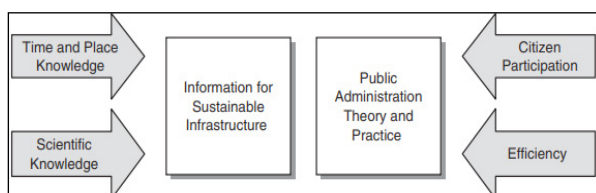
Two political factors, ideology and coalition, were added in each equation as independent variables. The first variable is an ordinal one; a value of 1 indicates that a left-wing party was in charge of the municipality, a value of 2 indicates a center-wing party, and a value of 3 indicates a right-wing party. The latter is a dummy variable; if the municipality was ruled by various parties in coalition, the value would be 1, and if not, it would be 0.

To evaluate the third premise, each model further incorporates four financial and budgetary indicators: FRI, CEI, Balance, and Investment. FRI, or the ratio of tax revenue to total current income, served as a stand-in for the LGs' financial autonomy, or their relative freedom to impose local taxes, collect revenue, and allocate funds while abiding by regulations from the central government. Current Expenditure per capita, or CEI, is a measure of the government's effort to deliver public services to the populace. Balance, often known as fiscal balance, is the ratio of total revenue to total expenditure. Lastly, investment measures the importance of long-term initiatives by dividing capital expenditure by current spending.

The proportion of people under 16 and over 65 (Pop. dependent), who are mostly outside of the working age range and are thus regarded as dependent populations or at the very least economically non-independent, was included as a control variable in each equation.

This model represents, actually, the only clear, optimal and relatively precise method of evaluating SDGs achievement in the local government level, with the possibility to extrapolate it to the all-nation level.

The model can be called an embodiment of the conceptual framework, suggested by D. Leunberger back in 2006 (Fig. 1 below):



**Fig. 1:** Parallels in the Tenets of Sustainable Infrastructure and Public Administration Theory and Practice (Leunberger, 2006)

The principle of sustainability might help public managers lower the likelihood of resource depletion at crisis levels and environmental harm resulting from consumption.

## DISCUSSION

The more strategically and performance-driven public administrations are, the more successfully they can assist political management in carrying out the development objectives of the state. This conclusion is backed by academics and professionals and is consistent with findings from international forums such as the World Economic Forum, OECD, and IMD.

Nonetheless, a public administration system finds it difficult to adjust to changing needs, particularly when there is a lack of administrative capability. Therefore, in order to fully support both their economy and population, governments and their political administration must improve government efficiency as compared to an international environment.

It is insufficient to only balance the activity of public administration and sector organizations and institutions; structural changes are necessary, necessitating new policies and approaches to public management (Zurga, 2018). Governments can take the initiative to identify turbulence in its early phases and to become competent in overseeing the structural adjustments required to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals.

Using the Sustainable Public Administration paradigm offers benefits that are both tactical and strategic. It facilitates all pertinent players maintaining concentration on their "part of a job". It is crucial to maintain the ongoing operations of public administration organizations' constant adjustment and to include them in larger system improvement initiatives and projects. In this approach, along with other methods of guaranteeing high-performing public administration, modifying and increasing performance in accordance with the incremental technique can be created as a mode of operating following the assessment of government operations.

In order to have a sustainable public administration, the state must establish its long-term developmental goals and vision, as well as strike a balance between

the demands for structural changes and the day-to-day operations of its institutions. The state could base this on the model of sustainable public administration that is provided here.

Organizations in public administration that follow the concepts of comprehensive quality management are well-equipped to handle changes of almost any sort. Just a few examples include how they incorporate citizen and customer orientation into their product and service offerings as well as various forms of citizen participation in consultation and decision-making processes, such as defining the strategic goals and creating procedures that avoid creating administrative roadblocks (Alieksiienko *et al.* 2022). It is quite possible to observe results in practice in this regard.

Moreover, sustainable public management today is impossible without network interaction with stakeholders and partners. The most innovative concept of such a network is penta-helix. In particular, Amrial *et al.* (2017) define penta-helix model as a “sustainable development solution”.

The penta helix, which originated from the triple and quadruple helix, is now a crucial component needed to enable sustainable growth. Initial circumstances, institutional design, leadership, and collaborative processes are the four primary factors of collaborative governance, according to Kismartini *et al.* (2020). In order to navigate regulatory uncertainty, public and corporate organizations produce the majority of collaborative leadership. This is the outcome of cultural thinking as opposed to a legalistic approach to conducting business.

In order to effectively address the requirements of many stakeholders, it is imperative to concentrate on resolving intricate inter-stakeholder issues via experimental research and alternative policies implemented in cities or regions. When addressing multi-actor problems, the penta-helix approach works well since it allows stakeholders to express numerous interests at one location.

## CONCLUSION

One of the challenges that many public administrations confront in fostering sustainable growth is the Sustainable Development Goals. The global development agenda that must be accomplished by 2030 is comprised of the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In the SDGs, public administration is emphasized more than in the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). First, establishing a sound system of public administration is now a stand-alone goal for growth. Second, the use of policy tools by public governance systems to aid in the achievement of the SDGs is now expressly required. The achievement of the remaining SDGs will largely rely on public governance, which is how they are defined and integrated. Even though the SDGs’ framework makes reference to various degrees of commitment, public administration is included in every one of the goals. It is definitely a good development that public administration is given such a prominent place in the SDGs. It is now the professional community’s responsibility to assume these significant duties. However, innovative approaches in public administration for developing strategies and tools for achieving sustainability are still within initial stages. Despite the fact that such concepts as penta-helix model are well developed and justified by practice, thorough research is needed to incorporate them in the ‘fabric’ of public management, especially New Public Management, with appropriate study of available best practices.

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