

Do the Brazilian innovations in public management constitute a new model?[☆]

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Abstract

Recent studies point to alternate models of public management with the purpose of surpassing the assumptions of the New Public Management. The current theoretical debate centers on the prevalent view that government is not following a specific management model of well-organized principles and guidelines. Instead, the literature converges on the perception that the contemporary public administration functions with tendencies closer to innovative management principles and tools. Given the recent structural changes in Brazil, is the government functioning under any model or is it converging with any trends? This paper systematically explores the improvements in management raised from the winning initiatives of the Federal Award of Public Management Innovation, from 2007 to 2014. Research indicates nearly all principles and tools described were incorporated, in varying degrees, in the winning innovations in the federal government. Most initiatives (98%) fall into the trend. The prevailing innovations are based on information technology and networking strategies as to provide better quality and more efficient public services.

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Keywords: Innovation; Public administration; Digital era; Networks; Brazil

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the innovations in public management by the Brazilian federal government as compared to the current changes in the paradigms of public management. In other words, to what extent do the initiatives by the Brazilian federal government fit in the discussion of contemporary management models?

A myriad of new management models have recently sprung up to defy the premises of the New Public Management (NPM). Although there is no consensus among nations on the effective adoption of these models, the vision on the role of the State

and the performance of the public administration in providing services is different from the vision and roles prescribed by management since the 1970s.

The current context assumes that the public sector is a major player in economic and social development; in the creation of socially inclusive institutional arrangements; for technological advances, the quality and transparency in public management as well as recognizes the end-users recovery as relevant actors in the policymaking process.

This role of government leadership is closely related to an innovation process in management that is increasingly gaining a strategic dimension in the public sector. Innovation in the public sector may be related to improvements in organizational processes, implementation of new products, procedures, services, policies or systems (Damanpour, Walker, & Avellaneda, 2009).

Given the structural changes in recent years and the need to expand the innovation processes in organizations, where does the management model of the Brazilian government fit in? This paper, proposes a systematic analysis of the advances in management from the award-winning initiatives of the Federal Award of Public Management Innovation (FAPMI) between 2007 and

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2014, in order to identify the characteristics that help place the Brazilian public administration within the current paradigms of public management.

First, a discussion of the assumptions of the current management models from the perspective of surpassing the NPM hegemony is carried out by a bibliographic study in order to place this paper in the contemporary debate of public management. The articles' search was accomplished based on the following journals of Public administration between 2010 and 2014:

- (i) Top Brazilian journals recognized by CAPES (Revista de Administração Pública, Revista de Administração Contemporânea e Revista de Administração da USP).
- (ii) Top international journals with a high ranking in the Thomson Scientific ISI (Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory; Public Administration; International Public Management Journal; Governance and Public Administration Review).

In addition, classic books and articles on public administration and management subjects are cited as references. Based on this literature, the theoretical discussion focuses on the results of the reform movements in recent decades, on the proposals for new paradigms after NPM, as well as on the trends of current management governance. Thus the empirical analysis of this paper is framed within a theoretical and analytical framework that is both robust and contemporary.

The analysis of management models and trends enabled the incorporation of a set of five tools and principles used by public organizations worldwide. This paper offers a descriptive analysis of 80 award winning initiatives in the eight year period studied. The reports sorted by theoretical analysis and published at the time of the awards are the source of information used in this paper.

Besides the introduction, the article includes three other sections. First, we debate the models and paradigms of contemporary public management. Second, an analysis of innovative initiatives within the tools and principles of public administration is outlined. Third, some final remarks are made.

Paradigms of public management: models or trends?

The twentieth century was marked by intense socio-political and economic changes that undoubtedly led to a reflection and reorganization of the role of the State and public administration. The welfare state construction, in its different formats, required a complexification process of the State apparatus in order to meet demands not only social, but also in areas of infrastructure and economy, since the middle of this century. In developed nations, the main concerns involved impartiality and equal access to public services.

In OECD countries during the 1970s, the basis for the legitimacy of the public service and the representative model began to be questioned. The responsiveness of the elected officials and their political priorities became the subject of debate (Manning, Shepherd, Bum, & Laudares, 2009). In Latin America, the main concern continued to be the prevalence of paternalism behaviors,

which undermine the public administration capacity to provide quality services. In both scenarios, the dominant discourse of changes was characterized by bureaucratic rationality, hierarchical planning and cost-benefit analysis (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Among other factors, the support for the reforms in the public sector is related to macroeconomic and ideological changes and technological advances. In the late 1970s, a combination of those factors began to influence the managerialist movement. The financial crisis affecting the capitalist economies of the world shifts the attention to the need to reduce the degree of state intervention in the economy and in society, seen as the main reason for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the public administration (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011). Secchi (2009) lists several triggers for the modernization of the state apparatus: the increased competition among countries for private investment and skilled labor, the availability of new organizational methods and technology, the rise of pluralistic values, and the increased complexity, dynamics and diversity of our societies.

In the 1980s, a broad reform movement with strong political, ideological and economic components starts to change the role of the State. Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the United States, lead the way in transitioning the role of government from interventionist and dirigisme to promoters of regulation (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011). In this context, the NPM starts to emerge. The strong normative character of the NPM model advocates for the incorporation private sector techniques of efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness in the structuring and management of public administration. Under the intense sponsorship of multilateral organizations, during the 80s and 90s, NPM quickly spread across many developed and emerging countries.

The NPM consists of a broad reform movement in public administration in order to get better performances by establishing a set of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of the organizations in the public sector.

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) argue that the NPM, also called the government reinvention movement in the United States (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), consists of a two-tier phenomenon. At the top tier, NPM is a theory or doctrine in which public services are improved via the immigration of concepts, techniques and values from the private sector. The lower level includes a specific set of concepts and practices: emphasis on performance through the review of measured indicators; preference of leaner and specialized organization instead of large multifunctional organizations; widespread introduction of typical mechanisms of free enterprise, such as, competitive tendering, performance pay and the treatment of end-users of services as clients.

The reform initiative focus on the search for efficiency and cost reduction and during the managerial movement is complemented by objectives such as prioritizing the quality of services provided; giving the citizen choices of service providers through competition among agencies; accountability and transparency (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011).

After three decades of the managerial movement, a consensus exists about the perception that the NPM consisted of a myriad of concepts and initiatives and similar principles in theory, in

practice the NPM promoted quite different results and changes in public administration. Such differences can be seen across many countries and over certain periods of time (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011; Pacheco, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Such heterogeneity led to disparate experiences as a consequence of the diversity and complexity of the objectives and also due to the influence of the pre-existing institutional framework of each country on the reform process in their public sector. Anglo-Saxon countries such as Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand were the forerunners and reached wider and innovative changes in public administration. For other OECD countries, especially in continental Europe, the reformist results were restricted to incremental changes to increase responsiveness and performance of the public administration. Latin American countries, under the heavy influence of the Washington Consensus, began reforms only in the 1990s. Many significant changes were proposed but the results incomplete. The proposals ranged from improvements in management and the redefinition of the responsibilities of the state (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011).

The NPM has been heavily criticized for its one-size-fits-all feature as the solution to the problems of public bureaucracy and for its pattern of mimetic isomorphism in which the reform projects were based (Hood & Peters, 2004). The reform projects with these intrinsic characteristics, from a managerial point of view did not, in practice result in homogeneity. In the majority of nations, a wide range of proposals have been rejected and/or adjusted to the institutional realities and to the particular relations between political actors in each country.

The debate about models or paradigms of public administration in recent years has on one side been marked by the reflection on advances and limitations of the reforms based on NPM and, on the other by proposals for post-NPM models to better reflect the principles and operating standards of current public management (Bourgon, 2010; Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2005; Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010; Hood & Peters, 2004; O'Flynn, 2007; Peters & Pierre, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Shaw, 2013).

If the results and a clear definition of NPM are still the objects of differences and uncertainties in the literature, the same is also true of the latest views on the principles and operating standards that serve as guidelines to the ruling governments. The similarity of the new views on public administration reform stems from the assumption that the NPM model has become exhausted after decades of hegemony. One exhausted example is the idea that public services are intended for customers, not citizens.

The constant concern with results, specifically efficiency emphasized by NPM, remains on the agenda of the proposed reforms. However, instead of an excessive appreciation of the role of the private sector in the provision of services, the new models underline a more balanced pattern between market and government (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011). The main topic of the current debate is the absence of a dominant thought model of reform. In addition, each proposed model would have new definitions, applications and ranging emphasis for each essential concept, such as state capacity, governance, networks, partnerships and transparency.

The inclusion of these new dimensions to the proposals of government reform strengthens the leading role of the state, but does not isolate the government in the promotion of economic and social development (Evans, 2008). Thus, there is a return of the ability of bureaucracy to lead this process but with a more interactive relationship with society than the classical bureaucratic standards defined by Max Weber. The hybrid concept of public administration reinforces the role of the state in the delivery of public services, but takes into account the capacity of bureaucracy tends to grow when combines with other society actors, both in decision-making and controlling processes. This perspective is well summarized by (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 44) in the following passage:

This renewed debate on state and development echoes the debate on public management, which allows locating the NPM as something that is no longer new . . . according to the angle of analysis. Despite the focus differences, it is possible to locate some common elements that articulate these latest analyzes and normative propositions to them. First, there is the crucial role assigned to the State as a development promoter and welfare. Second, the need for the state to develop new capacity, which has as its corollary the need for strong and competent bureaucracies, recovering its role after criticized by the NPM. Third, the emphasis on the relationship with society and the democratic process for setting priorities and making choices refers often to the notion of governance, others to the notion of sharing and deliberative processes. Elements that articulate public management with a democratic dimension and therefore to a political dimension but that, in a narrow sense, do not limit the instrumental and technical aspects to efficiency, but its definition of performance of the state and its social effectiveness.

The new strategies of State reform include different models that converge on the need to overcome NPM, but place different emphasis on the assumptions and management mechanisms that, in some cases, are repeated in the models or paradigms. The comparative research of Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) provides a detailed analysis of the reform experiences in developed countries between 1980 and 2010 and the European Union management initiatives, in order to explain the differences of the programs undertaken and the results achieved.

An alternative to the NPM is the Neo-Weberian State (NWS), which calls for strengthening the capacity of the State to lead development processes and restore confidence in public administration by modernizing the traditional state apparatus in order to make it more professional, more efficient and responsive to citizens (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

The shift from internal focus of bureaucratic rules to more interaction with the citizens and their demands and preferences is highlighted by a democratic representation with mechanisms for consultation and direct participation of citizens, promoting a culture of quality of service, and fostering improved performance by aligning both the emphasis on *ex ante* and *ex post* controls (Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011).

The Neo-Weberian bureaucracy does not ignore components of the NPM such as private enterprise methods of management

and principles of efficiency and responsiveness. However, it assumes the role of bureaucratic authority of the State in the conduct of public policy. In other words, the NWS becomes the main actor responsible for, but not the only one, the solution of complex political issues, such as globalization, technological advances, demographic changes, environmental sustainability and other issues.

A second alternative proposal to NPM exists, with greater cooperation in decision-making process, surrounds the idea of governance and is more recent. In other words, the model advocates the expansion of relationships between all the actors within public administration, that is, between State and society, private actors and government or society and the private sector (Secchi, 2009).

As such, the citizen begins to play a more prominent role in comparison to the customer-focused approach, as is the case with NPM. The focus turns to the need to increase the legitimacy of the State due to the skepticism of overcoming the deficits inherited in representative democracy. Control and accountability gain strength in the development of public policies through democratic participation and decision-making mechanisms that improve the management and delivery of public services.

This perspective on governance is intended to make the government better informed, more flexible and less exclusive. The hierarchical organization is replaced by the inclusion of new actors in networks more directly involved in the implementation, the processes and the control of public policies. A more effective and legitimate functioning of public administration is to be expected (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

The Digital-Era Governance (DEG) is another attempt to reform model of public management. Dunleavy et al. (2005) propose to increase the professionalism of the traditional bureaucracy and to make more efficient and closer to citizens. DEG is critical of the inconsistency of the NPM and of the assumptions of disaggregation and competition between administrative units, which ultimately created the inability of the State to deal with its own complexity of governmental coordination. DEG is an alternative based on the integration of information technology to foster better relationships between administrative units and civil society. Based on the principles of reintegration, holism based on need (*joined-up governance*) And, Dunleavy et al. (2005) argue that is possible to establish a more agile and responsive government based on the holistic approach of joined-up governance and the principles of reintegration and because of digital changes.

More recently, a fourth public management perspective has been gaining ground, the Public Value Management (PVM), which is concerned not only with results in terms of services, but also with how such results are achieved (Shaw, 2013). The perception of citizens is central to PVM. The citizen is considered both an active participant and user in the creation of government policy. The involvement and collaboration of the citizen is a key element of the public administration.

Collaboration is introduced to supersede the competition aspect of the NPM and as a support for and a source of legitimacy of the public administration. Management is highlighted by relational focus on multiple and common goals, rather than by

results and performance targets. Furthermore, PVM differs from the NPM on accountability. Citizens act as government controllers, consumer of governmental services and fund-raisers. PVM also extends the scope of alternatives for the provision of public services that must be selected in a varied and pragmatic fashion (O'Flynn, 2007).

In summary, we presented a brief discussion of the contemporary history of the initiatives of reform and models or paradigms of public management, which bring important insights for understanding of this debate. First, there is a consensus that the experiences of administrative reforms, both Managerial and Post-NPM, offered a high degree of diversity in their settings, explained by factors such as the path dependency of each country, the relationship of political forces, economic and technological changes, among others (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

The second is the incongruity of the view of pure superseding and complete models of management, between the NPM and classic bureaucratic models or between the Post-NPM models and NPM. The literature suggests a much more incremental and messy process than was found in the original proposals, regardless of the country or the historical moment analyzed. As stated by Goldfinch and Wallis (2010, p. 1099), just like the convergence of NPM, Post-NPM is also perhaps a myth.

Finally, it is clear also that new approaches advocate a complementary character. It is quite difficult to measure precisely the degree to which each of the models and the NPM, are implemented in a particular country. However, the breadth and overlap of the assumptions and instruments of the latest reform of the public administration reinforce the prevalence of a more incremental character in the construction of the discourse than on the proper revision of the debate.

One way to understand this complex debate and the assumptions governing the operation of public management in the twenty-first century is to detach the need for full framework of models or paradigms from the direct trends in public administration. For convenience, we choose to investigate the innovations on management focused on the principles or converging mechanisms of the governments in recent decades than actually fitting the empirically valid innovations in boxes or pre-established theoretical models.

Therefore, it is possible to create, from that broad debate on administrative reforms, a set of trends (principles and/or tools) management that has been guiding the innovations in public administration in the last two decades (Bourgon, 2010; Carneiro & Menicucci, 2011; Grau, 2004; Manning et al., 2009; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), they are:

- Improvement of mechanisms of transparency, open government and accountability;
- Promotion of e-government as an expansion strategy, ease access and citizen participation in public administration;
- New public policies that encourage more active role of citizens in the creation of political capital;
- Networks and partnerships of state actors, social and private enterprises;

- Expansion of information technology to increase the quality and efficiency in the delivery of public services.

From this theoretical categorization, this paper work begins the next section, the framework of innovations in public management within these trends.

Innovation in Federal Public Management 2007–2014

The FAPMI has been held annually since 1996. The award was created by the Ministry of Administration and State Reform – MARE in order to encourage the managerial nature in the context of reform conceived by Minister Bresser Pereira. During the first 19 years, the prize went through several restructures and improvements with the aim to improve the criteria and selection procedures of the winning initiatives.

According to Ferrarezi and Amorim (2007), the prize underwent significant changes in 2007. Categories saw an increase in objectivity and information was expanded to the Judging Committee as technical visits became the proof mechanism *in locus* of the report submitted in the initial phase. This strategy redefined the concept of innovation, the criteria and thematic areas of the winning initiatives. The innovation concepts of the contest are the following: changes of the previous practices, by the incorporation of new elements of public administration or a by a different combination of the existing management mechanisms that produce significant results for the public service and society (Ferrarezi & Amorim, 2007).

This observation and an analysis of the trajectory of the Contest to date, we decided that this paper would focus on the analysis of the initiatives awarded between 2007 and 2014, which translates into 8 years and 80 awards. This time period was chosen because of the consistency of the criteria and categories of the last eight editions of the award. The analysis was based on the accounts of the awards and the identification of a convergence with the principles and tools identified in the theoretical survey.

Initiative reports were categorized through content analysis on three steps:

- (i) Construction of categories identified in literature trends (Table 1);
- (ii) Independent analysis and categorization of each initiative by two research assistants, following the analysis protocol guidelines from step 1; and
- (iii) Validation by academic specialist. The specific case of network performance was divided it into three groups: other government agencies, society and the private sector, given the relevance of co-creation in the understanding of innovation.

The classification of the initiatives allowed the creation of a database with dummy variables (binary dichotomous) with a 0 (zero) represent the absence of category in the initiative and one (1) a presence. The possibility of more than one category per initiative led to choosing dichotomous variables in all the analyzed experiments.

Table 1
Protocol for collecting and coding information.

Trend	Categories	Identification form
Transparency, open government and accountability	Transparency	Actions that allow increased access to data and/or government activities (the organization itself or others)
Access to citizens through electronic government (e-government)	Access to citizen e-gov	Government actions through the internet whose purpose is to promote access to the beneficiaries of the public policy in question
New arrangements to public policy (active role of the citizen)	New arrangements – active citizen	Presents actions with society role
Networks and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks with state; • Networks with the private sector; • Networking with stakeholders 	Joint action implementation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies • Private initiative • NGOs, Civic Society of Public Interest or organized body or agency.
Use of information technology	Use ICT	Development or use of software as the central point of the initiative.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 2
Frequency of Management Trends – Federal Award of Public Management Innovation (FAPMI), 2007–2014.

Trend	Frequency	Percent
<i>Transparency, open government and accountability</i>	35	44%
<i>E-gov</i>	13	16%
<i>Performance networks</i>	52	65%
Government agencies	40	50%
Society	14	17.5%
Private initiative	18	22 ± 5%
<i>New arrangements</i>	24	30%
<i>Information technology</i>	55	69%

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the Federal Award of Public Management Innovation (FAPMI) reports.

Table 2 describes the occurrence (frequency and percentage) of each of the trends between 2007 and 2014.

The first trend concerns the improvement of mechanisms of transparency, open government and accountability. Empirical analysis shows that almost half of the winning initiatives (44%) incorporate these principles in the implementation process. In this case, the result reinforces the view that the federal government is responding to social demands with an increase in the control of government actions.

A symbolic case of this trend among Brazilian initiatives is the Transparency Portal of the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU) - 2007 which enabled the effective monitoring of the financial execution of all programs and actions of the federal government. Another experiment is the Social Security Census: innovative solutions for the update of the registry (2007).

This census made it possible to view improper and overpayments by the Social Security (INSS) and generated savings of nearly 120 million Reais. The establishment of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) - 2009 also falls into this category as it generated more accountability for the educational results. Another important winning initiative was the e-SIC – Citizen Electronic Information System of the Comptroller General - 2013 that functions as a gateway under the federal executive power, so that any citizen may refer to the law on access to public information (Law no. 12,527/2011).

The promotion of e-government as an expansion strategy to facilitate citizen access to and participation in public administration stands at 13 or 16% and is the lowest among the trends analyzed. In this aspect, the INSS: Scheduled Appointments Program generated considerable reduction of waiting times (2008); the Retirement Program within 30 min (2010); and the Program to the Application of Benefits - 2011. The analysis of other reports highlight programs such as Broadband internet in public schools by the Ministry of Education - 2010; the Network of Tele-assistance to remote areas which improved access to specialized health care by the Hospital of the Federal University of Minas Gerais - 2012; and the post office reverse logistics service of the Brazilian Post and Telegraph Company - 2014.

Acting in networks and partnerships is observed to be the second most recurrent trend. It is present in most of the initiatives (65%) confirming that co-creation is an important factor in the formulation and implementation of innovation in the public sector.

Certain heterogeneity prevails in the composition of partnerships. The first, between government agencies, corresponds to half of the winning initiatives and confirms the perception that the ability to act jointly can generate not only significant gains for the state but also benefits the different organizations and levels of government.

The private sector is an important partner as it is involved in about a quarter of the initiatives in the role of consultant or involved directly or indirectly with specific public policy.

The effectiveness of the performance of the private sector in networking initiatives listed is shown in new arrangements of public policy (30%). The involvement of social organizations reflects the proper role of these actors in an innovative management process. The closing of the gap between the private sector and bureaucracy could be observed in the actions of social ministries such as the Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Alleviation, the Ministry of Health and the Special Secretariat of the Presidency.

Two very innovative experiences regarding the establishment of networks and partnerships for the implementation of public policy purposes need to be highlighted. One is The School Route Program of the Ministry of Education (MEC). Awarded 1st place in 2009, it is a partnership of agencies of the federal government (National Bank for Economic and Social Development), municipalities, numerous states, the Federal District and NGOs to overcome historical problems of transportation to and from the schools in rural areas. The other initiative is the Bolsa Família (Family Allowance) Program that won 3rd prize in 2010. Through the Bolsa, a follow-up of the conditions of the

families has been able to achieve significant results (the health agenda of 6.5 million families and the school record attendance is of 14 million children and adolescents is monitored) is due to the coordination of a complex network of government agencies, involving areas of health, education and social assistance in all states and municipalities in the country.

The trend that stands out in the analysis of the Awards Competition is the extensive use of information technology. Keeping up with the convergence of public administrations around the world, approximately 70% of the innovations incorporate technological tools to manage the changes in their processes and services.

This trend is convergent with the current governance of the digital age (Dunleavy et al., 2005), previously discussed. In order to surpass the competitive and divisive perspective of the NPM, the paradigm proposes the increase in the adoption of information and communication technology-based initiatives as a means to improve the relationships between administrative units and civil society. These innovations, driven by exponential advances in ICT over the last decades, tend to help governments become more agile and responsive by achieving different goals, such as improved data processing, better governance, development and monitoring of public policies and increased transparency (Balbe, 2010).

Two initiatives in particular fall into the ICT trend and objectives. The first is the use of Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) the contest winner of 2007. During the national census, the IBGE provided information and communication in real-time to more than 80,000 enumerators spread across Brazil. The second initiative, the 2012 winner, is the Electronic System of Citizen Information Services (e-SIC), by the CGU, which facilitates and reduces bureaucracy in the submission of requests of the Access to Information Act (LAI). The move to online services enabled e-Sic to process more than 220,000 applications with a response rate of 98% and average time of 14 days.

In summary, categories are not mutually exclusive and the same initiative may contain components of different trends. The choice to highlight one trend over the other was due to the prevalence and relevance to the success of the award-winning experience analyzed. It is of note to say that out of 80 initiatives analyzed in the study; only two were not classified into at least one of the theoretical trends. This result allows us to infer that the successful practices of the Brazilian government clearly adhere to the recent worldwide proposals for the modernization and reform of public management.

Final remarks

This paper proposed to examine if the extent of the innovations of the Brazilian federal government in the last eight years converge with the debate for changes in the paradigms of public management of the last decades. The theoretical discussion demonstrated that the prevailing view is that the government is not necessarily following any specific well-structured and direct model of management. Instead, research has shown that the operation of today's public administration is based on a prolific

number of similar principles and tools. Thus the view that administrative reforms have been guided by incremental decisions with an individualized character than by decisions constructed on comprehensive implementation plans to change the normative management models or paradigms.

This paper presented how the Brazilian government has been adjusting to the process of transformation in governance. The analysis was transferred from the comprehensive and holistic reform movement to a look at the effective changes that the public sector has been implementing in recent years. The choices for innovative and award-winning experiences demonstrate to what extent the public administration in Brazil has been adjusting to the global trends in public management.

The descriptive analysis concludes that during the period in question virtually all the principles and tools listed were incorporated, in varying degrees, in the award winning initiatives. The results indicate that, first; most of the initiatives (97.5%) fall into the trends. Second, there is an overlap of the experiments, i.e. initiatives that incorporate more than one characteristic. Moreover, the innovations are based predominantly on information and communications technology and networking as the main strategy of performance to improve the quality and efficiency of the public service.

In conclusion, this paper contributes toward signaling that Brazilian actions adhere to the global trends in public management. This is an exploratory study aimed at the analysis of the relationship between innovation and the current debate about the changes in public administration. It is important, however, to point out that the survey was not exhaustive and not meant to be definitive. On the contrary, given the relevance of this research area, this paper expects that this is only the beginning of a productive research agenda.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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