

PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DECENTRALIZATION MODELLING IN THE CONTEXT OF REFORMS

Eglė Gaulė

Kaunas University of Technology
K. Donelaičio str. 20, LT-44239 Kaunas, Lithuania

The author of the present article analyses the dissemination of the processes and the change of the content of public governance decentralization in the context of the public governance system development. The reiterations of the objects of public governance reforms and the observations that these reforms re-lose targets raise questions for both practitioners and academics. Practitioners lack the knowledge and skills to manage the processes of public governance reforms. After analyzing the features of the theoretical modelling of public governance decentralization, the author presents a model of public governance decentralization integrating the systematic and the procedural approaches.

Keywords: *public governance decentralization, decentralization process management, public management reform.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *viešojo valdymo decentralizacija, decentralizavimo procesų valdymas, viešojo valdymo reforma.*

Introduction

Economic and political changes in the world over the past decades, such as the global trends of democratization, the establishment of the new common currency and economic unions, the decentralization of public finances caused by dissatisfaction with the central government fiscal activities, revived debates about public governance decentralization, its efficiency and the management of these process.

The development of the relationship between different levels of government is an integral part of the process of public governance. Institutional, functional, finan-

Eglė Gaulė – Kauno technologijos universiteto Viešojo administravimo katedros lektorė.

El. paštas egle.gaule@ktu.lt

Eglė Gaulė – Kaunas University of Technology, Department of Public Administration, lector.

E-mail: egle.gaule@ktu.lt

cial architecture of central and sub-national levels of government is changeable in the long term. The question of how to distribute power between national and sub-national actors continues to occupy a prominent position in the national policy agenda of most countries [22]. Decentralization of public governance encompasses the consolidation of the self-management of sub-national levels of government and the distribution of public spending and income between the different levels of government. Notwithstanding the strivings to establish this configuration for a certain period of time, the changing economic, social and technological conditions require a revision of decisions. Decisions relating to the income and expenditure allocations between different levels of government are not and cannot be clear and definitive [15]. This process is evolutionary but not smooth due to its interaction with economic and social problems and dependence on the strategies and tactics of government and political parties as well as the impact of interests groups. Unfortunately, even at the central level of government, only a few countries have developed a clear strategy and procedures for public governance decentralization, although in these countries it has been in process for some time already.

There exist a number of theoretical scientific publications focusing on the analysis of certain content aspects of public governance decentralization. However, there is a lack of procedural insight that would disclose the managerial aspect of the formulation and implementation of the processes of decentralization. The aim of the present article is to develop a theoretical model for public governance decentralization integrating the systemic and the procedural approaches.

Content and Process of Public Governance Decentralization

Over the second half of the twentieth century, countries worldwide have witnessed complicated social, economical, demographical, political and technical changes requiring certain changes in the public governance systems. The forces of public governance reforms may be classified as follows: (i) international challenges and pressure, (ii) changing role of modern government in the global economy, (iii) mixed economy of public, private and non-profit sector interactions in the production and delivery of public services, (iv) society's participation in governance processes, equity and ethics in governance, new models of public governance.

Due to the pressure of these forces, national governments were induced to consider what and how should be done. The question 'what is the government doing?' forced to manage the environment of governance by setting public policy priorities, coordinating performance, resolving conflicts and creating regulatory and coercive institutions. The question 'how is the government doing?' stimulated regulatory and organizational changes directed at the development of adequate managerial competences and financing system as well as the decentralization of public governance. The traditional public governance practice and ethos has been changed [4]. Public policy is implemented within complex institutional networks of public organizations of different levels, decentralized structures, public-private partnership, and unions of non-

profit organizations, consultants and the government [3]. The essence of the contemporary problem is the ways of the organization of the public sector in order to adapt it to the changing needs of the society without losing the coherence of strategy or the continuity of governance values [10].

The modern conception of public governance decentralization is a relatively new phenomenon in practice, and its evolution can be conditionally divided into three phases [2], showing the development of the content and scope of public governance decentralization (see Figure 1).

<p><i>Phase 1 (1950 – 1980s)</i> Deconcentration of hierarchical structure and bureaucracy seeking for more efficiency in public service delivery and strengthening of local government responsibility.</p>	<p><i>Phase 2 (1980 – 1990s)</i> Distribution of political powers, democratization, market liberalization, involvement of the private sector in order to reduce the power of the public sector and strengthen the local government.</p>	<p><i>Phase 3 (since 1990s)</i> Openness of public governance and efficiency achieved by participation and teamwork of the public sector organizations at various levels of government as well as cooperation with external groups.</p>
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Figure 1. Development of the content of public governance decentralization

Decentralization of public governance emerged in the 1950s–60s, when British and French colonial administrations were prepared for independence by transferring the responsibilities for certain programmes to local governments. Public governance decentralization included the administrative aspects of decentralization.

The second period of public governance decentralization started in the 1980s by changes in the perception of public governance and government functions as well as by the recognition of the limitations and constraints of central economic planning and management. The focus was shifted from an adequate division of responsibilities within the system of public governance to a search for effective ways of government intervention in the economy, for the roles of public and private sectors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the processes of economic growth and social development.

The third period started around the 1990s and is still in process. The emergent demand for a wider public, political and economic participation and a more open public governance is caused by globalization, the growth of global economic interaction, the complexity of societies, the expansion of the global communications network stimulated by technological development. The interaction of globalization and localization forces shapes the changes of state governance [9]. Accordingly, the development of the concept of public governance has led to changes in the concept of public governance decentralization: the decentralization of authority turned into the decentralization of governance by assuming various new meanings and forms.

In recent decades, public governance decentralization became not only a theoretical but also a practical phenomenon. Considering democratic elections at the sub-

national levels of governments as an indicator of (political) public governance decentralization, 95% of the democratic nations have elective sub-national governmental institutions, as stated in the World Bank report [16]. From 193 countries around the world, 119 are attributed to the category of representative democracies, 90 countries are classified as 'free' and 60 countries as 'partly free'; in other words, 4.2 billion people (64% of the total world population) live in democratic states [5].

Decentralization of public governance may be regarded as a necessary condition for local and civil society development. Decentralization of public governance is an integral part of the democratization process realized through the power of people to elect their own government (representatives), to establish public policies and public services. In the context of the change in the public governance system, decentralization of public governance is treated as a means to: (i) provide high quality public services that meet public preferences, (ii) increase managerial autonomy by reducing the administrative controls carried out by the central government, (iii) create competitive environment for the participation of private sector organizations and NGOs in the processes of public service delivery, and (iv) enable the participation of citizens in decision-making, strategic planning and public management. Successful public governance decentralization results in performance growth, compliance with the needs of the society and democratic development. Unsuccessful decentralization poses a threat to the economic and political stability of the state and destroys the public service delivery system.

Public governance decentralization is a complex phenomenon encompassing many dimensions and social sectors, involving many societal actors: (i) geographical entities including international, national, sub-national and local levels of governance; (ii) social actors of public governance representing the government, the private sector and the civil society; (iii) the social sector including political, legal, social, cultural and environmental development themes [21]; (iv) management activities, decentralization of organization, financial and human resources management, legal and political reforms [3].

A public governance system is defined as the configuration of centralized and decentralized governance. There is no dichotomy between centralization and decentralization: they are the poles of a hypothetical continuum of the public governance system involving various combinations of centralized and decentralized public governance. The supporters of centralized governance argue that the benefits of centralization are: (i) national unity, (ii) harmonization, (iii) equity, and (iv) welfare. However, the manifestations of centralized management benefits may be necessary or desirable under certain conditions. The arguments for the decentralized governance are: (i) participation in political life, (ii) institutional openness and closeness to people, thereby increasing the democratic accountability, (iii) legitimacy of governance and (iv) freedom, devolution of authority powers and interaction between government bodies [6]. The search for an adequate combination of central government coordination and control and the autonomy of local government characterize the governance of countries [18].

Approaches to Theoretical Modelling of Public Governance Decentralization

Public governance decentralization, like any public governance reform, requires an understanding of the nature and dynamics of the public governance system as a whole and its functioning as a part of the society. Each system has its own dynamics, trade-offs and risks which reflect its unique history, culture and institutional structure. Governments need to understand the dynamics and the risks of their own system and design reform strategies accordingly [10].

Management science techniques belong to the systems approach to problem solving [20]. The features of the systems approach include:

- A system consists of two or more parts connected by the same nature relations which form the structure of the system. The essence of a systematic analysis embodies the analysis of systems structures. A complex analysis of the systems structure includes an analysis of the elements of the system, i.e. the identification of subsystems and the setting of the content and nature of their interrelations;
- Everything in a system is interrelated: if one part of the system is changed, all other parts are also affected, thus, the systems approach emphasizes the interrelatedness of system variables [20];
- Systems can be represented by models in symbolic language. The model develops as investigations are conducted to discover certain patterns in the working of systems. As the variables are identified and quantified, the model is used to predict the outcome of the alternative courses of action [20];
- The essence of the management of a system embodies a permanent and sustainable process of the realization of the function (functions) of the system;
- Social systems are highly interconnected open systems in which system behaviour is a combination of intentional human action and system processes of self-organization [14].

The management of a system should be based on the procedural approach, as the desired result is achieved much more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed as a process; this removes the barriers and conflicts between functional departments, hierarchical levels, production or service lines [8]. A process is a set of interlinked and influenced actions, in other words, the actions that make inputs and results. Processes integrate into a common framework and compose a series of processes, as the output and/or the result of one process becomes the input of the other process. After each process, the result which, in its turn, hides another process is achieved. When the process is designed and operated properly, the results become predictable [8].

Public governance reform is a social process: (i) it is a social process since it consists of a sequence of actions that lead towards the achievement of objectives; (ii) it is a social process because these actions primarily relate to the relationship between people. Public governance reform includes solving a complex of issues related to the ways of making the system move to a target state, gaining critical loyalty

and support of individuals and reconciling the interests and objectives of different groups.

Integration of systematic and procedural approaches should be the essence of the strategy for public governance reforms. The application of the procedural approach in public governance allows seeing the system under reform as a set of processes, managing their inputs and outputs and the interaction between them. Meanwhile the application of the systematic approach helps combine these processes into a single unit, when a common goal is achieved by harmonious activity, and the system is seen as much more than a simple sum of separate parts.

Pettigrew and Whipp [12] distinguish three dimensions of strategic change. Strategic change should be regarded as a continuous process consisting of: (i) the content (intentions, objectives, tasks)—WHAT to change, (ii) the process (implementation)—HOW to change, (iii) the context (internal and external environment)—WHERE to change.

In the model of public management reform, Pollitt and Bouckaert [13] identify the process of elite decision making as the center since the changes are ‘top-down’ due to being conceived and executed by executive politicians and/or senior civil servants. The architecture of the model shows an interplay between the principle elements: (i) socio-economic forces; (ii) political system; (iii) administrative system; (iv) process of elite decision-making [13].

The model of public management reform policy of Yesilkagit and De Vries [7] consists of four elements: (i) the actors in the political process emphasizing the role of political and administrative elite in the public management reform, (ii) the management style describing the action strategies of actors chosen in order to use institutional or situational opportunities or to avoid political or administrative resistance, (iii) the institutional framework which forms the context of the political reform process where actors take decisions and choose their action strategy, and (iv) the separation between the policy cycle stages of formulation and implementation.

To summarize, the changes of public governance system may be formulated as $\text{CONTEXT} + \text{CHANGES MECHANISM} = \text{RESULTS}$ [11].

There exist two views on the sequence of reform processes—unidirectional and cyclic (see Figures 3(a) and 3(b))—which differ in the identification and sequencing of the process stages. Many reform strategies fail because they follow a ‘single track’, placing greater emphasis on policy formulation and less on implementation. Often, there is no vision or strategy of the process beyond its adoption. Policy formulation is more or less viewed as a one-off event [17].

A strategic process is best thought of as a cyclical process with activities and feedback loops that progressively approach the desired goal. The cyclical mode, whereby each element of the process may be repeated, means that a strategy can start off modestly and gradually become ambitious. In addition, a cyclical approach promotes continuous dialogue, participation, communication/information flow, monitoring—elements that are needed throughout the life of a strategy [17].

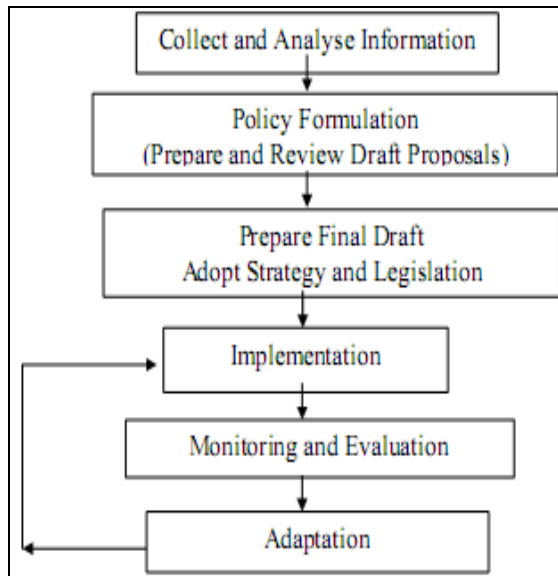


Figure 3(a). The ‘single track’ approach [17]

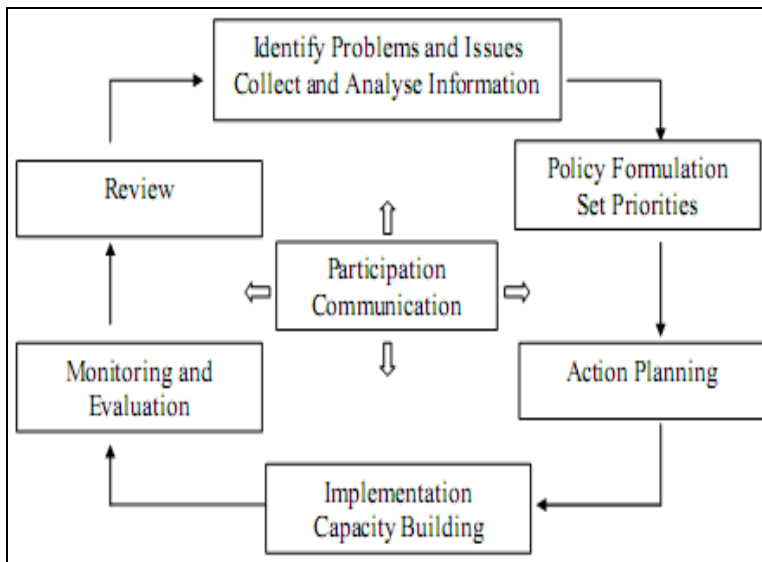


Figure 3(b). The strategic cycle model [17]

Governments must adapt to constantly changing societies. It is not a matter of a one-off ‘reform’ but of a whole-of-government public management policy that enables governments to make adjustments with the total system in mind. Effective public

management policies need clear problem diagnosis and outcome evaluation [10]. Public governance reforms, being complex and comprehensive, multilevel and multidimensional processes, involve many actors, procedures and rules and require appropriate processes management.

To generate the result expected, this process requires paying attention to the human factor, the characteristics of public governance systems and traditions, organizational culture and values. Reform plans are not valuable in themselves. The value of reform plans is created by long-term collective activities of public employees developing and implementing reforms and operating in a dynamic environment. There is no uniform methodology for public governance reforms as the practice and various change management tools and techniques can be adapted to various situations.

The holistic systemic architecture of public governance reforms may provide the perception of how changes should be managed taking into account the human factor and ensuring process integrity and consistency. A public governance reform should be carried out within a gradual change of the organizational culture of the public governance system and the establishment of the new values of public governance. The integration of organizational and individual dimensions ensures the success of a public government reform by increasing individual involvement in the change processes. These new demands for the builders of public management systems will require leadership from officials with enhanced individual technical, managerial and political capacities who think and plan collectively and can work well with other actors [10].

The experience of various countries shows that the success of public governance decentralization depends on the development of a coherent strategy and appropriate implementation mechanisms, such as the harmonization of the multiple elements of the reform and different interests (between central and sub-national levels of government, sectoral ministries and central authorities, bureaucrats, politicians, citizens, etc.) as well as on the development of adequate communication systems. While there is extensive knowledge about the designing of decentralization policies, considerably less is understood about how a decentralization program should be sequenced and implemented [1]; moreover, decision-makers often fail to properly control the speed of decentralization [16]. The holistic approach involves seeing multi-level frameworks and continuous, synergistic processes of interaction and iteration of cycles as critical for achieving wholeness in a decentralized system and for sustaining its development [19].

Theoretical Model of Public Governance Decentralization

The theoretical model of public government decentralization consists of the reform context embodying assumptions and enabling or restricting factors in external and internal environments, a reform mechanism composed of a set of elements of content and processes, results of the reform and its impact on the public administration system and the state governance system (see Figure 4).

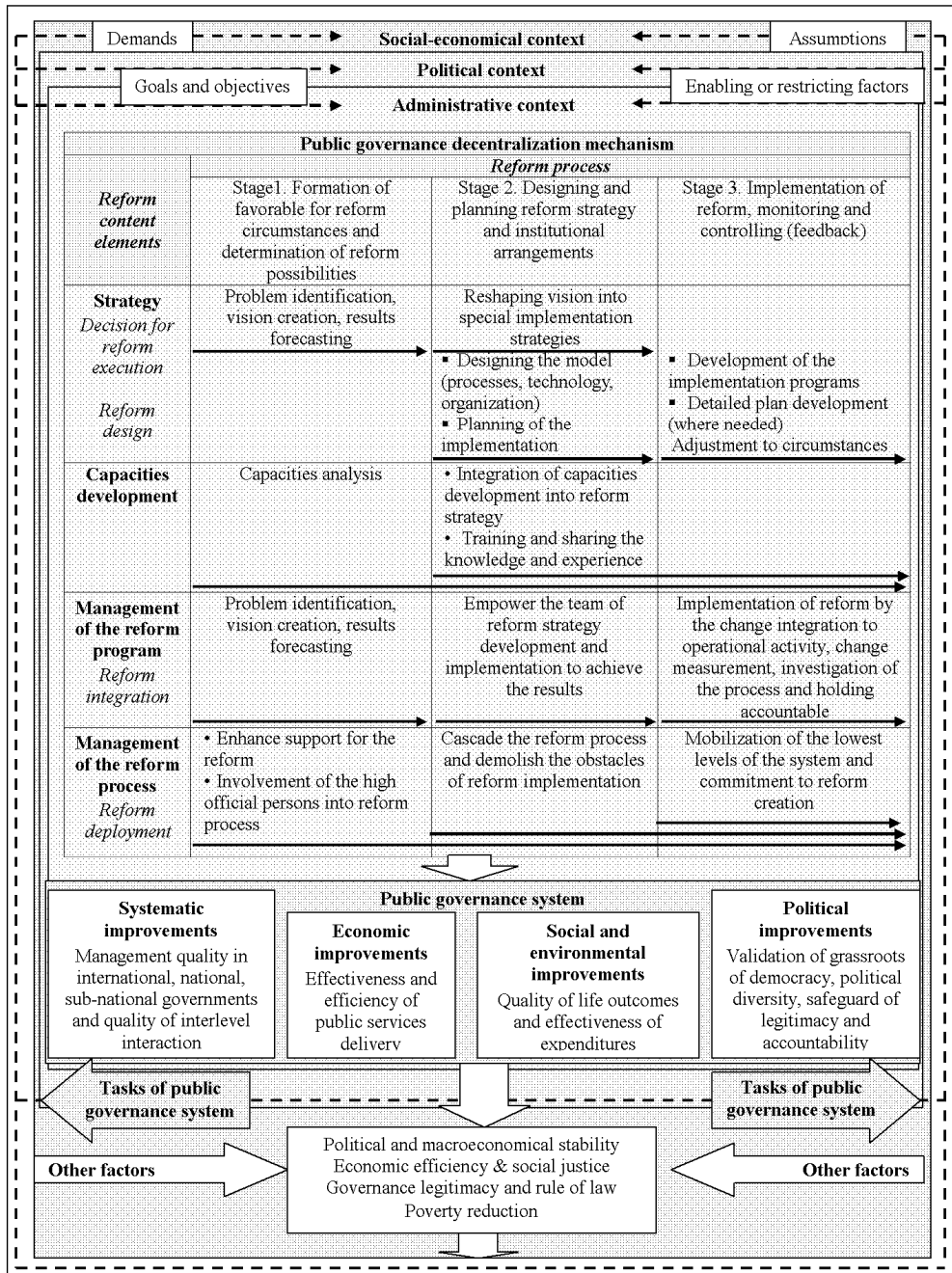


Figure 4. Public governance decentralization model

Public governance decentralization allows the realization of individual freedoms and economic choices in stable political and economic environments which are ruled by laws. Public governance decentralization brings socio-economic, political and administrative results: stability and development of political and economic systems and quality of public governance. Public governance decentralization involves political, fiscal and administrative areas of public governance and is carried out through an integration of deconcentration, delegation and devolution as forms of decentralization, while the changes affect the systemic, institutional and individual levels of the public governance system. ***Public governance decentralization is a sequential process of the empowering of individuals or organizational entities by the devolvement of authority powers and the development of the capacities of decision-making and resource management, establishing accountability for performance, integrating mechanisms of participatory public governance.***

Public governance decentralization is modelled as a process of the transference of public governance instruments to different levels of government and integrating internal and external environments of a reform. Reform ideas and content, its scope and impact on the public governance system and state governance as well as the changes in the democratic model in the politico-administrative systems in different countries differ. These differences are caused by current environmental characteristics of public governance systems and constitutional arrangements, historical-cultural context and the instrumental activities of the leaders at the political and administrative levels directed to the achievement of common goals by the public governance performance and active national public policies.

A high level of education and communication in the society, a strong middle social class, an active civil society and a democratic governance culture as well as the level of economic development are the common contextual prerequisites for public governance decentralization in transition from government to governance decentralization.

The assumptions and factors of public governance decentralization arise from the external socio-demographic, economic-fiscal, political-cultural, technological environments and are under the influence of globalization. In the theoretical model of public governance decentralization, these factors may be grouped according to the socio-economic, political and administrative context. Contextual features of the system and actors' perceptions, attitudes and skills become the enabling or restrictive factors of reform processes (see Table 1).

A decentralized public governance system should be constructed by modelling the interaction in the public governance system: balancing the allocation of authority between the national and sub-national levels of government, creating a self-organizational system in the levels of self-government in the fields of institutional arrangement (including the model of self-governance), functions and resources, integrating mechanisms of representative and participatory citizenry. In a reform strategy, a combination of the elements of the system determining the highest possible level of public governance decentralization should be identified.

Table 1. **Enabling and restrictive factors in the process of public governance decentralization**

<i>Enabling and stimulating factors</i>	<i>Restricting factors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the features of the political regime</i> (the functional aspect of the political system including the system of the political relationship between the society and the state and the methods of state government formation and functioning), <i>which form the interaction between the executive and the legislative branches and the political parties</i> (the axis of the interaction between politicians and administrators in the public governance system) <i>and the central government and sub-national levels</i> (the axis of the interaction between the levels of government in the public governance system). The formal and informal structural (vertical and horizontal) elements of this interaction can be identified; • <i>the changes in public policy</i> expressing the dynamics of public governance centralization–decentralization that is <i>determined by the legal framework and informal relations in the public governance system</i>, accordingly enabling or restricting public governance decentralization, <i>the sequence of public governance decentralization</i>, and <i>socio-economic conditions that change the levers of bargaining positions of the central and sub-national levels of government</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the lack of competence at central and/or sub-national levels of government</i> to work in a decentralized system of public governance and to manage the processes of public governance decentralization; • <i>the perception and attitudes of public officials regarding authority powers and efforts to keep authority</i> in the central government level and/or consolidate the newly acquired positions in the public governance system and the <i>reluctance to share authority</i> at sub-national levels of government; • <i>the transfer of corruption</i> to sub-national levels of government; • <i>the disappointment</i> at the reform results in the society.

The distinction between formal *de jure* (determined in the legislation) and informal *de facto* (arrangement of authority and tolerated volume of heterogeneity within the system of public governance) aspects should be taken in to account in modelling the system of public governance.

The basic principles of public governance decentralization, which includes the rights and responsibilities of all levels of government, institutional roles and the basis on which the rules may be consolidated or changed, should be legally established during the decentralization processes.

Planning-based management of reform processes requires the establishment of decentralization stages and procedures. Experience shows that public governance decentralization is successful if the process is incremental and iterative, ongoing according to a cyclical model. The reform process may be structured into 3 stages using the principles of change management in the processes of public governance decentralization.

Planning-based management of a reform process requires a comprehensive situation analysis, prioritization of issues, determination of a clear vision and direction of the reform, roles and accountabilities of actors in the reform process and the impact of key stakeholders. Reform processes integrate factors, processes and mechanisms,

values and regulatory procedures, technologies and resources. The principles of successful reform process are:

- Effective processes leadership and management;
- Stakeholders involvement, empowerment and their commitment to reform promotion;
- Setting the targets and formation of the environment in which the objectives can be achieved;
- Development of monitoring and control mechanisms;
- Consolidation of responsibility, promotion of initiative and creative thinking;
- Prediction of reform outcomes and perceptions of reform consequences.

Public governance decentralization is a consistent and systematic work in a public governance system characterized by complex interaction of politicians and bureaucrats with the society (introducing the values of democratic governance that make the basis for the development of a civil society) as well as the society's interaction with politicians and bureaucrats (requiring the assurance of the quality of state management based on the quality of public governance).

Conclusions

Public governance decentralization is an expression of the change in a public governance system characterizing: (i) the state of public governance system by centralized–decentralized public governance dimension axis at the given moment in time, and (ii) the dynamics of the processes of centralization–decentralization in a given period of time. The complexity of public governance decentralization determines its universality in the processes of the development of the public governance system and/or in solving a range of public governance system problems. The change in the perception of public governance transformed the concept of decentralization from management to governance decentralization.

Public governance decentralization is contextual and requires an analysis of the internal and external environment of public governance systems including a determination of the restricting and the enabling factors of public governance decentralization. The processes of a public governance reform refer to a combination of responsibility and trust establishing a relationship between citizens and government, politicians and bureaucrats. The institutional framework for a public governance decentralization reform should be formed by ensuring a balance between structural and functional approaches, the centralization–decentralization and the political–administrative dimensions.

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VIEŠOJO VALDYMO DECENTRALIZAVIMO MODELIAVIMAS REFORMŲ KONTEKSTE

Eglė Gaulė

Santrauka

Viešojo valdymo decentralizacija gali būti suvokiama kaip viešojo valdymo sistemos transformavimo būdas reaguojant į kintančias viešojo valdymo sistemos aplinkos sąlygas valstybės raidos procesuose. Viešojo valdymo decentralizacijos koncepcijos plėtra suponuoja požiūrio kaitą – nuo valdžios decentralizacijos pereinama prie valdymo decentralizacijos, kai valdžios decentralizacijos koncepcija suformuoja sąveikos viešojo valdymo sistemos viduje principus, kuri išplečiama viešojo valdymo sistemos sąveikos su visuomene principais. Viešojo valdymo decentralizavimas yra daugialygmenėje (sisteminis, organizacinis ir individualus lygiai) sistemoje vykstantys, glaudžia tarpusavio sąveika pasižymintys pokyčių valdymo ciklai, kai dėl viešojo valdymo sistemos dinamikos nulemtos iteracijos sukuriama sinerginis poveikis. Teorinį viešojo valdymo decentralizavimo modelį, integruojantį sisteminį ir procesinį požiūrius, sudaro šie elementai: reformos kontekstas, apimantis išorinės ir vidinės aplinkos reformos formavimą ir įgyvendinimą, lemiančius ir/arba ribojančius veiksnius, reformos mechanizmas, susidedantis iš reformos turinio ir reformos proceso, bei reformos rezultatų įtakos viešojo valdymo sistemai ir valstybės valdymui.

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