

What are the key characteristics of effective public administration?: findings from recent empirical studies of bureaucracy

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Brief self-introduction

- Assistant Professor at the Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University, the Netherlands
- Ph.D. Indiana University, the U.S.
- The Quality of Government Institute, Sweden
- Teaching & research interest
 - Comparative public administration and management
 - Quality of government
 - Bureaucratic structure
- Editorial board member: *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*
- Publications
 - *Public Administration Review, Governance, Journal of European Public Policy, Public Management Review, etc.*
- Recent works
 - "Is Impartiality Enough? Government Impartiality and Citizens' Perceptions of Public Service Quality" *Governance* (with Mehmet Akif Demircioglu)
 - "Politicization, Bureaucratic Legalism, and Innovative Attitudes in the Public Sector". *Public Administration Review* (with Victor Lapuente)

Main topic

- Findings from recent empirical studies in peer reviewed academic journals
- What are the attributes of high quality government and public administration?

Findings from recent empirical studies

- Growing number of cross-national empirical studies on bureaucracy
- “Rediscovery” of bureaucracy (Evans and Rauch 1999, Olsen 2006, Rothstein 2009)
- Empirical studies find that **the output side of the political system (i.e. public administration and policy implementation)** rather than the input side (i.e. quality of electoral democracy) matters for favorable macro outcomes (Rothstein 2009, Holmberg et al. 2009)
- **Certain characteristics of public administration** (often called “quality of government”)—such as impartiality, strong rule of law, low corruption, and meritocratic recruitment of civil servants— **matter for various favourable macro-level outcomes.**
- Rediscovery of “Weberian bureaucracy”
- Accumulated empirical evidence

Findings from recent empirical studies

- Key characteristics of effective public administration identified by empirical studies
 - 1) Impartiality in bureaucratic decision making
 - 2) Meritocracy in personnel policy
 - 3) Representative bureaucracy
 - 4) Collaborative governance

Characteristics of effective public administration

1. Impartiality in bureaucratic decision making

- One of the critical components of the classic model of Weberian bureaucracy (Galbreath & Rose, 2008; Linde, 2012).
- Core feature of quality of government (Rothstein & Teorell 2009)
 - “[w]hen implementing laws and policies, government official shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/ case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law” (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008, p. 170)
 - Impartial treatment of citizens
 - Civil servants can behave and make decisions without the influence of any political party (Aucoin, 2012)

Characteristics of effective public administration

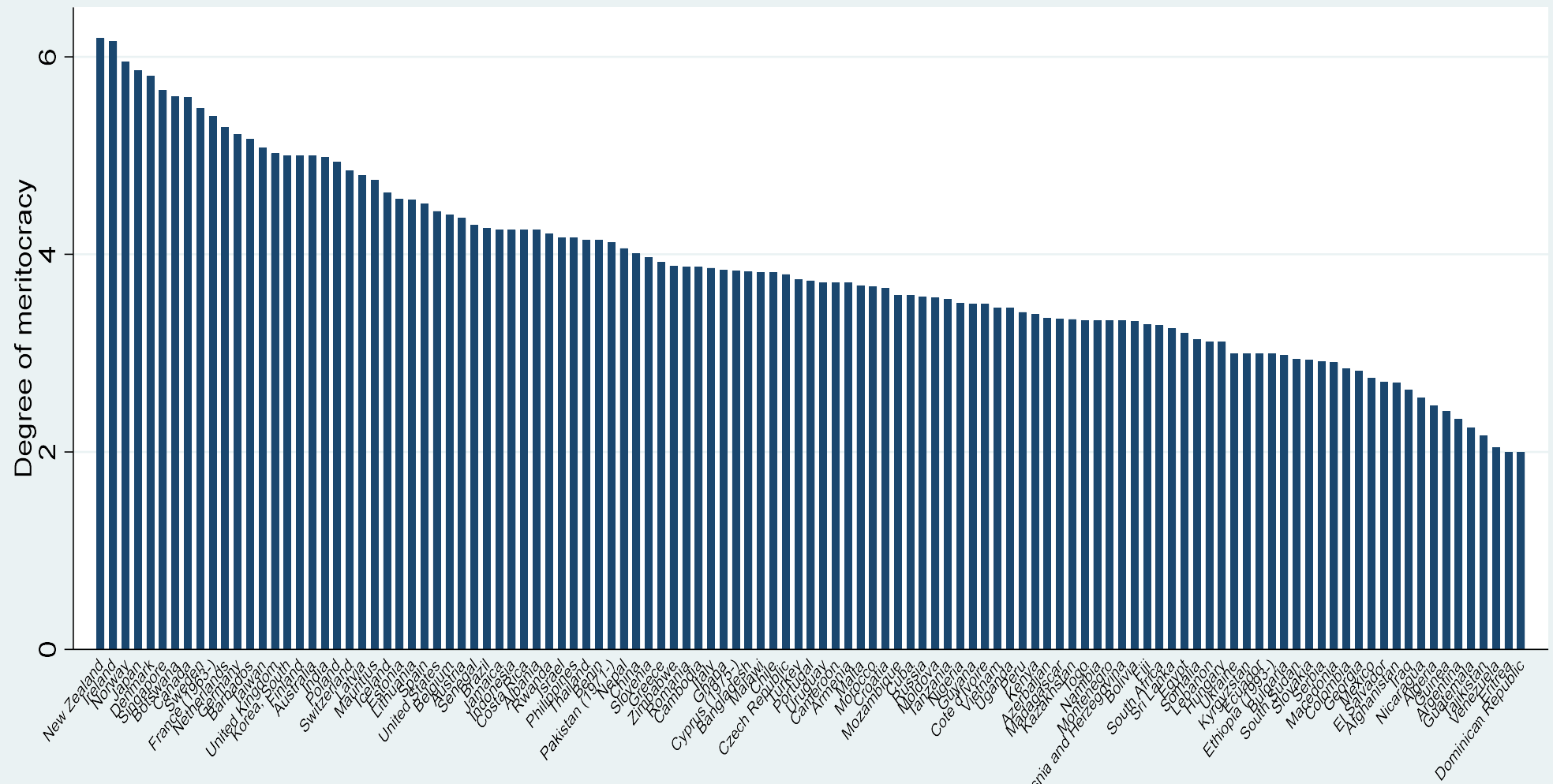
2. Meritocracy in personnel policy

- Separation of careers: politicians and bureaucrats (Dahlström & Lapuente 2017)
- Separate career
 - Mutual checks and balances through different accountability mechanisms
 - Politicians: electorate
 - Bureaucrats: professional peers and norms
 - Recruitment and promotion depend on performance, not on personal contacts and connections
 - Meritocratic recruitment ensures staffing independent and competent civil servants. Such recruitment practices attract more competent professional public servants with relevant skills and ensure “credible commitment” to public services (Miller & Whitford, 2016).

Characteristics of effective public administration

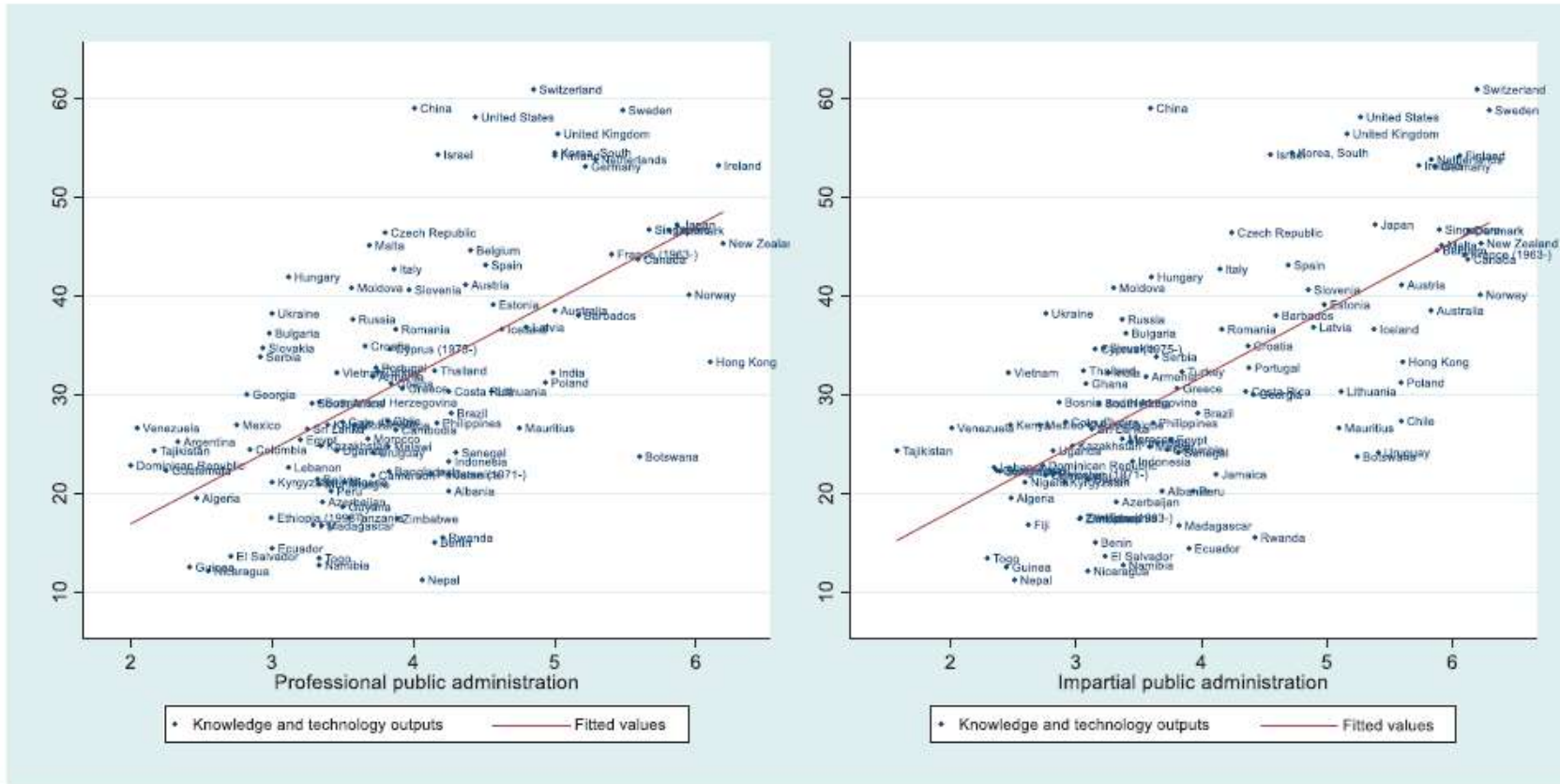
- Findings from cross-national empirical studies
- Positive impacts of impartial and meritocratic bureaucracy
 - Socio-economic development (Evans & Rauch, 1999; Nistotskaya, Charron, & Lapuente, 2015)
 - Corruption prevention (Charron, Dahlström, Lapuente, & Fazekas, 2017; Dahlström, Lapuente, & Teorell, 2012a)
 - Regulatory quality and entrepreneurship (Nistotskaya & Cingolani, 2016)
 - Scientific productivity and innovation (Fernández-Carro & Lapuente, 2016; Lapuente & Suzuki, 2020; Suzuki & Demircioglu, 2019)
 - Economic activities or infrastructure efficiency (Crescenzi, Di Cataldo, & Rodríguez-Pose, 2016; Kyriacou, Muineló-Gallo, & Roca-Sagalés, 2019; Rodríguez-Pose & Garcilazo, 2015)
 - Environmental outcomes (Povitkina & Bolkvadze, 2019)
 - Government effectiveness (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2017)

Degree of meritocracy in personnel policy



Source: QoG Expert Survey

Meritocratic and impartial bureaucracy and innovation



Note: Samples are based on model 1.

Suzuki & Demircioglu (2019)

Figure 1. Administrative characteristics, knowledge and technology outputs.

Characteristics of effective public administration

3. Representative bureaucracy

- One of the popular topics in public administration and management (Kingsley 1944, Meier & Melton 2014)
- **Demographic and social representation of civil servants** matters for outputs of public organizations
- Public organizations should look like the population they serve
- Ethnicity, gender, education, social class, etc.
- Impact of more diverse civil servants on performance of bureaucracy and broader outcomes
 - “Fair and just treatment, justice, and the equal and equitable distribution of benefits to the society at large” (Gooden 2014 in Riccucci & Van Ryzin 2017)
 - Wilkins & Keiser (2006): the representation of women in child support enforcement units positively affects women clients in those units
 - Hong (2017): More representative police force leads to better treatment of not only minorities but of all citizens. Greater diversity in police organizations may lead to less unfair or unethical practices such as ethnic or racial profiling
 - Suzuki & Avellaneda (2018): More female representation in local councils lead to less risky local finance outcomes

Characteristics of effective public administration

4. Collaborative governance

- A concept that has received a lot of attention in the last 20 years
- Agranoff & McGuire (2003); McGuire (2006); Bryson et al. (2006); Thomson & Perry (2006); Ansell & Gash (2007); Emerson et al. (2011); Hartley et al. (2013); Dickinson & Sullivan (2014); Bryson et al. (2015); Choi & Moynihan (2019)
 - “the process of facilitating and operating in **multiorganizational arrangements** in order to remedy problems that **cannot be solved — or solved easily — by single organizations**” (McGuire 2006, 33)
- Departure from Weberian model bureaucracy
- Collaborative approach and covid-19 preventions
 - South Korea
 - Taiwan
 - Norway
 - See Van der Wal, Z. (2020). Being a Public Manager in Times of Crisis: The Art of Managing Stakeholders, Political Masters, and Collaborative Networks. *Public Administration Review*, 80(5), 759-764.

Implications for public administration in Libya

- Attributes of effective public administration
- However, contexts matter (O'Toole & Meier 2015)
- State structures and history should not be neglected (Milward et al. 2016, Roberts 2018)
- Need to be tailored to the Libyan condition

Thank you!

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