

THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PARADIGMS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY: A REVIEW

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Abstract. Developments in public administration have seen a significant paradigm shift as the complexity of public demands and the dynamics of government governance have increased. This study aims to examine and analyse the evolution of public administration paradigms and their implications for the delivery of public services in the contemporary era. The method employed is a qualitative literature review of academic articles published since 2020, focusing on the main paradigms of public administration, including Old Public Administration (OPA), New Public Administration (NPA), New Public Management (NPM), New Public Services (NPS), New Public Governance (NPG), Public Value Management (PVM), Digital Era Governance (DEG), and the Whole of Government (WoG) approach. The findings indicate that each paradigm has its own contributions and limitations in improving service quality, accessibility, accountability, and public trust. No single paradigm was found to be fully capable of addressing all the challenges of modern public service. Therefore, this study emphasises the importance of an integrative and adaptive approach that takes into account the social, institutional, and technological contexts in public administration management to meet the increasingly complex expectations of the public.

Keywords: Public Administration Paradigms, Public Service Delivery, New Public Management, New Public Governance, Digital Era Governance, Public Value, Collaborative Governance

Abstrak. Perkembangan administrasi publik menunjukkan pergeseran paradigma yang signifikan seiring meningkatnya kompleksitas tuntutan masyarakat dan dinamika tata kelola pemerintahan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan menganalisis perkembangan paradigma administrasi publik serta implikasinya terhadap penyelenggaraan layanan publik di era kontemporer. Metode yang digunakan adalah tinjauan literatur kualitatif terhadap artikel ilmiah yang dipublikasikan sejak tahun 2020, dengan fokus pada paradigma utama administrasi publik, meliputi Administrasi Publik Lama (OPA), Administrasi Publik Baru (NPA), Manajemen Publik Baru (NPM), Layanan Publik Baru (NPS), Tata Kelola Publik Baru (NPG), Manajemen Nilai Publik (PVM), Tata Kelola Era Digital (DEG), dan pendekatan Seluruh Pemerintah (*Whole of Government*/WoG). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa setiap paradigma memiliki kontribusi dan keterbatasan masing-masing dalam meningkatkan kualitas layanan, aksesibilitas, akuntabilitas, serta kepercayaan publik. Tidak ditemukan satu paradigma yang sepenuhnya mampu menjawab seluruh tantangan layanan publik modern. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya pendekatan integratif dan adaptif yang mempertimbangkan konteks sosial, kelembagaan, dan teknologi dalam pengelolaan administrasi publik guna memenuhi ekspektasi masyarakat yang semakin kompleks.

Kata Kunci: Paradigma Administrasi Publik, Penyampaian Layanan Publik, Manajemen Publik Baru, Tata Kelola Publik Baru, Tata Kelola Era Digital, Nilai Publik, Tata Kelola Kolaboratif

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INTRODUCTION

Public administration, as both a field of practice and an academic discipline, is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between the state and its citizens through the delivery of services and the management of public affairs. The history of this discipline is not a static narrative but a living chronicle of paradigmatic transformations, each driven by shifting political philosophies, socioeconomic imperatives, technological innovations, and evolving societal expectations. Understanding these paradigm shifts is therefore not merely an intellectual exercise; it carries direct implications for how citizens experience healthcare, education, justice, and other public services.

The concept of paradigm shifts in public administration draws on Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science, where dominant frameworks are gradually replaced by models that better explain emerging realities. In public administration, this process has been cumulative rather than linear. The Old Public Administration (OPA), grounded in Weberian bureaucracy, was followed by reformist perspectives emphasizing equity, market-oriented managerialism, and later citizen-centered, network-based, and digitally enabled governance models (Gupta & Lamsal, 2023; Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024; Vanthica dkk., 2025). Existing studies generally discuss these paradigms either in isolation or through chronological descriptions without systematically linking them to concrete implications for public service outcomes.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative and outcome-oriented perspective. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on theoretical classification or historical evolution of public administration paradigms, this article synthesizes multiple paradigms simultaneously and explicitly connects them to their implications for service quality, accessibility, accountability, and public trust. By positioning paradigms not merely as abstract frameworks but as practical lenses shaping service delivery, this study offers a more holistic understanding of how paradigm combinations operate in contemporary governance contexts. This integrative emphasis is particularly relevant in the post-2020 period, characterized by digital transformation, complex policy networks, and heightened citizen expectations.

This article adopts a qualitative literature review methodology to synthesize insights from reputable scholarly sources published since 2020. Unlike protocol-driven systematic reviews, a qualitative literature review allows for interpretive synthesis, thematic analysis, and conceptual integration across diverse theoretical and empirical contributions (Bojang, 2020). This approach is well suited to capturing the layered and multidimensional nature of public administration paradigms and their evolving influence on public service delivery.

The central contribution of this article is twofold. First, it demonstrates that paradigm evolution in public administration has tangible effects on the quality, equity, responsiveness, and trustworthiness of public services. Second, it argues that contemporary governance challenges cannot be adequately addressed through a single paradigm. Instead, they require adaptive and context-sensitive integration of insights from multiple paradigms. By tracing the trajectory from OPA to emerging hybrid governance frameworks and linking them to service delivery outcomes, this article contributes both theoretically and practically to the ongoing discourse on improving public administration in complex governance environments.

METHOD

This article employs a qualitative literature review as its methodological framework—specifically, a narrative and thematic synthesis approach—as distinct from the protocol-driven procedures of systematic literature reviews. The qualitative literature review is particularly appropriate for studying evolving theoretical constructs such as public administration paradigms, where the objective is not to calculate aggregate effect sizes but to trace conceptual development, identify thematic patterns, and interpret the relational dynamics among paradigms and their practical implications (Bojang, 2020; Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024).

Source selection followed three criteria: (1) publication in peer-reviewed journals from 2020 onwards to ensure currency and relevance; (2) direct relevance to public administration paradigms or public service delivery; and (3) availability through reputable academic databases, including Scopus-indexed journals, Wiley Online Library, and verified open-access platforms. Foundational theoretical works by seminal authors (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Moore, 1997; Osborne, 2006) were included as primary conceptual anchors where directly cited by recent literature. A total of 28 sources were reviewed and incorporated into this article.

Data synthesis was conducted thematically, organizing sources according to the chronological progression of paradigms while simultaneously analyzing cross-cutting themes, including the citizen-state relationship, accountability mechanisms, the role of technology, and the equity implications of different governance models. This thematic organization allows for both diachronic analysis (tracking how paradigms evolved) and synchronic analysis (comparing how different paradigms address the same governance challenges simultaneously). Reflexivity was maintained throughout by consciously considering alternative interpretations, including critical perspectives on each paradigm, and by engaging sources that represent diverse geographic and disciplinary perspectives, including Asian, African, and European

scholarship alongside the Anglo-American traditions that have historically dominated public administration discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cumulative Influence on Public Service Delivery

The progression from OPA through NPM and post-NPM frameworks has not been a linear replacement of one model by another; rather, it has been an accretion of insights, each adding new dimensions to the understanding and practice of public service delivery while inheriting unresolved tensions from its predecessors (Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024). The following table synthesizes the key service delivery implications of each major paradigm:

Table 1. Paradigm - Its Service Delivery Orientation and Key Impact on Service

Paradigm	Core Value	Service Delivery Orientation	Key Impact on Service
OPA	Rule of Law	Procedure-based, hierarchical	Stable but rigid and unresponsive
NPA	Social Equity	Equity-oriented, participatory	Expanded access; limited institutional reform
NPM	Efficiency	Market-driven, performance-based	Improved speed; risk of fragmentation and inequity
NPS	Democratic Citizenship	Citizen-centered, collaborative	Enhanced trust; democratic accountability
NPG	Network Collaboration	Co-produced, multi-stakeholder	Improved coordination of complex services
PVM	Public Value Creation	Value-creation, strategic triangle	Holistic, mission-driven service design
DEG	Digital Integration	Digitized, reintegrated, needs-based	Radical efficiency gains; risk of digital exclusion
WoG	Government Integration	One-stop, cross-boundary	Reduced fragmentation; improved citizen experience

Sources: (Aoki dkk., 2024; Gupta & Lamsal, 2023; Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024)

The trajectory revealed by this analysis reflects a progressive expansion of the values that public administration is expected to serve. The OPA era was primarily concerned with legality and procedural correctness (Rosenbloom dkk., 2021). NPM added efficiency and cost-effectiveness (AlQurashi dkk., 2026). Post-NPM paradigms have further incorporated democratic legitimacy, social equity, collaborative co-production, public value creation, and digital accessibility (Gupta & Lamsal, 2023; Salarzahi, 2020). Each addition represents a genuine advance in understanding the complexity of what it means to govern well.

Tensions Among Paradigms and Their Service Delivery Consequences

The expansion of values also creates real tensions in practice. The imperatives of efficiency (NPM) and equity (NPA, NPS) frequently conflict: market mechanisms that improve average service speed may simultaneously reduce service accessibility for the poor or those in geographically remote areas (Bojang, 2020). The demands of citizen participation (NPS, NPG) and administrative speed (NPM, DEG) pull in different directions, as meaningful participation requires time and deliberative processes that resist compression. The goal of digital transformation (DEG) can inadvertently exclude digitally marginal populations — elderly, rural, low-literacy citizens potentially widening rather than narrowing service inequalities (Hadi & Widnyani, 2024; Pakaya dkk., 2026).

Indonesia's digital governance trajectory illustrates these tensions vividly. The SPBE system has delivered measurable efficiency gains and transparency improvements, including a 64th global ranking in the UN E-Government Survey 2024 (Pakaya dkk., 2026). Yet, simultaneously, 2,881 villages still lack internet access, approximately 30% of civil servants possess adequate digital literacy, and fragmentation across more than 24,000 unintegrated government applications undermines the seamless service delivery that DEG promises (Hadi & Widnyani, 2024). This pattern of impressive aggregate progress co-existing with significant distributional inequality is characteristic of governance systems navigating transitions between paradigms without fully resolving the tensions inherited from prior models.

Research on collaborative governance in Indonesia further illustrates the practical gap between paradigmatic aspiration and institutional reality. It has been found that while collaborative governance is theoretically embraced, actual implementation is constrained by closed bureaucratic cultures, inter-agency competition for resources, and limited civil society capacity for meaningful co-governance (Tando dkk., 2020). The case study of SPBE implementation in Polewali Mandar found that committed leadership was the decisive enabling factor, suggesting that paradigmatic change requires not only institutional design but also individual leadership capacity to bridge paradigmatic ideals and organizational realities (Ahad & Barsei, 2023).

The Role of Public Value in Resolving Paradigmatic Tensions

The literature shows both convergence and divergence in how scholars conceptualize the role of the Public Value Management (PVM) paradigm in contemporary governance. Several studies agree that PVM provides a conceptual framework capable of accommodating multiple, and often competing, governance values. Salarzahi (2020) and van Gestel dkk. (2024), for

example, similarly emphasize that public sector performance should not be assessed solely through efficiency or output indicators, but also through service quality, societal outcomes, and legitimacy. This shared finding highlights a consensus that PVM responds to the limitations of narrowly managerial approaches by broadening evaluative criteria.

However, differences emerge in how scholars interpret the transformative capacity of PVM. While some studies present PVM as a promising corrective to the shortcomings of New Public Management, van Gestel dkk. (2024) demonstrate that adopting public value strategies does not automatically dismantle entrenched NPM logics. Their findings contrast with more normative accounts that implicitly assume value-based frameworks will override efficiency-driven practices. This divergence suggests that PVM's effectiveness depends heavily on institutional context and the ability of organizations to consciously manage legacy paradigms rather than merely adopting new value narratives.

Further differences are evident in how PVM is positioned relative to earlier paradigms. Gallahue (2022) and Salarzahi (2020) argue that PVM does not reject traditional bureaucracy or NPM, but selectively integrates elements such as authority, policy coherence, and efficiency with ethical considerations, social justice, and accountability. In contrast, Rosenbloom (2023) and Rosenbloom dkk. (2021) conceptualize PVM less as a standalone paradigm and more as a meta-framework that guides decision-making across paradigmatic boundaries. While both perspectives acknowledge integration, they differ in emphasis: one highlights normative reconciliation, whereas the other stresses analytical flexibility.

Taken together, these similarities and differences indicate that PVM is widely recognized as an integrative approach, yet scholars diverge in assessing its practical capacity to manage institutional inertia and value conflict. This comparison underscores that PVM should not be understood as a uniform solution, but as a context-dependent framework whose implementation and impact vary across governance settings. By explicitly contrasting these perspectives, this study clarifies how existing research converges on the need for value integration while differing in expectations about how such integration can be realized in practice.

Digital Governance and the Reconfiguration of Service Delivery

Digital Era Governance has emerged as arguably the most practically transformative development in contemporary public administration, not because it represents a new set of values but because it provides technological capabilities that can serve the values of any paradigm (Gupta & Lamsal, 2023). DEG can be used to enforce NPM performance metrics,

facilitate NPG co-production platforms, deliver NPS participatory consultation processes, support PVM strategic management tools, or implement WoG integrated service portals. This technological versatility makes DEG particularly important — and potentially dangerous, in the sense that the values embedded in digital system design may reflect paradigmatic assumptions that are neither explicit nor democratically chosen.

Research on Indonesia's SPBE implementation reveals that digital systems can simultaneously advance multiple paradigmatic values when designed intentionally. It has been found that SPBE improved transparency and accountability (good governance), reduced processing times (NPM efficiency), enabled integrated cross-agency services (WoG), and expanded citizen access to government information (NPS) (Hadi & Widnyani, 2024; Wojciechowski dkk., 2023). At the same time, Subhan's (2025) analysis of SPBE challenges found that the biggest implementation barriers — limited infrastructure, low digital skills, and resistance in organizational culture — are fundamentally human and institutional rather than technical. This confirms that successful digital governance transformation requires comprehensive capacity building, supportive legal frameworks, adaptive institutional cultures, and technological investment (Subhan & Sartika, 2025).

Toward an Integrative Framework for 21st Century Public Administration

Overall, this literature review is directly relevant to the research context as it provides a conceptual lens for understanding the practical challenges faced by contemporary public administration systems. The shift toward integrative and adaptive governance models reflects real-world pressures on governments to respond to increasingly complex public problems that cannot be addressed through single-paradigm solutions. In many administrative contexts, including developing and transitional governance systems, public organizations operate within layered institutional legacies where bureaucratic rules, managerial efficiency demands, democratic accountability, and digital transformation coexist simultaneously (Gupta & Lamsal, 2023; Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024). The findings of this review help explain why hybrid governance arrangements are not anomalies but necessary responses to these conditions.

The principles identified in the literature are particularly relevant for public service delivery contexts characterized by diversity, inequality, and institutional fragmentation. Emphasizing citizens as democratic stakeholders responds to persistent challenges of public trust, participation gaps, and service inequities that remain salient in many governance settings (Gupta & Lamsal, 2023; Halim dkk., 2025). Similarly, the multidimensional understanding of performance and accountability highlighted in this review aligns with the practical need to

balance efficiency targets with equity, transparency, and legitimacy in public sector reform initiatives (Kamindang dkk., 2025; Salarzahi, 2020).

Furthermore, the discussion on inclusive digital transformation and collaborative governance is highly pertinent to contexts where digitalization risks reinforcing existing disparities if not carefully designed (Hadi & Widnyani, 2024; Pakaya dkk., 2026). The emphasis on whole-of-government integration and public value creation provides a strategic framework for addressing coordination failures and fragmented service delivery, which are common challenges in complex administrative systems (Aoki dkk., 2024; van Gestel dkk., 2024).

By situating these theoretical insights within the realities of contemporary governance, this literature review reinforces its relevance to the research context. It demonstrates that paradigm evolution in public administration is not merely an abstract intellectual progression, but a practical response to ongoing governance challenges. Consequently, the review offers a grounded foundation for understanding how integrative, citizen-centered, and value-oriented approaches can inform both future research and practical reform efforts in public administration.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative literature review highlights that the evolution of public administration paradigms reflects an ongoing effort to respond to increasingly complex governance challenges. Rather than representing a sequence of replacement, the shift from OPA to contemporary approaches such as NPM, NPS, NPG, PVM, DEG, and WoG demonstrates a cumulative development of ideas that shape how public services are designed, delivered, and evaluated. These paradigms influence not only administrative structures but also service quality, accountability, citizen involvement, and public trust.

The key finding relevant to this study is that no single paradigm is sufficient to address contemporary public service demands. Efficiency-oriented approaches, citizen-centered governance, collaborative networks, digital transformation, and public value creation each address different dimensions of governance. The literature consistently emphasizes the need for integrative and adaptive approaches that combine managerial efficiency, democratic values, collaboration, and technological innovation. Managing the tensions among these values is therefore a central challenge in modern public administration.

In relation to the research objectives, this review underscores the importance of synthesis as the core conceptual contribution. Public administration today requires the strategic integration of paradigmatic insights to enhance service effectiveness, equity, and legitimacy. This finding provides a clear conceptual foundation for future empirical research examining how integrative governance approaches operate in specific institutional contexts and how they contribute to improved public service outcomes.

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