

8. The Study of Public Management in Italy.

Management and the Dominance of Public Law

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INTRODUCTION

Public management research in Italy is a recent development, concurrent with the administrative reforms and to the devolution process in place since the early nineties. The distinctive national characteristics of the study of public management in Italy are explained in this chapter by considering three main issues:

- The historical evolution of public administration in Italy, including an analysis of characteristics preceding and following the political and administrative unification in 1861;
- The coexistence of competing disciplines in the study of public administration and the traditional domination of the administrative law approach;
- The recent influence of the Anglo-American managerial approach, New Public Management ideas, and the Italian managerial theory *economia aziendale*.

The study of public management in Italy is strongly influenced by early administrative history and the coexistence of several disciplinary approaches including administrative, political and managerial sciences, sociology, law, and public economics.

First, we will examine a synthesis of historical texts on public administration before and after the unification in 1861, focusing on those historical trends which most influenced the path of public management and administration. This synthesis will help bring to light the principle causes of the current state of Italian public administration, including the heterogeneous performance of central-northern and southern Italy.

Next we will analyse public administration education in Italy while considering a survey of 42 Italian universities. The fourth section will explore the unique characteristics of Italian public management studies, highlighting both domestic patterns (i.e. the *economia aziendale* approach) and influences from abroad (namely the New Public Management wave). To this end we will take a closer look at the aforementioned university survey. Finally, the closing section reviews the main features of public management research in Italy with a content analysis of the articles published in *Azienda Pubblica*, the most important academic journal on public management in Italy in the last decade.

HISTORY OF STATE AND ADMINISTRATION

One hundred and fifty years after unification, Italian public administrations is relatively young when compared with the administrative systems of other European countries such as France, Spain and the United Kingdom. Still, performance is disproportionately heterogeneous across regions particularly when considering central-northern and southern Italy. Furthermore, the influence of pre-unification administrative systems on

political, social, and civil society development merits exploration as it is not immediately obvious.

Italian public administration is the result of the cross-fertilization of different administrative cultures including the *Rechtsstaat* tradition (Austro-Hungarian derived Lombardia and Veneto), bureaucratic Napoleonic traditions (Piemonte and Sardinia), and weak-State models more similar to the Vatican State and the Two-Sicilies realm (South Italy). These administrative cultures embody vastly differing visions of institutional and organizational models, and a diversity of relationships between public administration, citizens/civil society and other social and economical actors. These cultures further influence more minor themes such as public accounting and the management of public assets. This can be seen in northern regions where attention was given to openness and clarity of bureaucratic processes and on the delivery of basic public services such as waste and garbage collection, road maintenance, and public lighting. Here the philanthropy of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie played a strong role in the provision of social services and healthcare.

In contrast, the southern civil servants were known for their arbitrariness and free-riding behaviours which determined the low quality of public services and a greater distance between the government and the citizens. The *brigantaggio*, the rule of bandits, described the violent response from locals. This phenomenon lasted through most of the 19th century. However, in the *Sabaudia* realm, the French army had imposed Napoleonic institutions such as the *préfet* with highly formalized careers and a strong hierarchy (Melis 1996).

While the Piedmont in north-western Italy played a leading role in shaping the unified administration, institutional modernization efforts took place earlier and more obviously in other pre-unified States. East of Piedmont, in the Lombardo-Veneto region, a social class of bureaucrats was developed following a formalized fostered by the Austro-Hungarian empire featuring educational requirements for entry, career mobility, and ethical principles

In the Naples realm and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, the main Bourbonic laws (1816 and 1817) were in line with the previous French tradition. There were differences between formal rules, based on professional bureaucracy and territorial mobility, and their real application (prevalence of personnel with aristocratic origins). In other States – such as the Vatican Kingdom – there was general lack of formal norms regulating the organization and functioning of public offices. On the eve of unification, the various administrations counted nearly 60,000 employees, of which about 25,000 were from the Kingdom of Two Sicilies.

Prior to the political and administrative unification, the Italian states with the exception of the Lombardo-Veneto were converging to the French administrative model. Still, in the years immediately following the unification there were many discussions about which administrative model to adopt at the national level. The two main options were the Lombardo-Veneto model, based on a contingency approach emphasising local specificities and considered highly successful, and the French-inspired Piedmont (Napoleonic) model, based on principles of organizational uniformity. The Piedmont

model was selected hesitantly, considering the bureaucratic fragility of the southern administrative systems and the decentralisation experienced under the Bourbon rule (Fedele 1998).

The new model aimed to centralize political accountability and unify policy-making and executive activities. The creation of the secretary general further linked the minister with the bureaucratic apparatus.

In the aftermath of unification central government gained authority at the local level in almost every field with the exceptions of defence and justice. First introduced in 1853 and then in the unified Italy in 1865, the main difference with the French model was the absence of inter-ministerial coordination. In Italy, the competences of the central government authorities operating at the local level not integrated with those taken on by the prefects. Ministries were organized in general directorates, initially grouped as war, finance, and public works ministries, which expanded steadily during the following years. This induced a greater autonomy of the directors general from the minister.

During the 80s, liberal government revised this model, abolishing the secretary general and creating a deputy secretary general similar to the British parliamentary secretary. Yet at central level, the ministries-model, in a pure Weberian style, continued to exist until the 1990s.

During these years the number, size and diffusion of the agencies and independent authorities fluctuated (Cassese 1983)¹. In terms of sub-national levels of government, Italy has elements of both centralised France and the regional State of Germany. Different from Germany, the Italian central government has peripheral

Comment [R1]: Is this 1980s or 1880s?

administrations at the local level, which coexist with regions, communes and provinces. Cassese (1983) estimated that in every provinces there were at least 100 of peripheral offices of the State. Although local governments have been recognized as autonomous in the Italian Constitution, it was only in 1990 that a thorough reform was undertaken, with Constitutional revision only in 2001.

The Italian bureaucracy from the unification to 1900 was characterized by small size² and high uniformity, including almost of the all employees coming from the Piemonte administration. Career paths were mainly hierarchical with high integration between bureaucrats and politicians. It was only in 1908 that a civil servants statute³ was adopted, as a consequence of a major conflict due to increasing size and function of the government, as well as the increasingly socially and culturally diverse public employees with the increasing number of civil servants from the former Kingdom of Two Sicilies and from the former Vatican State.

Comment [R2]: All employees or no employees from Piemonte?

Public employment increased as a consequence of the expansion of the role of the State in the economy (figure 8.1). This expansion of public employees and functions is not in conjunction with the political and administrative unification as in other European countries, but four decades later in connection to the industrialization process. Here the State did not steer the economic development process as in France (Melis 1996). The increase of employees from South Italy – the ‘southernization’ – is simultaneous to this expansion.

Here table 8.1

Selection and training were carried out by the administration itself, which brought about the isolation of bureaucracy. Administrative elites such as those developed in France and the United Kingdom (Cassese 1983) were all but nonexistent, and the closeness of career paths didn't allow to develop an education system similar to the ENA in France. Needless to say, Italy did not have established public administration education traditions such as the French *grands corps* or the English Oxbridge. During the 1920s, the Giolitti government introduced a reform programme including: privatizations and liberalizations of some public services; ministerial reorganization and merger; and modernisation of civil service and public finance. It is important to note that, between World War I and World War II, many policies of public administration and public employment did not substantially influenced the decision-making processes and the way of working of Italian public administrations, which remained the same as when introduced during the 1920s.

The 1970s brought three important reforms: the reform of the healthcare system, the reform of the fiscal system and the creation of regional governments. The decentralisation process continued in 1977 and in 1998. Administrative reform launched in 1979-80 (Giannini 1979) and remained idle until 1990.

The main lines of this administrative reform included the adoption of scientific management ideas, the creation in each administration of a unit dedicated to the implementation of managerial techniques, the privatization of the public employment, with the exception of the higher civil service.

In 1990, the law on simplification and administrative transparency was approved and some of the most important administrative independent authorities were set up. A new agency was introduced in 1992 with the mission to coordinate the contractual bargaining process between the State and public employees unions. This was followed by the re-organisation of several ministries.

However, two decades after the reforms of the 1970s innovations in administrative transparency remained unsatisfactory, as highlighted in an evaluation by the Agnelli Foundation. Less than 50 percent of government offices had implemented governmental guidelines. This failure is even more pronounced in the areas of citizen relations and process management.

We can track the failures of transparency reform to several important factors, the most influential including: fiscal and budgetary pressures; loss of citizens' trust; an ageing society; changes in the electoral system; and, political vision and leadership.

Initially, budgetary pressures were the driving force for reform. A calamitous combination of relatively low level of taxation, huge government debt, and poor quality and cost-transparency of public services was magnified during European integration. This resulted in higher taxation and direct costs to citizens for certain public services. A second driver is concerned with the low levels of citizens' trust in public institutions. While it was an overall trend, the low level of citizens trust is often exemplified by the massive popular protest against the widespread corruption in the early 90s, the so-called

tangentopoli (the state of bribery), which led to many reforms aimed at improving the government-citizens relationship (table 8.2). Several referenda during these years highlighted a positive attitude of citizens towards the abolishment of some ministries. The media in turn have placed enormous emphasis on the technical nature of managerial expertise as a sort of moral antidote to the degeneration of politics (Panozzo 2000).

Here table 8.2

Demographic changes, in terms of ageing of the society and growth of the immigration, have led to many problems in the social, health and pension systems.

Important changes to the electoral system introduced the direct election of mayors (1993), presidents of provinces (1993), presidents / governors of regions (2000), with the aim of strengthening the stability of local governments and public accountability mechanisms.

Influences from abroad were mainly visible in the greater focus on new management practices such as the performance orientation of budgeting and human resources management in what has been coined the 'Italian wave' of new public management. Political vision and leadership were relevantly changed. It was only in the early 1990s, with the governments of Amato and Ciampi, that the modernization of the public sector became a central element with the public finances recovery programmes. More recently, regulatory reform became an area of focus for the Italian government. Policies of simple

streamlining of individual practices and the introduction of the one-stop shops for businesses were followed by codified policies for specific areas and subjects.

Integrity and ethics in public service have also been addressed by initiatives aimed at fighting corruption and managing conflict of interest situations. Law No. 3 of 2003 has instituted the ‘High Commissioner for preventing and fighting corruption’ in conformity with the provisions of the International Convention against Corruption recently adopted by the United Nations. Another important area of reform focuses on implementing a shift from a procedures-based administration to a results-based administration, mainly through the evolution and modernisation of preventative legitimacy control systems to managerial controls focused on ex post evaluation of economic impacts, social impacts, efficiency and effectiveness. A performance-oriented approach in the public sector has been introduced mainly through strategic planning initiatives both at the central and at the local and regional levels of government.

A key area of reform still underway is the devolution of powers from the central administration to the territorial administrations (i.e. Regions, Provinces and Municipalities). Future challenges in this area will be multilevel governance issues (particularly regulatory governance), integrated decision making and the development of local level competency in new functions.

Public management reforms in Italy have taken both a legislative approach and a top-down approach. While the contents of reforms are very much in line with the New Public Management principles and the experience of other OECD countries, the

approach to implementation is particularly to Italian reforms. These particularities include: (1) the implementation gap problem; (2) problems of scope (namely, wide-ranging reforms); (3) the varied speed and degree of modernisation across geographical areas/types of administrations; and, (4) the lack of evaluation. While the Italian government has been very active in introducing new and all-encompassing laws for reform, it is particularly weak in implementation. The modernisation paths of bodies such as the central and local governments, national and local public enterprises, and executive agencies are quite divergent. These differences are indicated by their varying innovation capacities.

Still, there has been no systematic evaluation of the public administration reform process in Italy.

The coexistence of different public administrations, the difficulties encountered in their integration and the effective establishment of a public administration system only in the past 50 years, have without a doubt influenced the study, as well as the reform, of public management in Italy and produced relevant consequences. It worth noting here the administrative and institutional dualism and the different speeds of modernisation process in the north and south (Cammelli 1988; Dente 2001 et al 2004), the relationship between institutional performance and civil society (Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti, 1994) and the particulars of public administration in the South (Mezzogiorno) in terms of political-administrative relationships and the spread of free-riding behaviours (Dupuy and Thoenig 1992; Reborra 1999). In illustration, Figure 8.1 presents the varying rates of adoption of New Public Management across regions in Italy.

Here figure 8.1

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION, WITH A FOCUS ON PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

An analysis of public administration education programmes in Europe (Hajnal 2003, see next table) defines three clusters: a legal group of countries, where a strong emphasis is put on administrative/public law; a public group, in which the public administration is recognised to have a unique public and political character; and, a corporate group focused on business management techniques (see Table 8.3).

Here table 8.3

Italian public administration has traditionally been dominated by administrative and public law while hesitant initiatives aimed at introducing scientific management principles encountered obstacles related to a formalistic and juridical culture. Still we see the simultaneous presence of several disciplinary approaches in the study of public administration each focused on different research areas. Among these are the administrative sciences approach which has developed inside the administrative law and the public accounting areas, the organisational sociology, the political sciences, the public policy analysis, and finally the *economia aziendale* approach. Still today the most consolidated approaches include both administrative law/science and political science. More recently, researches have noted a convergence between these two areas

which favours a multidisciplinary approach. This is exemplified in policy analysis and implementation research and the descriptive theory of public administration decision making.

The current state of the study of public administration in Italy can be further analysed with a survey of 42 Italian universities⁴ which comprised of a web-based content analysis of the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the faculties of economics, law, political sciences, sociology and science of communication. The sample of universities was determined by the necessity to compare these results with those of a 2004 survey on public management educational programmes to which the economic faculties of these 42 universities responded, an account of which is given later in this section.

Public administration degree programmes were found in 32 of the 42 universities. A closer look at these faculties exposes interesting aspects. The number of degree programmes on public administration is higher in political sciences faculties, followed by economic faculties and by law faculties (see Table 8.4).

Here table 8.4

In the area of post-graduate education, there are 29 Master of Arts programmes and 12 doctoral programmes dedicated to public administration as illustrated in Tables 8.5 and 8.6.

Here table 8.5

Here table 8.6

The pervasiveness of post-graduate courses related to public management in economic faculties can be explained by the competencies' demand expressed by public managers: in 2005 the Italian Department of Public Administration interviewed 1,588 senior civil servants, of which 99 per cent felt to lack managerial competencies.

Academic departments dedicated to public administration issues are found in only six of the 42 universities, of which five were positioned inside economic faculties and one in a political sciences faculty. This feature, far from representing a strong influence of the New Public Management approach, can be explained by taking into account the *economia aziendale* approach, explained in the next section.

Regarding education programmes specifically focused on public management, a survey of *economia aziendale*⁵ carried out by the two state universities of Rome (Tor Vergata and Rome 3) on behalf of the Italian Academia has highlighted the steady expansion of graduate and post-graduate courses on public management in the 42 universities which responded to the survey. The survey found 149 graduate courses in public management (Bologna education model); 34 post-graduate masters programmes in public management, public policy and management, and innovation and public management; and, four interuniversity PhD programmes dedicated to public management. Of the 149

undergraduate courses on public management, 66 per cent were within triennial degrees, while 34 per cent were within the biennial specialist degrees of the Bologna system.

Twenty-one percent of the courses tackle issues of planning, budgeting and control, compared with just 17 per cent of courses in accounting systems—which was earlier introduced in public management studies. The remaining courses are in areas of organisational and human resources management studies and public-private relationships. It should be noted that the increase of planning and control courses and the prominent role played by general courses in public management are a direct consequence of the impact of the New Public Management ideas on the study of public management in Italy.

Here table 8.7

Of the post-graduate degrees investigated, 34 are master of arts programmes. Furthermore, there are four doctoral programmes dedicated to public management at each Rome Tor Vergata, Bocconi, Siena and Salerno Universities.

Here table 8.8

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The national distinctions of the Italian study of public management are the result of two main influences: the typical *economia aziendale* approach and the New Public Management wave. Although the development of *economia aziendale* dates back to the first decades of the 1900s, it was thoroughly applied to public administrations only in the past two decades. The coexistence of several more dominant disciplinary approaches in the study of public administration, and the development of its own disciplinary identity, are the main challenges faced by the *economia aziendale* researchers in Italy.

Economia aziendale is a theoretical framework developed in Italy for describing the strategies, behaviours and operations of the private for-profit enterprises. It can be ascribed to the institutional approach to economics as opposed to the dominating technical and practical approaches. The main cornerstones and propositions of the framework are described in Pessina 2002 (see Box 1).

Box 1: The *Economia Aziendale* approach

A possible translation for *economia aziendale* may be business management or business administration even if none of these terms satisfactory captures its meaning, which corresponds to the German *Betriebswirtschaftslehre* (Borgonovi 1992).

Economia aziendale is the result of specific developments within the field of institutional economics, taking place in Italy, Germany and Central Europe. It is different if compared to the analytical, modellistic and econometric focus of the Anglo-American approach (Borgonovi 1992) and also to the French *sciences de gestion*, as far as these studies are centred around the capitalist enterprise archetypal, focused on

individual profitability objectives. Other differences refer to the research method (inductive/deductive in the former, mainly inductive in the latter).

It is a positive, general theory of the economics and of the management of all kind of social-political entities. Also it is holistic and interdisciplinary and oriented to the guidance of managers in need of strong general principles and theories useful in understanding the contingent reality. Studies falling into this approach correspond to specific information needs relating to business management issues.

An organization, according to the *Economia Aziendale* approach, is an *azienda* if it obeys to several guiding principles. It is seen as a social and economic unit with an autonomous existence that is unitary, evolutionary, enduring and innovative.

Unitariness comes about when the decisions of corporate governance are mutually consistent and shared by the members of the organization. Autonomy means that, while taking into account legitimate external expectations, the organization must make its decisions freely and in the interest of its members. Furthermore, it means that the organization is not systematically dependant on third parties, in order to avoid having to submit to the will of such parties. In the absence of unitariness and autonomy, the organization loses the capability to make timely decisions oriented towards long-term development. Unitariness and autonomy are necessary conditions for efficiency (as a condition for institutional equilibrium) and effectiveness. Whenever efficiency and effectiveness are not critical objectives (when the organization is allowed to operate in a protected environment) even unitariness and autonomy lose their relevance. Other

principles relate to the integration and balances of interests, to equity, etc. (Airoldi et al 1995).

The *Economia Aziendale* approach investigates simultaneously managerial (operational as well as strategic), organizational and accounting aspects of every organization (of every *azienda*). It virtually breaks it up in three sub-systems.

- a) the management (or decisional) sub-system includes the design of production processes and the decisions aimed at making the best use of the resources;
- b) the organisational sub-system comprises the organizational structures (units and relative functions) and the operative mechanisms (human resources management, planning and control, leadership style, etc.);
- c) the information and control sub-system relates to auditing, accounting and communication systems in place, aimed at satisfying the information needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

Source: With adaptations from Cepiku, Meneguzzo 2004; Pessina 2002.

For literature in English on the *economia aziendale* approach see Airoldi et al 1995. See also: Accademia Italiana di Economia Aziendale <<http://www.aidea.it>>

The main propositions of *economia aziendale* include the following (Pessina 2002):

- To satisfy their needs, individuals may create institutions, some of which perform economic activities.
- An institution is a durable entity, which includes individuals and resources (tangible and immaterial), operating under a set of stable cultural norms and of behavioral rules

and structures. It performs a set of coordinated activities with the final aim of satisfying human needs.

- Institutions include both public and private, for and not for profit entities;
- Management theory and its general principles must cover all classes of institutions;
- The institutions of all classes share the following general features: are guided by a dynamic vision; are autonomous (although not independent) and exist to satisfy human needs (which implies strategic effectiveness and operational efficiency). These are often referred to as *visione sistemica, autonomia & economicità*;
- Management theory is the discipline that focuses on the economic dimension of institutions;
- Institutions include stakeholders and the governance structure; economic activities; organisational structure and mechanisms; human resources management; and, physical and technical arrangements;
- Management theory considers the environment with specific reference to its economic dimension, which includes other entities having competitive, exchange, institutional, implicit and liberality relations with the institution.

In public administrations and agencies the strengthening of the disciplinary identity of *economia aziendale* took place in the area of accounting as a reaction to the hegemony of administrative law, which highlighted the legal implications of the national public accounting. Only now, decades later, a central issue in Italy has become the application of private business management (namely planning, accounting and control, decision making) to the public sector.

The adoption of *economia aziendale* paradigm to public administrations in Italy gained more space and interest during the starting phase of the New Public Management wave. The main developments are found in Borgonovi 1973; Rebori 1983; Borgonovi et al 1984.

Table 8.9 lists the main levers of action ascribed to New Public Management reforms in Italy. Market-type mechanisms and managerial techniques in use in the private sector, particularly planning and control systems, are the areas receiving greater attention and higher visibility. There is a direct relationship between these New Public Management levers of change and the incidence of public management, public accounting, and planning, budgeting and control undergraduate courses listed in table 8.7.

Here figure 8.7

Two issues here are noteworthy. First, the innovative experiences of management and organisation preceding the New Public Management wave developed since the mid-50s have not received an adequate attention from the academia and the business administration researchers. Examples of this include the adoption of PPBS (Planning, Programming, and Budgeting Systems, in the '60s) and ZBB (Zero-Based Budgeting, in the '70s) in the central government. Another remarkable experience is the 1952 creation of an organisational unit dedicated to planning and project management in the municipality of Milan, which has multiplied since the 60s. In 1982 the regions of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna also created units on planning and control and introduced systems for evaluating the impact of regional policies. The second issue is

the adoption of managerial techniques in Italian public administration – in terms of both an institutional approach such as *economia aziendale* and the New Public Management approach. As previously mentioned, the success reached by these later experiences varies significantly between different levels of government and between geographical areas.

The proliferation of graduate and postgraduate courses in public management in Italy is relative to a greater awareness of certain weaknesses of the *economia aziendale* approach to public administration. Among these are the low propensity towards interdisciplinary research and the lack of comparisons and confrontation with other disciplines, especially political sciences, sociology and administrative law. Additionally, the approach gives limited importance to the study of public administration tendencies at the international level, including the pros and cons of the New Public Management experience and the emerging, now consolidated, paradigm of public governance.

Currently, some Italian universities (Bocconi Milano, Venice, Pisa, Siena and Rome Tor Vergata), in partnership with the governmental units for modernisation and innovation, are exploring international trends and beginning to overcome a vision of business administration limited exclusively to accounting with a movement towards developing a paradigm which integrates managerial, organisational and strategic issues.

KEY ISSUES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH

Though the influence of the Anglo-Saxon shall remain strong, the institutional, political, social and historical specificities will continue to play a role in the evolution of public management studies in Italy. Among the main future trends, we will see a movement towards other disciplinary approaches such as sociology and political sciences (Cassese 2004), especially in the study of public governance (Cepiku 2005); strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation (Rebora 1999); public policy impact evaluation; and, network management and governance (Kickert et al 1997).

Themes such as the design and development of networks between public administration and both private and non-profit organisations are central to the current scientific debate, as well as important trends in the practice of public administrations. Considering the development of political entrepreneurship phenomena (mayors and presidents of regional governments) and the introduction of a spoil system model, another key issue concerns the relationship between political level and senior civil service. This trend, considering the duality and plurality of Italian public administrations, calls for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of public management.

Figure 7 illustrates the main issues addressed by articles published on the most important Italian academic journal on public management: *Azienda Pubblica*. Over 300 articles were analysed from 1996 to 2006 and classified according to the areas of research, government levels addressed (Table 8.11), research strategies (Table 8.13 and 10), and stage of research .

There is a direct relationship between the main levers of public management adopted in practice and post-graduate education and research in Italian Universities. Public administration reform, innovation, planning and control, and accounting systems are the most recurrent issues in academic/scientific articles (114 articles). There are a surprisingly low number of articles addressing institutional decentralisation and devolution (12), processes of interest in Italian public administration since 2000. Also of low frequency are articles referencing e-government and interdisciplinary issues, with only 10 articles in 10 years on administrative theories.

Other research issues, more in line with the current trends of public management and the progressive evolution towards public governance, are emerging: human resources management and leadership development; government-citizens relationships; public and institutional communication; public accountability and social/environmental responsibility; inter-institutional networks; and, strategic management.

Here figure 8.10

The analysis of publications in public management and administration in Italy offers other interesting information on the levels of government researched and the methodology adopted. Table 8.11 illustrates that regional and local administrations are the most analysed organisations (161 articles). The attention given to the local level of government is easily understandable by considering the higher innovation rate of these administrations, as exemplified by the various national and international awards (such as the four quality conferences of the European Union from Lisbon 2000 to Tampere in

2006). This is the direct effect of the greater managerial autonomy and the direct election of mayors and close contact with citizens. Furthermore, the type of activities included in local governmental functions —service delivery as opposed to the policy-making activities characterising ministries and regions—may explain the viability of applying managerial principles(*economia aziendale* and New Public Management) and techniques.

Of the articles examined, 94 address to the public sector in general, without reference to a specific type of public administration.

Here figure 8.11

There is also a modest interest in the international context with 30 articles dedicated to foreign experiences. Among the motivations towards international public administration research, which is growing in recent years, is the limited access of the Italian public funds as highlighted by Table 8.12.

Here table 8.12

Apart from the basic literature review, our research strategy also includes a review of case studies. ~~A closer look to the typologies of case studies adopted is illustrated in~~ **Figure 10**. The single-case approach (61 articles out of 90 adopting this method) is preferred to the multiple-case strategy. Highly relevant is the frequency of surveys, which are adopted more frequently than the methodologies of other disciplinary approaches such as ethnography (sociology), historical research (administrative

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sciences), simulation methods (managerial sciences). A final feature of Italian research on public management is represented by the predominance of qualitative research (324 articles out of 338).

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Italian experience of institutional, administrative and managerial reform offers interesting ways to address the question, launched by Walter Kickert in his North-South comparison, 'How does the history of a state or administration affect the form and content of its administrative reforms?'

A historical perspective of Italian public administration cannot be restricted to post World War II but must embrace the political and social unification process which was completed with the fall of the Vatican authority and the accession of several North-East regions after the World War I. We have herewith briefly reviewed the various institutional, political and administrative cultures which birthed the unitary state, and analysed the difficulties in their homogenisation and the clarification of unitary and shared procedures in central and local administrations.

The coexistence of 'several Italies' including the North-South dualism (well-known abroad) the three-Italies phenomenon (the territorial context of big firms in North-West small-to-medium enterprises in centre, and North-East and the *Mezzogiorno*) are

without a doubt influenced by the underlying administrative and institutional cultures. These cultures have conditioned the orientation of public administrations to sustain industrial or service enterprises, and to promote the development of the civil society and public-private partnerships. This explains, in the perspective of administrative history and business history, the creation of parallel models of administrations, the clientelism, the corruption, the weakness in the face of organised criminality and, especially, the different degrees of social and economic development, which are not immediately clear considering the history after WWII.

In order to overcome stereotypes, it is necessary to highlight some important distinctions of Italy when compared with other Mediterranean states. These issues include the difficulties of managerial reforms in breaking the legalistic monopoly, the ossified world, and the levels of collectivism mentioned by Walter Kickert, and should be dealt with by considering the innovations introduced by local governments before and during the New Public Management wave.

More generally, Italy presents a particular dynamism and vivacity in innovations of the local public services delivery, in healthcare and social assistance, in education and in cultural heritage management. In these sectors, the regional and local governments have developed important capacities of network management.

The innovation capacity in service delivery activities is confirmed by several best practices well-known abroad including the management of kindergartens in *Emilia Romagna* region; mental-ill healthcare in Trieste; cultural events management in Rome,

Venice and Florence; and, tele-heating and co-generation in *Brescia*. More recently, innovations are being introduced in decisional processes and working methods. Examples of this are the 'network of strategic cities' (see the website of RECS - *Rete delle Città Strategiche*: www.recs.it) grouping over 100 municipalities adopting strategic planning and management, the participatory planning and budgeting experiences of Florence and Rome. Italy, similar to some Scandinavian countries and Germany, is experimenting and adopting public governance principles centred on networks among local governments and between healthcare and cultural administrations, and public, private and non profit organisations.

The varying levels of innovation can be in part explained by the strong civic sense: an attention to the common good or administrative pride which, in some territories (centre and north) developed historically and institutionally based on a pre-unitary state which has been maintained and enforced systematically from the socialist municipalities in early 1900s to the 'good government' experiences in some big cities and regions in mid-'60s.

The distinctions of Italy in comparison to the other southern European states include the diffusion and relevance of bottom-up innovation, important experiences of participatory planning and management, public governance principles more in general and the enhancement of NIMBY (an acronym of Not In My Back Yard) phenomena since 2005 on topics including high-speed rail lines, nuclear waste in the south, U.S. military base expansion in *Vicenza*.

In conclusion, in consideration of the Italian experience of the North-South comparative perspective, the three main reforms—namely professionalism and rationalisation, democratisation and modernisation—should be applied to those administrative systems characterising the country either at the institutional or at the territorial level.

A final remark concerns the ways in which universities, business schools, and the various national and regional civil servants training schools have addressed the specificities of Italy in reforming its public administration. As mentioned earlier, the New Public Management levers of change and the administrative reform/institutional decentralisation processes have boosted the study and research on public management and administration in Italy.

The centrality of the legal culture and the juridification are progressively fading: although, as the survey presented here illustrates, undergraduate courses on public administrations prevail in law, political sciences and sociology faculties (49) and less so in economic faculties (26), the latter playing a dominant role in post-graduate programmes (masters and doctoral) in public administration and management. The strong development of post-graduate education on public management is mainly in the areas of performance measurement, planning, budgeting and control, and accounting which play a central role in the New Public Management theoretical structure.

In the near future, once the managerial techniques introduced in the Italian public administrations are consolidated, it will be absolutely necessary to give great attention to promising areas of public governance. While these areas currently as shown by the

analysis of academic articles, already receive the consideration of researchers, Italian public administration will benefit from a recovered identity of public management and should adopt interdisciplinary approaches to integrate administrative history and international comparative analyses.

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Notes

¹ While during 1861-1921, were created 100 organizations; during 1922-1940, this figure reaches 260..(Cassese, 1983: 36). Their creation was motivated by different reasons including: aims of technicality and efficiency in carrying out new functions of the welfare State (1910-1920); public intervention in economy (1930s); aims of flexibility and independence in traditional areas (1940/50s). See also Melis (1996).

² In 1896, France had 38,5 millions of inhabitants and 416.000 employees; the Austro-Hungarian empire 41,3 millions of inhabitants and 63.535 employees; Belgium 6 million inhabitants and 47.880 employees; while Italy 31 million of inhabitants and 90.618 employees. See Melis (1996).

³ The statute differentiated the regulations applied to employees in public administrations as compared to the private sector. It lasted until 1998 when the laws overcame distinctions. This last reform is usually referred to as the 'privatization' of the public employment in Italy.

⁴ The surveyed universities are 42 out of the 63 existent universities. The complete list can be found in D'Alessio L., Meneguzzo M., Cepiku D., Gulluscio C., (2004), Elaborazione sugli insegnamenti attivati dalle università censite: Progress report nr. 4/31.05, Gruppo di interesse azienda pubblica – AIDEA.

⁵ AIDEA is a network grouping business administration academicians from economic faculties of Italian public and private universities.