

# *John Halligan: Reforming Public Management and Governance: Impact and Lessons from Anglophone Countries*

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John Halligan's new book *Reforming Public Management and Governance: Impact and Lessons from Anglophone Countries* was published in 2020 by Edward Elgar Publishing. John Halligan is internationally known public administration scholar, Emeritus Professor of Public Administration and Governance at the University of Canberra, Australia.

He has authored and co-authored many books, focusing his scholarly interests at public sector governance, performance management, and comparative analysis of public management. He is very active in international and European scholarly societies, and is known for his consultancy projects with international organisations, Australian government departments, and state and local governments.

In this book he summarised his extensive, long lasting exploration of public sector reforms in the Anglophone world, following their two main strands, managerialism and politicisation, in the period of about 40 years, from the 1980s onwards. The book is structured in ten chapters, with

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three useful appendices and some additions, such as the index, the bibliography, and the glossary.

In the first chapter the author constructs a general frame for an analysis of public management and governance reforms in four Anglophone countries, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. His research approach is comparative and historical, while the analysis covers only central governments, not state, provincial or local levels. The empirical body of knowledge and insights is found in “extensive interviews with public servants, present and former, in central agencies and departments, and with think tanks, overseas agencies and academic observers” made during “a decade or more ... but were concentrated in 2016-18” (19).

Three main themes constituting the conceptual frame of analysis are the impact of politicisation grasping the political-administrative relationship, management processes (devolution of responsibilities, capability and capacity, performance management, focus on results, etc.), and the governance of the public management system (integrating executive, coordination, etc.).

The second chapter examines the distinct features of administrative tradition in the Anglophone world. This should give an account of the initial conditions for public sector reforms as well as provide an insight into possible causes of problems if a public administration system seriously deviates from the initial, Westminster model.

The third chapter analyses strengthening political executive by taking into account politicising the executive in terms of changing roles, resources, and relationships. There are several relatively harmonized processes of widening the space for politicians and the ways of favouring political considerations in the central governments (strengthening the prime minister’s and ministers’ offices, empowering ministers, politicizing policy process, etc.).

The fourth chapter explores how the relationship between politicians and senior administrative professionals, established within the Westminster model, changes on the basis of managers’ appointments made by politicians and/or inflated with the political elements. Political priorities have become dominant, causing various imbalances within the public administration systems. The political appointment widens, while professional is influenced by political criteria, but to a various extent in researched countries. Finally, politicisation produces certain effects on public service behaviour.

The fifth chapter deals with some of the key managerial processes and preceptions, such as the application of management controls (what form

and for what purposes), decentralisation ('devolution', but with opposite pressures towards centralisation, plus agencification) of functions and competences, supporting capability and management processes (financial, performance, and risk management, human resource management, policy capability) and management improvement, change and reform.

The sixth chapter focuses on the performance and results in the public service, comparing four countries in regard to the purposes and instruments of performance, putting performance management to the first place, but including other instruments, such as programme evaluation, Canadian Management Accountability Framework, organisational capability reviews, etc. In addition, themes inevitably connected with the basic concept of performance, such as outputs and outcomes, quality of performance information, targetism, and some others attracted the author's attention. The newest evolution to the performance system is analysed.

In the seventh chapter the author explores efforts to reduce internal regulation, red tape and bureaucratic practice in public administration. The impact of rules and regulations and related issues are described and analysed. Risk aversion, innovation, politicisation, and bureaucratisation under public management are explored.

The eighth chapter focuses on the coordination and collaboration in the public sector. Vertical coordination, both political and administrative, including whole-of-government and digital coordination is analysed. Horizontal coordination is also treated in an analytical and comparative manner, tackling programme delivery and inter-agency cooperation, and integration and mergers. Three types of internal networks are compared, political, functional and professional, together with interdepartmental committees and task forces. The search for and patterns of coordination and collaboration is also elaborated in this chapter.

The ninth chapter offers a general overview of the author's research results. The author summarises the research by commenting the impacts of politicisation, managerialism, public management systems, and long-term patterns. Furthermore, he uses three interpretations of these patterns that bring into focus political management, administrative tradition, and change and cycles as public management themes.

The final, tenth chapter, titled 'Postscript' gives information about the situation at the end of the 2010s and possible directions (agendas) for change – bureaucratic, politicised, managerialist, and digital. He also speculates about four scenarios – politicised, gridlocked, public bureaucracy, and rebalanced. In conclusion, the author expresses his conviction

that presented and analysed empirical material indicates “the fundamental changes to both the roles of the political executive and appointed officials, and to public management” (218).

The book has three useful appendices, giving the overview of (1) reform programmes and judgements in the 2010s, (2) country chronologies, and (3) dynamics of change: centring and decentring. They are followed by an extremely comprehensive bibliography (pp. 244-289) and a well-prepared index.

The books and papers authored or co-authored by John Halligan have been helpful companions during my professional life, giving abundant and reliable information about state of the art in the field of public administration / management / governance especially in Australia and other Anglophone countries. Using his European orientation, I invited him to several important conferences that were held in Dubrovnik during the 2010s. On my invitation, he spent a month in Croatia, in Zagreb, in 2012, when he also visited Split and gave a lecture there. We have met several times at conferences abroad, last time at the IPSA World Congress in Brisbane in summer 2018.

John Halligan is a thorough and resourceful researcher and scholar, always well-prepared and ready to comment, support and give advice. He is an excellent and patient lecturer. Some of these characteristics are reflected in this book.

Based on his research and consultancy experience, he is able to give detailed empirical information, to systematise a huge amount of data and to make useful general conclusions, to summarise complex matters, to think in general, theoretical, comparative and historical categories, to follow different lines of theoretical thinking, and to make syntheses that connect everything mentioned above into well-grounded conclusions. Thus, he has contributed to administrative science as a respectable social discipline and offered a necessary frame of thinking and orientation for the administrative practice.

I would like to recommend the excellent John Halligan's book *Reforming Public Management and Governance: Impact and Lessons from Anglophone Countries* as an unavoidable source of information about public management and governance in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom to everyone whose interest is connected with public affairs, be that interest of the scholarly, practical, or educational nature.