

OECD Perspectives on Government of the Future

Caroline VARLEY

Head of Programme

Public Governance Reviews

Governance Reviews and Partnerships Division

Public Governance and Territorial Development

caroline.varley@oecd.org

(0033) 1 45248574

Some strategic questions to start...

- What is the purpose of the State (serving citizens)?
- Legitimacy and trust issues...
- Is the nature of the State changing, if so why, what are the drivers of change?
- How will the changes impact on the role of government?
- What would be the key characteristics of well functioning, well adapted future States?
- Can some shared public governance values, criteria, be identified?
- How to take account of context? Issues of scale, income, political culture....
- Dealing with transition, breaking out of path dependency

...and a definition of effective government

Effective government is about the ability to deliver on a strategic vision, that is, how governments pro actively expect to change the economic and social environment of their countries

It is about the framework of strategy, institutions and processes through which the different actors who have a legitimate interest in the shaping and implementation of public policy, find their place, under the leadership and stewardship of the state

Public Governance Reviews (PGRs)

OECD Public Governance Reviews provide governments with a 360° perspective on their performance, and where this needs to be improved, in order to strengthen a country's potential for sustainable growth and to improve the well being of its citizens

Public Governance Reviews (PGRs)

- Ireland (2008-2009)
- Greece (2008-2010, 2011, 2012-2013)
- Finland (2009-2010)
- Estonia (2010-2011)
- France (2011-2012)
- Slovenia (2011-2012)
- Poland (2011-)
- Hungary (2012-)
- Slovakia (2013-)
- Spain (2013-)
- Colombia (2013-)

Diagnostic (1)

- Operational strategic goals are not clearly visible and don't link to the budget
- Fuzzy Centre of Government, lacks visibility
- Leadership and accountability deficit
- Minister-civil servant relationship is neglected, yet politics can't be ignored (can it?)
- Poor (sometimes very poor) communication (internally as well as externally)
- Executive and parliament not well joined up

Diagnostic (2)

- Integrity issues are not just for emerging states
- Implementation of policies got lost somewhere
- International dimension got lost somewhere
- Legal formalism blocks initiative
- Concern about silos, functions, machinery of government
- Innovation needs space and encouragement

What specifically needs fixing(1)

- Improving the minister-civil servant relationship
- Addressing the role of the Centre of Government
- Strengthening the relationship between the executive and parliament
- Linking strategic planning with the budget
- Breaking the silo habit

What specifically needs fixing(2)

- Having a « fit for purpose » public administration
- Paying attention to implementation
- Improving collaborative networks
- Engaging the actors beyond the centre for 21st century service delivery
- Focus on effectiveness not just savings

A footnote on language

- Countries do not speak the same public governance language!
- Slippery territory includes: public sector, civil servant, policy, regulator, ministry
- Reasons: language reflects political and institutional culture; different statistical definitions; different definitions for different governance fields

Back to some big questions...

1. The role of the State?

Core business, responsibility, accountability...

2. Does one size fit all?

Issues of scale, income, political culture....

3. Shared principles...

Are these possible?

Conclusions

Putting the State back into focus

- Strategic vision and agility
- Leadership and stewardship from the centre
- Enabling the participation of local actors
- Integrity and transparency
- Institutional strength and networks
- Effective processes
- Implementation in support of real outcomes and impact for the economy and society

Conclusions

**You need to change everything
in order for nothing to
change**

Thank you!

caroline.varley@oecd.org