NEW PUBLIC SERVICE BARGAIN: TIME FOR PARADIGM SHIFT IN TURBULENT TIMES?

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Abstract

Europe and North America are facing demographic changes with an aging population and declining birth rates. This has implications for the labor market and the workforce of the future. An existential crisis for public institutions is that the public sector is no longer the employer of choice. The public sector is already facing challenges in recruitment, filling vacancies with competent and talented personnel, and retaining public servants. The paradigm shifts in the state from public administration to new public management and new public governance in part underlies this declining interest in public service with the introduction of neo-liberal public sector reforms over the decades, downsizing of the state, relatively lower pay, and various austerity measures. The article revisits these paradigm shifts of the state, providing a review and discussing the impact of these shifts. Furthermore, the article argues for a new paradigm shift. A New Public Service Bargain, which recognizes and values public service because it is the human resource capacity of the state that is key to addressing crises, wicked policy problems and turbulent times.

Keywords: human resources, public service bargain, talent management, new public management, new public governance.

1. Introduction

Much has been written about governance and paradigm shifts of the state from public administration (PA) to new public management (NPM), and to new public governance (NPG). The article revisits these paradigm shifts as a context and contributes to a scholarly debate as to whether these paradigm shifts have enabled the state to deal with turbulent times. The article also calls for a paradigm shift that recognizes the human resource capacity of public institutions to address wicked policy problems (Massey, 2022) and challenges in turbulent times.

Hood (1991) described the paradigm shift from PA to NPM as the value base of the state, focused on the efficacy of the market and drawing upon private sector principles of competition to drive public sector efficiencies. The criticisms of the state saw the introduction of neo-liberal public sector reforms and ever-increasing differentiation of the state (Rhodes, 1997). The hollowing-out of the state and increasing involvement of the private sector such as contracting-out was described as a form of governance with a move towards privatization, entrepreneurialism and competition (Massey and Pyper, 2005). Although there have over the years been many scholarly debates and publications of the positive and negative outcomes of these paradigm shifts (see Massey and Pyper, 2005; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011), this article aims to open a debate as to whether public sector reforms prepared governments for dealing with turbulent times and wicked policy problems, or whether it has contributed to the hollowing-out of the state in its capacity to address wicked policy problems and manage crises. Particular attention is paid to the human resource capacity and challenges faced by the government in this debate.

The article is structured in three sections. The first section provides a review of paradigm shifts in the state and draws upon contemporary research of the impact of NPM. The second section provides a discussion of a challenge governments face, specifically the challenge of human resource capacity of the public sector and the implications for dealing with turbulent times, crises and wicked policy problems. The article draws upon the experience of Europe and North America as illustrative of countries that first implemented NPM, have the longest experience of neo-liberal public sector reforms, and embraced NPG. The final section of the article concludes and makes an argument for a new paradigm shift—a New Public Service Bargain.

2. Paradigm shifts of the state—revisiting debates

2.1. Public administration and New Public Management

Public administration in practice (as opposed to the scholarly field) is often associated with bureaucracy, rule-bound *modus operandi* of government, an adherence to standardized procedures, inflexibility, impervious to change and thereby slow, inefficient and wasteful (Meier and Hill, 2007; Barberis, 2011). However, Du Gay (2000; 2005) challenges denunciations of bureaucracy by arguing that it is not in decline after the introduction of NPM reforms, but that bureaucracy has become a pervasive form of organization. Ac-

cording to Barberis (2011) public administration in the form of the Weberian bureaucracy is still a prevalent form of organization.

The Weberian perspective views bureaucracy as a rational institution which advances authority (Weber, 1968) through the formal enactment of laws (Mommsen, 1974; Blau and Meyer, 1987). The characteristics of a Weberian bureaucracy with fixed and official jurisdictional areas ordered by laws and rules, hierarchy, officialdom, and meritorious careers are all pervasive aspects of government (Meier and Hill, 2007; Barberis, 2011). Arguably, bureaucracy in contemporary government still plays an important role in the machinery of government and the policy process. It does so by virtue of its expertise, information and knowledge (Peters, 2001; Page and Jenkins, 2005). These resources are concentrated in bureaucracies with the technical expertise and monopoly of information to inform the policy process (Peters, 2001).

The Weberian bureaucracy with an emphasis on qualified officials with the appropriate skills and experience, and longevity of office provides bureaucrats with the argument that they have more intimate knowledge of the policy area, should be in control of making the policy and be principal advisors to politicians on policy (Peters, 2001). A second role of the bureaucracy is its linkage between interest groups, non-state actors and policy stakeholders with the political arena (Peters, 2001). Bureaucrats are the interface between the politicians, particularly those within the executive branch of government, and various organizations and even individual citizens who wish to influence the policy process (see Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981). Politicians, particularly those within the executive, are dependent upon bureaucrats who fashion policies that they believe may be politically palatable to their political leaders (Page and Jenkins, 2005). Bureaucrats' permanence and stability enables them to gain expertise, knowledge and information about a policy area over a long period of time (Page and Jenkins, 2005). Additionally, it allows for continuity particularly in turbulent times. The relationship between bureaucrats and politicians, i.e. the political-administrative interface is explained through a public service bargain where politicians normally expect a degree of loyalty and competence from bureaucrats and in return bureaucrats expect a mixture of tangible and intangible rewards such as a permanent career and good remuneration (Hood and Lodge, 2006). Thus, an important role of the bureaucracy is its expertise in informing policy decisions, and therefore many scholars argue that despite NPM reforms, PA is still relevant (Du Guy, 2005). However, is a career in public service still an attractive option, or has NPM eroded the public service bargain?

The role of bureaucracy with its rule adherence, permanence and monopolist role in the policy process came under increasing criticism from neo-liberalist agendas (Massey and Pyper, 2005). The view of 'big government' saw a revisionist view of bureaucracy with criticisms of bureaucratic pathologies and inefficiencies crowding-out the market (see Thompson and Miller, 2003). These neo-liberal views saw reforms of the public sector in the form of NPM (Massey and Pyper, 2005; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011) and thus bureaucracy, rather than being viewed as Weberian rational and efficient administrative organization, became synonymous with inefficiency through rule-bound, monopolistic behavior.

In the UK Thatcherism saw the introduction of neo-liberal reforms of state with privatization of public services, sale of public assets, contracting out of public services to the private sector, agencification of public agencies, introduction of market principles such as competition and performance management (Massey and Pyper, 2005). In the US reforms of the state saw the re-inventing of government with President Clinton and Vice-President Gore drawing upon the work of Osborne and Gaebler (1992). This paradigm shift in the state was opening the state up to free market forces, competition and the reduction in the size of the state.

As De Vries and Nemec (2013) argues, the neo-liberal roots of NPM told society that it would be better off if the public sector was downsized and the number of public officials could be decreased by privatization and economic liberalization. De Vries and Nemec's (2013) review of NPM reforms offers a valuable insight into the debates of paradigm shifts of the state. Although they acknowledge that neo-liberal principles of NPM was a free market ideology, De Vries and Nemec (2013) observed that NPM on the one hand aimed to improve the quality of the public service delivery on behalf of its customers, and on the other hand the need to downsize the public service, because in neo-liberal terms the private sector was superior in delivering services and performance than the public sector. Drechsler (2005), examining the rise and demise of NPM, argued that NPM was no longer a viable concept, yet evidence of the pervasiveness of NPM exists (De Vries and Nemec, 2013). There have been debates as to whether NPM is still relevant, whether it still exists, whether we are in an era of public governance.

2.2. Governance and New Public Governance

Rhodes (2011, p. 33) argued that governance '[...] signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to new processes of governing; or changed conditions of ordered rule; or new methods by which society is governed.' Thus, the link to NPM is the decreasing role of the state, the paradigm shift toward NPM and the downsizing of the state to involving the private sector and other sectors of society in the delivery of services and involvement in public policy processes. Governance was therefore referred to the ever-increasing variety of domains (e.g. supranational, national and sub-national) and actors (e.g. from the political, public, private, civil society and community realms) involved in the policy process (Richards and Smith, 2002; Rhodes, 1997; 2008). Governance is often used within the context of NPM with the government moving from a hierarchical mode of service delivery to reforming the public sector (as described above) with the integration of non-state actors such as civil, the private sector and other society sectors (Fairholm, 2010). Lynn (2010, p. 671) defines governance as the 'action or manner of governing—that is, of directing, guiding, or regulating individuals, organizations, or nations in conduct or actions.' This somewhat broad and all-encompassing definition illustrates that government is no longer directly involved in governing, but is steering others in the policy process. Rhodes (1996; 1997) argued that neoliberal NPM reforms of the government resulted in a differentiated polity with authority of the state being 'hollowed-out'.

Rhodes (2008; 2011) defined governance as self-organizing, inter-organizational networks with the following characteristics: interdependence between organizations; the continuing interactions between network members require a need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes; interactions are game-like and rooted in trust; and there is a significant degree of autonomy from the state. The conceptualization of governance therefore involved trust, interdependence, an exchange of resources, shared purpose and autonomy from the state. Scholars argue that governance involves the functional interdependence between public, private and civil society actors in policy formulation and implementation with government increasingly dependent and inter-dependent on cooperation and joint resource mobilization of policy actors outside traditional hierarchical governmental institutions (Börzel and Heard-Lauréote, 2009). Key to the concept of governance is networks which have resulted in new forms of structural relationships, interdependencies and dynamics between actors for the mobilization of resources between actors where resources are widely dispersed (Kooiman, 1993). Thus, governance is a much broader term than government with public resources and services provided by any permutation of government, private and civil society organizations such as the voluntary sector (Rhodes, 2008; Pierre and Peters, 2000).

Scholars observed that public services were increasingly being decentralized within the context of new forms of governance arrangements towards public governance with the co-governance and co-production of services (Johnson and Osborne, 2003; Kooiman, 1993). Yet, despite this emerging consensus that policy is being formulated and implemented through a permutation of state and non-state actors in a variety of public governance arrangements debates remain. Osborne (2010, p. 9) described the increasingly complex, plural and fragmented nature of public policy and service delivery as NPG. Osborne (2011) argued that NPM was a transitory stage in the evolution from PA to NPG. He acknowledged that there is a co-existence of PA and NPM, and there are elements of an overlap among the paradigm shifts of the state (Osborne, 2011). He argues however, that there is evidence to support the case that '[...] the time of NPM has...been a relatively short-lived and transient one between the statist and bureaucratic tradition of PA and the...pluralist tradition of NPG' (Osborne, 2011, p. 419). NPG draws upon institutional and network theory with a plurality of state and non-state actors involved in networks, negotiations and contractual relations (Osborne, 2010). What then has been the impact of these paradigm shifts on the state, and moreover the state's capacity to deal with turbulent times and wicked policy problems?

2.3. The impact of paradigm shifts

Despite the voluminous scholarly contributions on neo-liberal public sector reforms, the impact of reforms remains opaque. Pollitt (2005) acknowledges that although the broad aims of producing more efficient, effective and responsive public services may have been widely shared, the mixtures of strategies, priorities, styles and methods adopted by different governments have varied very widely. Thus, making it difficult to undertake evaluative studies as governments have started at different points in the implementation of

NPM type public sector reforms and have implemented reforms in different ways (Pollitt, 2005). He also argues that evaluation of the impact of NPM is dependent on how results are measured, arguing there are limitations in studies:

a. An absence of reliable baseline measures, so that before-and-after comparisons become speculative;

b. An absence of benchmarking, where for example productivity gains of a privatized company may be positively evaluated without comparable data for non-privatized companies over the same period;

c. Limited or no gathering of the views of service users;

d. Scarcity or absence of data on transitional costs;

e. Scarcity or absence of data on step-changes in transactional costs and/or on other continuing 'side effects' such as the loss of trust or a degree of value confusion;

f. Opinion gathering being limited to, or biased towards, senior staff as some middle- and lower-level staff are often more critical of reforms;

g. Little analysis of contextual variations which may mean that a similar type of reform will work well in one situation or locality, but not in another;

h. Limited or no attention to attribution problems, i.e. often several reforms have proceeded simultaneously, and external conditions have also been changing, which makes it hard confidently to attribute results to specific reforms;

i. Narrow range of criteria applied to the findings (e.g., productivity measures only, with no attention to equity, to staff morale or to externalities), which most of the evaluations fail to distinguish between and/or miss out altogether many of the types of results (Pollitt, 2005, pp. 280–281).

A recent study that attempted to measure the impact of NPM on the state was a large-scale study across Europe, which found mixed results on measures common to NPM type reforms in the public sector. The study focused on five key structural and NPM reforms prominent within central governments across Europe, including downsizing (i.e., reforms aimed at cutting costs, through redundancies, closures or terminations); agencification (i.e., reforms that create quasi-autonomous agencies in place of government ministries); contracting-out (i.e., reforms that put public services out to competitive tender); customer orientation (i.e., reforms that increase communication between public service providers and users), and flexible employment practices (i.e., reforms that make civil service careers more flexible and less hierarchically organized) (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). The study involved a survey of top public sector executives in twenty European countries and showed that major structural reforms involving downsizing and contracting-out of public services resulted in improved efficiency, but less impact for performance (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). Downsizing was associated with declining service quality, and contracting-out had a positive relationship with policy coordination (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). Customer orientation had a strong connection with service quality and policy coordination, and on overall public administration performance (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). The study also found that downsizing and contracting-out had a positive relationship with costs

and efficiency. Importantly the study showed efficiency improvements may come at a price because in pursuit of downsizing there was a reduction in public service quality (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). However, the study showed a positive connection between contracting-out and policy coordination, which the authors argue may suggest that contractors' managerial capabilities are an additional source for government (Hammerschmid *et al.*, 2019). Hammerschmid *et al.* (2019) conclude from their study that gains in efficiency do not appear to be bringing the many other performance benefits that advocates of NPM reforms assert.

Equally, there have been debates on the impact and efficacy of NPG, but the problem here too is on results and measurement. This is partly because the NPG remains conceptually underdeveloped (Torfing and Triantafillou, 2013), but proponents have argued that NPG has allowed for more inclusion of non-governmental actors in public policy and service delivery, which increases the legitimacy of decision-making (Börzel and Risse, 2010). This perhaps explains the findings of the Hammerschmid *et al.* (2019) on contracting-out and policy coordination. According to Brandsen and Johnston (2018) there are advantages to NPG and collaborations between state and non-state actors. Firstly, there is a pooling of resources and scaling of economies through mutual interdependence of resources among state and non-state actors, which has the potential to improve the quality of public services. Secondly, there is a perceived legitimacy that the collective effort of state and non-state actors incorporates the knowledge of all affected by a service and therefore there is a collective ownership (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). Third, there is the assumption of responsiveness in effort to improve service delivery through collective effort (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). However, there are issues with NPG. Firstly, there are problems of coordination across actors, institutions, and networks (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). Organizations have different modes of operations and procedures, power balances and agendas, and the sheer logistics of working in different locations results in a trade-off between inclusion of relevant actors and organizations to increase legitimacy and time to reach decisions (Huxham and Vangen, 1996; Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). There is also the threat of accountability being fragmented with an increasing number of organizations and actors collaborating in NPG networks, which could result in diffused roles and responsibilities (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). Some studies have also shown the asymmetries of resource, information and power among NPG actors and organizations which risks exclusion and a lack of representativity and legitimacy (Brandsen and Johnston 2018).

The debates on the paradigm shifts will no doubt continue in public administration scholarship, but this article calls for a closer examination and understanding of how these shifts have enabled or hollowed-out the human resource capacity of the state to address turbulent times. Indeed, as Pollitt (2005) notes when measuring results little attention is paid to human resource issues such as equity, staff morale, motivation, etc. It is pertinent to note that paradigm shifts in the state were invariably a response to economic recessions (1970s and 1980s) and the financial crisis (2008) with resultant austerity measures by governments. NPM was in response to reducing the role of the state, downsizing and increasing efficiencies through market forces with the mantra of 'doing more with less.' NPG

was a response to involving non-state actors in the delivery of services and public policy processes during a period of austerity following the financial crisis with a mantra of 'you do more we do less.' Crisis precipitated paradigm shifts in the state.

An aspect of the governments' capacity to address turbulent times, crises and wicked policy problems rests on its workforce. Although there have been technological developments and smarter working in both the public and private sector, much of the public sector is still very much dependent on the human element in the delivery of services from frontline workers (e.g., police, nurses, teachers, social workers, etc.) to strategic policy practitioners (e.g., foreign affairs, trade negotiators, defense policy, etc.). The size of the public sector workforce of course varies globally. Data for OECD countries in 2019 showed that the average public sector employment rate was almost eighteen percent (OECD, 2021). What are the human resource challenges for the state and its future capacity to deal with turbulent times?

3. Human resource capacity challenges

Research has demonstrated a demographic challenge for the public and private sector with declining birth rates and an aging workforce across Europe and North America (Burke and Ng, 2006; Ng and Johnson, 2015). There is also growing evidence that Millennials espouse different values and attitudes, and form different expectations about work (Lyons and Kuron, 2014) such as a high degree of preference for materialistic rewards (Twenge and Kasser, 2013) and value leisure time over work (Twenge *et al*., 2010). With the paradigm shifts in the state, changing demography and changing career preferences in a digital economy, particularly post-Covid, there are implications for the state in its capacity to deal with turbulent times, particularly given human resource challenges and the public sector competing with the other sectors to attract talent.

3.1. Public sector attraction

Public institutions have difficulty in attracting skilled and talented personnel to work in the public sector. This is an existential crisis because if there are declining rates of public employees there is less capacity for the government to deliver upon services and deal with turbulent times. Furthermore, the inability to attract talented individuals to work in the public sector, has implications also for the formulation and implementation of public policies, particularly policies to address wicked policy problems.

Fowler and Birdsall (2019) showed that the public sector often faces difficulties in attracting and recruiting competent personnel and are receiving fewer applicants despite increasing vacancies. According to Sievert, Vogel and Feeney (2022) this reduced interest in public sector employment is due to poor working conditions, low salary (compared to the private sector), and the retirement of the baby boomer generation. There are also other factors such as poor bureaucratic reputation including anti-government rhetoric, which aggravate the recruiting difficulties (Bankins and Waterhouse, 2019; Johnston, Kravariti and Alberti, 2023). These challenging circumstances are especially problematic in countries

where the public workforce faces a large number of retirements (Sievert, Vogel and Feeney, 2022). A key element in the resulting 'war for talent' is the government's ability to attract personnel (Sievert, Vogel and Feeney, 2022). Such is the concern for the challenges that the US federal government faces in recruitment, that the US House of Congress commissioned a report, entitled *Inspired to Service*, published in March 2020, it notes that:

> 'The Federal civil service personnel systems require urgent attention. The difficulties facing Government hiring are so severe that the Government Accountability Office identifies strategic human capital management as a 'high risk' area in need of transformation if the Government is to work effectively and efficiently. Existing practices block younger Americans and workers with critical skills from entering public service and jeopardize the ability of Federal agencies to replenish their workforce in the face of a looming wave of retirements' (National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, 2020, p. 10).

The US federal government on the basis of the recommendations contained within the report are considering a national service program and reforming recruitment, offering competitive benefits, and reforming human resource practices across the federal government.

The career preferences of Millennials and university students show a declining trend in a public service career. Rose's (2012) study of students in two Mid-west US universities, showed that a lack of confidence in government and negative perceptions of public sector work, did not make a career in public service attractive for students. Hinna *et al.* (2021) study of UK and Italian undergraduate students found a positive relationship between public service motivation and public sector job preferences among Italian students, but not with the British students. Hinna *et al.* (2021) argue that the UK has implemented more NPM-style reforms than Italy, and that this could be impacting on public sector recruitment. In other words, continuous NPM reforms in many countries make public sector employment highly unattractive to young job market candidates and found that graduates prefer employment in the private or not-for-profit sector (Hinna *et al*., 2021). Much of the research on career choices and preferences tends to employ opportunistic sampling of undergraduate and postgraduate students, tends to be smaller sampling, and focuses on public service motivation or pro-social behaviors (see Ballart and Rico, 2018; Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013).

A study, using a large-scale survey and employing an experimental research design of members of the public in the UK and US, found that people in general did not find the police organizationally attractive (Johnston, Kravariti and Alberti, 2023). The results of the study showed that people found the police generally unattractive as an employment option, did not find the police reputationally prestigious, and had no intention to pursue employment in the police. Although sector specific, the study nevertheless revealed the reputation of the police, particularly after the murders of George Floyd in the US, and employment in the police was not an attractive career prospect. The US police faces a historic workforce crisis with difficulties in attracting and retaining police officers (Mellen, 2021). The challenges of attracting individuals are not unique to the police.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (2023) in the UK found there was 20% less recruitment for teacher training courses from the previous year. Furthermore, Schools in England posted 93% more vacancies in 2022/23 compared to the year before the Covid pandemic (NFER, 2023). NFER (2023) noted that the declining retention rates and historically low teacher recruitment figures point to the deteriorating competitiveness of teaching compared to other occupations, in both pay and working conditions, which requires urgent policy action by the government. In the UK, the National Health Service (NHS) in 2023, showed that the number of students on nursing courses declined by more than 13% compared to 2022, despite government efforts to increase the number of nurses in the NHS (Walker, 2023). In the social care sector, social workers numbers are declining. In 2021 social worker vacancies increased by 21% (Department of Education, 2023) and a report showed a quarter of social workers have left the profession in 2022 (Social Work England, 2023). As noted, poor working conditions, low salaries, managerial pressures, decades of NPM type reforms, and poor bureaucratic reputation of public sector organizations, have led to poor retention of personnel and challenges in recruiting competent and talented personnel.

3.2. New public service bargain—a paradigm shift

There is a need to explore ways in which to attract and retain good human resource capacity of the state, and for the public administration scholarly community to improve understandings of the human aspect of public service. There are ways in which this could be achieved. Although improving salaries and working conditions would be a start, governments are often limited by the extent to which it can compete with other sectors. Thus, what is necessary is a New Public Service Bargain. As discussed above, the debates about the Weberian bureaucracy will remain (see Peters, 2001; Du Guy 2005), but NPM is still pervasive in the public sector (De Vries and Nemec, 2013) as is the state working with non-state actors as part of the paradigm shift of the state towards NPG (Osborne, 2010; Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). This article therefore calls upon the public administration scholarly community, as an agenda for future research, to explore and improve understandings of ways to improve the human resource capacity of the state. A New Public Service Bargain is suggested through creating meaningful work, managing talent in the public sector, ensuring a work-life balance, and compensatory remuneration to the extent public servants feel valued, work is rewarding, and the public sector becomes an attractive career prospect.

Ng, Gossett and Winter (2016) argue that what attracts Millennials to the public sector is meaningful work, job security and work-life balance. Henstra and McGowan (2016) reviewing graduate admission essays of students seeking entry into a Canadian Masters in Public Service (MPS) program, found several major themes from the students' statements that led them to apply to an MPS program: witnessing other people's disadvantage or hardship, being personally exposed to discriminatory treatment, desiring meaningful employment experience, wanting to serve as change agents, hoping to work towards solving social problems, improving government programs and services, and enhancing the

lives of the next generation of Canadians. Thus, a desire to make a difference to society for Millennials would constitute meaningful work. However, as Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010) note, individuals' public service motivation and performing meaningful public service is often for rational, self-interested, or instrumental reasons. Thus, a New Public Service Bargain would involve creating meaningful work where public servants and potential applicants feel that they can make a difference to society, and be motivated to serve the public, but this is rewarded through good working conditions, pay and opportunities for the talent to be nurtured.

NPM reforms and budget cuts have left many local and central governments failing to define and attract the talent they needed for the future (Hay Group 2011; Kravariti and Johnston, 2020). There is a need for research on the challenges and the impact of austerity measures on the public sector's capacity to attract, manage and deploy talent in order to address turbulent times and wicked policy problems (see Kravariti and Johnston, 2020). Talent management in the public sector is described as: 'The implementation of key procedures to ensure public sector employees possess the competencies, knowledge and core values in order to address complex contemporary challenges and fulfill public sector strategic objectives for the common good. (Kravariti and Johnston, 2020, p. 81). Kravariti and Johnston (2020) argue that talent management in the public sector needs to integrate the societal impact into its objectives so that the public sector's core scope and common good objectives (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013) are part of HR-related practices such as succession planning, which could ensure talented employees develop and enhance their career progression within the sector (Kock and Burke, 2008) so that rewards sustain public sector employees' self-motivation to achieve organizational goals (Rana, Goer and Rastogi, 2013).

A New Public Service Bargain should also recognize the desire by personnel for better working conditions and work-life balance. Particularly, in a post-Covid era personnel now value their time with family and personal time away from work (see Johnston *et al.*, 2023). As noted by Ng, Gossett and Winter (2016) Millennials desire more of work-life balance as part of their assessment in applying for jobs. It is important to note that a lack of a work-life balance leads to stress and burnout (see Clark, 2000). Although, work-life conflict has been viewed as a barrier to women's formal employment and career progression (Eby *et al*., 2005; Gamble, 2006), recent research has shown that when men and women in higher education in the UK and Spain anticipate work-life conflict, there is a reluctance to take on more demanding and work intensification roles (Pasamar, Johnston and Tanwar, 2020). Thus, to attract and nurture talent the introduction of working conditions that enable a work-life balance, rather than the managerialism and increased job demands, would be desirable. As Hammerschmid *et al.* (2019) noted from their study that flexible forms of employment appeared to be a reliable strategy for public sector improvement. According to Hammerschmid *et al.* (2019) flexible forms of work may contribute to positive cultural change within public organizations.

4. Conclusion

The article has provided a review of debates of the paradigm shifts in the state and reforms of the public sector over the decades. It could be argued that these neo-liberal type reforms of the public sector hollowed-out the capacity of the state to address challenges in turbulent times with an erosion of the human resource capacity of the state to deal with crises and wicked policy problems. The article calls for a New Public Service Bargain, where talented, skilled and competent individuals are attracted to public service, where their ambitions and aspirations are nurtured, and where the talents are retained within public service to meet increasing public service delivery challenges and to formulate public policies that address wicked policy problems, crises and turbulent times.

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