

Public Administration Reform in CEE: Evidence from bibliometric analysis

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Abstract: Public sector reforms are defined as deliberate attempts to change the structures, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better. The main drivers of public sector reforms in recent decades have been concerns related to fiscal imbalances, ineffective and costly government programs, unresponsive administrative machinery, and intrusive government. In the Central and Eastern European (CEE) Region, the public sector confronts unparalleled challenges in the face of rapid technological advancements, economic globalization, and environmental degradation. Addressing these challenges necessitates that public sector reform efforts be guided by the principles of sustainable development, which seek to harmonize economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection.

Consequently, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive and in-depth examination of research trends in public sector reform in the CEE Region and the Caucasus. The specific objectives include: 1) examining descriptive indicators; 2) identifying the most relevant countries, journals, and authors; and 3) analyzing the evolution of research over time. The bibliometric analysis draws from the Scopus database, encompassing 225 documents on public sector reform authored by individuals affiliated with the CEE Region or the Caucasus. Various established and innovative bibliometric approaches, such as descriptive overviews, scientific production analyses, and network analyses, are applied using diverse software tools, including Python, Biblioshiny, and VOSviewer.

The results of the bibliometric analysis reveal that the most studied reforms in these regions pertain to financial/tax, healthcare, pension, accounting, higher education, and local government reform. The leading sources, in terms of the number of published papers, include the Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences and the Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. Meanwhile, the most cited sources originate from the International Journal of Public Sector Management, Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, and Health Policy. Moreover, Romania, Poland, Czechia, Croatia, and Slovenia emerge as the most representative countries for research in public administration reforms within the analyzed region. The paper also establishes links between types of reforms and the most influential authors, sources, and countries. Notably, authors from Croatia and Romania exhibit a stronger focus on local government reforms and decentralization, whereas authors from Poland, Romania, and Slovenia demonstrate a more pronounced emphasis on healthcare and tax reform in their research.

The findings of the paper may be of benefit not only to the scientific community to facilitate the detection of research gaps but also to evidence-based policymaking to help identify appropriate policy solutions to facilitate sustainable development in the future.