



INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research

Volume 4 Nomor 4 Tahun 2024 Page 5656-5669

E-ISSN 2807-4238 and P-ISSN 2807-4246

Website: <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative>

New Public Management and Economic Growth: A Review of Some Empirical Evidences from Cambodia's Practices

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Abstrak

Makalah ini mengeksplorasi penerapan manajemen publik baru (NPM) di Kamboja selama 30 tahun terakhir, yang mengatasi tantangan seperti korupsi dan terbatasnya kapasitas administratif. Bab ini menyelidiki dampak ekonomi dari NPM, mengidentifikasi model manajerial, dan mengkaji struktur administratif. Studi ini juga memberikan studi kasus mengenai proses reformasi dan menyarankan potensi reformasi administratif. Secara khusus, makalah ini membahas penerapan NPM dalam penyelenggaraan negara dalam bentuk reformasi administrasi, dengan menekankan perlunya tata kelola yang baik untuk pembangunan berkelanjutan. Selain itu, kami mengkaji tindakan yang diambil oleh negara tersebut dan secara umum menemukan bahwa: (1) upaya reformasi dibatasi oleh struktur fundamental administrasi publik; (2) beberapa reformasi berfokus pada perubahan penting yang "harus dilakukan", sementara reformasi lainnya memilih dari menu reformasi yang "dapat dilakukan" yang lebih bersifat opsional; (3) namun demikian, reformasi memberikan hasil positif yang signifikan bagi pembangunan di semua tingkat pemerintahan. Kesimpulannya, makalah ini mengakui bahwa keadaan mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kegiatan reformasi dan mengusulkan agar pemerintah melakukan reformasi yang lebih komprehensif namun tetap realistis dan menjaga ekspektasi.

Kata Kunci: *Reformasi Administrasi, Kamboja, Pertumbuhan Ekonomi, Manajemen Publik Baru, Administrasi Publik*

Abstract

This paper explores the adoption of new public management (NPM) in Cambodia over the past 30 years, addressing challenges like corruption and limited administrative capacity. It investigates the economic impact of NPM, identifies the managerial model, and examines the administrative structure. The study also provides a case study on the reform process and suggests potential administrative reforms. Particularly, the paper discusses the application of NPM in the state administration in the form of administrative reform, emphasizing the need for good governance for sustainable development. Additionally, we examined the actions taken by the country and generally found that: (1) reform efforts were limited by the fundamental structure of public administration; (2) some reforms focused on essential "must-do" changes, while others selected from a more optional menu of "could-do" reforms; (3) nevertheless, reforms yielded significant positive results for development at all government levels. To sum up, the paper acknowledges that circumstances have a significant influence on reform activities and proposes that the government pursue more comprehensive reforms while remaining realistic and managing expectations.

Keywords: *Administrative Reforms, Cambodia, Economic Growth, New Public Management, Public Administration*

INTRODUCTION

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship in 1979, Cambodia faced numerous challenges in its state bureaucracy, including a lack of qualified civil servants, corruption, weak rule of law, low public participation, unpredictable financial flows, and low salaries of civil servants. These factors have led to a poorly functioning public administration system that faces major problems in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness (UNDP, 2003). The Cambodian government has made significant efforts to adjust and reform its governance structure towards liberal democracy and a market economy since 1993 (AB, 2000). The Prime Minister (1999) declared that "reforms are a matter of life and death for Cambodia." To fulfill its role effectively and responsibly, the public sector needs to be reorganized, involving procedural and organizational changes.

Since 1999, a substantial administrative reform program has been in existence, which is managed by the Council for Administrative Reform (CAR). The Governance Action Plan (GAP - 2001) addresses several PAR concerns, including anti-corruption, judicial and legal reform, public finance, gender equity, and public administration (UNPAN 2004). The objective is to create behavioral norms that define ethics in the contexts of social, political, and economic sectors, essential to the government's efforts to combat poverty and achieve social justice. However, a unified reform framework has not emerged, with most reform efforts being primarily led by political and civil service leaders rather than driven by public

demand for change. There is a "chicken and egg" issue here, as reformers may have used public dissatisfaction to justify and accelerate reform efforts (ADB, 2009).

Recent advancements in Public Administration Reform (PAR) include raising the average monthly salary from US\$19.5 in October 2001 to US\$28.1 in May 2002, initiating a decentralization program, proposing Priority Mission Groups (PMGs) to address obstacles and expedite reforms, and demonstrating how a pilot project in decentralized development planning can be expanded nationwide through the 'Seila' initiative (CDC, 2022; NBC, 2023). Real progress toward enhanced and expanded service delivery has been limited, and change confronts several obstacles. Some stress that the reform may only be able to achieve results if participants receive higher compensation, while others worry that donors may impact PAR. New public management concepts have an impact, but they seem to have more influence in discussions than in actual implementation (Eng & Ear, 2016).

The Evolution of Governance Paradigms: From Traditional Public Administration to NPM Integration

New Public Management (NPM) is a systematic change in the organizational structure of public sector services, focusing on private institutions providing services while the government decides on guiding policies (Waine, 2004; Uwizeyimana, 2006). It is a result of the integration of administrative principles like contestability, transparency, and an incentive structure and user charges, known as "managerialism," and the application of private sector business management principles to the public sector (Ormond and Loffler, 2002). NPM strategies and techniques seek to foster an "entrepreneurial spirit" among government organizations, requiring managers of public institutions to be directly accountable for the results, outputs, and outcomes (Batley, 2004).

NPM has a global impact on public sector changes, involving deregulation of line management, transforming civil service units into autonomous agencies or businesses, performance-based accountability, mechanisms for competition, and internal markets (Kettl, 1997; Hood, 1991). The movement aims to address deficiencies in professionalism, accountability, responsiveness, and economic efficiency (Olefemi 2010). Innovation can serve as a tool for NPM by promoting project-based approaches to social problems, challenging the welfare state's rigidity, promoting economic development, and providing partial answers to structural issues (Barberis et al., 2019).

The new governance paradigm emerged in the 1990s as a response to the perceived inefficiencies and bureaucratic nature of traditional public administration (Peters, 2002). The current paradigm evolved after years of inadequate and ineffective administrative

structures, necessitating developed nations to adopt fresh, private-sector-based management strategies (Fry and Raadschelders, 2014). NPM is integrated into the public sector in response to the change that citizens experience in relation to businesses and the global economy.

The Concepts of Economic Growth

Economic growth is a process that involves an increase in wealth and income, which raises society's standard of living (Grinols, 2004). Capitalism is defined by a rise in overall output or income. Measures of economic growth include gross domestic product, infrastructure, health, and education (Barro, 1996). Real GDP growth over time or real GDP per capita growth over time are two ways to measure economic growth (McConnell et al., 2009). However, only a small percentage of people's living conditions can actually improve (Greenwood & Holt, 2010). Classical economists emphasized the importance of free trade, market size, industrial investment, capital accumulation, innovation, and education as catalysts for economic growth (Adam Smith, 1776). Keynesian models suggest that investment and rising aggregate demand are key drivers of economic development. Keynesian models suggest that the productivity of savings and capital investment are the two most important factors affecting the rate of economic growth (Harrod, 1939; Domar, 1946).

In the 1980s, a new growth model was proposed to achieve endogenous economic growth. This model associates economic growth with human capital, intellectual property protection, government support for science and innovation, and public policies favorable to investment and technology (Adams, 2011). Empirical studies use endogenous or neoclassical models to examine the variables that influence economic growth. The new growth model emphasizes the importance of institutions for economic growth, supports government actions in creating a favorable investment environment, and creates incentives to attract foreign investment (Büthe & Milner., 2008).

Theoretical Bases and Framework of NPM in Practice

Traditional public administration, based on bureaucracy, separated politicians and administrators. The new public management paradigm offers accuracy, forecasting, and empiricism, inspired by economics and private management (Hughes, 1998). It has been influenced by theories and practices from the private sector, such as strategic planning, incentives, and flexibility in adapting organizations to changing conditions (Kajimbwa, 2013). NPM concepts have been widely applied in OECD nations to improve productivity, efficacy, quality of services, cost containment, professionalism in decision-making, and results-

orientedness (OECD, 2000; Kalimullah et al., 2012). However, the effectiveness of NPM implementation depends on the country's unique settings and other influencing variables. A conceptual framework will be created following the literature review to provide a theoretical basis for reforming public administration in Cambodia.

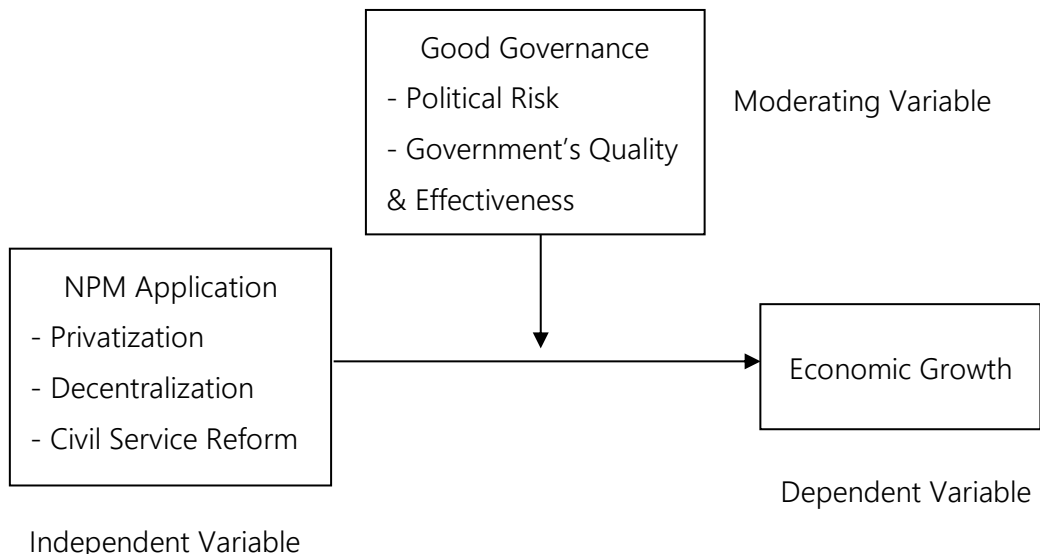


Figure 1. Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Framework on NPM Application

The New Public Management (NPM) framework outlines the implementation of NPM in public administration reform and its impact on the government's administrative effectiveness. Economic growth is achieved through various strategies such as good governance, civil service reform, customer-orientation, privatization, partnerships, and more. However, the impact is influenced by factors such as the political system, leadership, management style, and others (Mongkol, 2011).

The dependent variable is Economic Growth, with the independent variables being Good Governance, Civil Service Reform, Judicial & Legal Reform, Public Finance Reform, Decentralization, and Partnerships. The strength of NPM lies in its mutually supportive and inclusive nature. Good governance ensures consistent, open, and predictable investment environments, creating a favorable environment for domestic and international enterprises, resulting in increased output and employment prospects (Chheat, 2014).

Civil Service Reform is at the heart of service delivery, leading to more efficient and effective services and economic growth. Digitalization and procedural simplification are essential for adapting governmental services to changing citizen needs, increasing public satisfaction, attracting investment, and improving service delivery. Judicial & Legal Reforms ensure fairness and justice in society, leading to increased economic growth. A just legal system stimulates innovation, attracts investment, and promotes employment and

entrepreneurship. Public finance reform is crucial for a nation's economy, as it helps allocate funds efficiently for vital sectors like infrastructure development, health, and education, attracting foreign and local investment, leading to economic growth and employment creation (Romeo & Spyckerelle, 2003).

Strategic initiatives like partnerships and privatizations leverage the resources and skills of private businesses to drive economic development. However, the relationship between NPM elements and "fitness" depends on factors such as a country's unique socio-economic situation, effective bureaucratic and political system, and good leadership and management.

Hypothesis Development

The literature review suggests that the NPM model, applied to administrative reform, leads to increased government productivity and efficiency, which in turn enhances overall macroeconomic productivity, as hypothesized below:

H1: Better government governance leads to faster economic growth.

H2: Better public services lead to stronger economic growth.

H3: The more effective the judicial and legal systems are, the faster the economy grows.

H4: The stronger the country's public finances, the faster the economy will grow.

H5: A more decentralized government will benefit the country's economy.

H6: The number of partnerships and privatizations increases the rate of economic growth.

H7: The country's distinctive socio-cultural, economic, political, and legal circumstances also impact the use of NPM in administrative changes.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods, including secondary analysis of literature data and descriptive statistics, to study the reform of the state administration management system. This approach provides a theoretical basis for practical studies and may lead to biases in estimates of important variables due to a large data set covering government-wide comprehensive public administration reform programs and a long time period.

The data used in the analysis was sourced from secondary sources, including reports and statistics from NGOs and government agencies, as well as books and articles. The evaluation of secondary materials is referred to as "development research at 'home'," and a comprehensive and reliable dataset is produced by merging data from official sources like

the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. This approach reduces the likelihood of bias and offers a more complete understanding of the topic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

NPM in Practice in the Cambodian Context

Need for Reform

Cambodia has been rebuilding its public administration since Liberation Day to boost economic growth and provide citizens with basic necessities. However, the government's limited resources and insufficient resources hinder modernization and strengthening of the public sector (Kuzmina et al., 2014). Issues include a chaotic organizational structure, fragmented culture, unclear roles, insufficient capacity for policy formulation and implementation, inadequate performance management systems, and a lack of experienced experts with modern management and administrative skills. Insufficient and unreliable data on the number, competence, and distribution of civil servants hinder effective personnel planning and deployment (GDCEC, 2015).

Recruitment problems at all levels are caused by a lack of a strong recruitment process, and human resource management practices are seen as neither transparent nor fair. This leads to inadequate salary levels, low employee morale, and inadequate budget management. Corruption is rampant and spreads across the public sector due to the lack of effective punishments or sanctions (Abdelbary & Benhin, 2018). The Cambodian government has started a comprehensive Public Administration Reform Program to solve these issues and modernize public administration. The RGC has pledged to implement changes in the domain of governance, focusing on three main reforms: strengthening the government as a servant, strengthening public confidence and improving service delivery, and strengthening policy responsiveness and implementation (Romeo & Spyckerelle, 2003).

Key Findings of Decentralization in Cambodia

Cambodia's Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) reforms aim to shift decision-making authority from the national government to local authorities, aiming to enhance the delivery of public services (Raksa, 2023). However, subnational governments receive very little funding from the public sector, and the formal delegation of responsibilities has not happened as planned. The majority of money is used for councilor salaries and minor capital projects, raising questions about whether any unused funds will be carried over to the following fiscal year (Niazi, 2011).

Higher subnational levels, such as provinces and municipalities, spend most of their revenue on ongoing operational costs, with the central government bearing the primary responsibility for development investment (Eng and Ear, 2016). Off-budget procedures are still used, often when working with projects that get foreign funding. Revenue generation performance has been relatively limited, with a significant portion stemming from minor administrative fees like birth, death, and marriage registrations (ASEAN Briefing, 2023).

More effective decentralization transformation has been hampered by political dynamics, limitations in technical and governance competence, inconsistent national legislation, conflicting agendas across ministries and foreign development organizations, and differences in the public sector policy framework (AB, 2000; Sreang, 2014). Issues with the organizational structure of municipal, provincial, and district councils and the function of appointed Boards of Governors in the reform process lead to complications. Decentralization in Cambodia has produced benefits such as better service delivery, improved local administration, and higher levels of public involvement. It has improved community responsiveness and accessibility of public services, enabling local authorities to make decisions that more effectively meet the demands of their constituents. Additionally, it has increased public participation in municipal decision-making procedures, promoting accountability, openness, and community involvement (Chheat, 2014).

Decentralization in Cambodia has shown potential to improve local government and service delivery, but issues like capacity building, budgetary autonomy, and regional implementation gaps need to be addressed. The government has increased the amount of money transferred from national to sub-national administrations from \$416 million in 2018 to \$3,676 million in 2022 (The Phnom Penh Post, 2022). The establishment of a Financial Resources System and, so far, a \$4 billion allocation to support the Decentralisation Policy highlight these achievements (Sunly, 2022). Despite these advancements, further work is needed to fully realize the fiscal decentralization goals outlined in the Organic Law (2008) and the national program due to challenges such as a lack of shared vision among stakeholders and inconsistencies in key laws and regulations.

The Results of Empirical Study on Privatization

Cambodia is implementing privatization and deregulation strategies to enhance public administration. Deregulation has the ability to boost the country's economy, reduce the number of public sector employees and expenditures, and minimize corruption. The formation of commune development committees is intended to promote rural development through decentralized infrastructure planning, basic service investment, and administration

(CDRI, 2000). Privatization also involves transferring state-owned firms and assets to the private sector, which increases efficiency, fosters competition, and attracts foreign investment (Kikeri, 2022).

Cambodia began establishing private property ownership in the mid-1980s, leading to the gradual privatization of state-owned firms. This drive has produced positive outcomes, such as increased luxury real estate creation, government savings in capital and subsidy expenditures, improved infrastructure and public service standards, and increased revenue streams (ADB, 2015). Since 2020, Cambodia has seen a significant decrease in state-owned enterprises (SOEs), with 15 SOEs operating as of 2022. Businesses listed included Printing House, Green Trade Company, Telecom Cambodia, Electricité du Cambodge, Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, Rural Development Bank, Cambodia Shipping Agency, and Cambodia Postal Services. China has been the most significant investor in Cambodia, accounting for 48.2% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow in 2021. Following with shares of 8.3% and 8.1%, respectively, were Singapore and South Korea.

Other major investors include the United States, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The Belt and Road Initiative projects in Southeast Asia have increased China's ties with Cambodia, with China investing over US\$15 billion in infrastructure between 2012 and 2017, including US\$11 billion in the energy sector (Chhair & Ung, 2016; Friedel, 2020).

Cambodia has also seen a trend of higher education privatization, which has had a considerable influence on the tertiary education sector, providing both possibilities and problems. The rising demand for postsecondary education has resulted in the growth of private educational institutions that provide a diverse variety of degree programs and areas of expertise. Private institutions have also implemented novel teaching techniques, contemporary classrooms, and industry-relevant curricula to increase students' alternatives and flexibility.

However, tuition at private colleges is a major source of concern, since it frequently surpasses that of public universities, making it more difficult for low-income students to seek higher education. The large range of programs offered by private schools, as well as a lack of governance, certification, and academic standards, raise concerns about the quality of education provided. To protect students' interests and degree credibility, regulatory bodies and certification agencies must guarantee that these schools maintain high standards and adhere to set norms. Despite the benefits of privatization, challenges of pricing and quality control linger (Neth, 2009).

The Results of Empirical Study on Civil Service Reform

Cambodia is undergoing significant changes in its public administration system, primarily focusing on restructuring the civil service. The government is reducing the number of civil servants to improve operational efficiency through strategies such as eliminating redundant positions, implementing natural attrition, imposing strict recruitment limits, removing ghost employees, reallocating staff to priority sectors, enforcing salary freezes, and outsourcing to the private sector. In 1994, the Cambodian government implemented a Common Statute of Civil Service and conducted a census, which resulted in the removal of 10,000 ghost civil servants (World Bank, 2020).

The government also aims to create a workforce of qualified professionals within the public sector by reforming the civil service, strengthening training initiatives, refining hiring practices, and promoting merit-based advancement (CDC, 2022; Repucci, 2012). The shift to a performance-driven public service system seeks to replace conventional systems based on seniority and credentials. The current changes aim to create a framework that recognizes and rewards success to increase productivity, service quality, and employee motivation. However, this shift requires equitable evaluation processes, reducing corruption risk, developing performance management capabilities, and initiating a cultural shift within the civil service. Initiatives like the Merit-Based Performance Incentive (MBPI) program and standardized performance evaluation tools are being adopted to improve accountability and fairness (GAN, 2020; CDC, 2022).

Modernizing Salary Payments: A Commitment to Public Administrative Reform in Cambodia

Cambodia's civil service system faced challenges in the 1990s and early 2000s, including low wages, corruption, and difficulty in attracting skilled personnel (World Bank 2013). However, since the mid-2000s, significant reforms like the New Career Path System and New Remuneration System have led to improvements in salary increments and disbursements (CDC, 2022). Private financial institutions like Acleda Bank, Canadia Bank, and Wing have been chosen to handle payroll services for government officials (Acleda, 2013). The average salary of civil servants has risen over the years, reaching a peak of around USD 190.56 per month in 2016 (UNPAN 2004).

The Pay Reform Taskforce, established in 2013, is recognized as the driving force behind the evolution of salary payments within Cambodia's civil service (RGC 2013). The Council for Administrative Reform (CAR) and initiatives such as the civil service census, New Career Path System and Remuneration, and Computerization of the Payroll System (HRMIS) form the basis for public administrative reform. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC)

has expressed its commitment to modernize salary payments through the banking system to reduce cash handling burdens, opportunities for corruption, and ensure accurate and prompt payment for civil servants (MEF, 2014; RGC 2014; GDCEC, 2015).

Salary reform is seen as a crucial mission of NPAR to enhance the standard of living for civil servants and boost performance in the public sector, particularly by enhancing the quality of public service delivery. The introduction of salary reform through the banking system is expected to address key challenges within the civil service, such as non-competitive salaries, lower salary and pension levels, delayed and poorly communicated salary payments, and discrepancies between salary increases and budget forecasts, all supported by effective human resource planning and management (MEF 2017; Youk Bunna 2019).

GDCEC's medium-term strategy for revenues from 2014-2018 focuses on six key areas: revenue mobilization, compliance, trade facilitation, modernization of customs procedures, governance, human resource management, and customs reform. The Revenue Mobilization Strategy, led by GDT, aims to enhance revenue administration, encourage voluntary compliance, expand the tax base, improve taxpayer services, foster a more conducive business environment, and promote equity and fairness. The strategy includes initiatives to enhance non-tax revenue administration through monitoring, recording, and mobilization (GDCEC, 2015).

For expenditures, the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) will replace a temporary procurement solution. The FMIS is designed to oversee purchases from initial commitments to final payments to suppliers, recording each transaction in detail. It also automates tracking processes and generates reports on outstanding debts and arrears. This transition signifies a significant step towards improving financial efficiency, transparency, and accountability within the organization, as integrated modules streamline payment updates and enhance financial obligations management (RGC, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The New Public Management (NPM) practices in Cambodia present challenges to economic development, including disagreements over reform objectives, limitations on administrative capability, and corruption. Aligning reform initiatives with good governance principles is essential to fostering sustainable development and economic expansion. Strong reforms require political will, significant resources, regular support, and the establishment of attainable targets. Cambodia requires capacity building to promote development and economic progress, with an emphasis on strategic planning, policy

analysis, and horizontal policy coordination between the cabinet, Cabinet of Ministers, and government. In order to avoid "clans," "personal empires," "regional cliques," or "ethnic enclaves," staffing powers shouldn't be tied to seniority. Result-oriented management (ROM) faces challenges in horizontal coordination and capacity to tackle social problems. A revised law, a code of ethics for civil servants, the reorganization of State ministries and secretariats, an emphasis on strategic planning, policy analysis, and coordination, and the monitoring of the reform's effects will be all necessary to strengthen the government's policy-making system.

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