

From NPM to Digital Innovation: The Mediating Role of Ambidexterity

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Abstract: This study explores the potential mediating role of organizational ambidexterity in the relationship between New Public Management (NPM) principles and digital innovation outcomes within public sector institutions. Anchored in a conceptual and exploratory analysis, the paper investigates how ambidexterity—understood as the capacity to balance exploitative (efficiency-driven) and explorative (innovation-driven) activities—may enable public organizations to reconcile the structured, performance-oriented logic of NPM with the adaptive demands of digital innovation. Drawing on insights from the Romanian public administration context and initial qualitative data, the paper argues that ambidextrous capabilities could serve as a critical mechanism through which public institutions align operational discipline with innovation imperatives. The study offers a theoretical framework for future empirical research and contributes to ongoing discussions on how public organizations can leverage digital transformation to enhance NPM outcomes without compromising adaptability and innovation potential.