

# The Feasibility Study of Innovative Public Policy Client-Accordance Index

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## Abstract

The role of the societies and their interaction with public administration is changing toward ever closer cooperation. Since 2009 scientific literature, and to a lesser extent also the public administrations themselves, have increasingly been exploring the changing and dynamic role of the recipient of public services, or the client, as that of a partner in the provision of public services. In scientific literature this phenomenon is described as the concept of co-production or co-creation of public services. This is foreseen as the next stage of evolution in the relationship between public administration and society. With growing and wide-ranging social and civil participation in overall public governance, it is inevitable that new tools and approaches will be needed to facilitate the cooperation and co-production between policy makers and society itself. Furthermore, similar growing tendencies and principles of closer cooperation between providers and recipients can also be found business sector, most visibly in e.g. social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding. This, in turn, can give additional lessons to learn from in understanding the possible developments of the co-production of public services. Author's proposed policy client-accordance index (PCA index), which measures the relevance of policy planned results and policy-makers' expectations in relation to clients' intentions, is a draft try to contribute to this necessity. Such a research to large extent tackles also the general problem of insufficiency of innovation in public governance.

The main goal of the research is to set for the experts' discussion on the applicability and challenging aspects of the feasibility and to test the possible transfer of the author's developed Latvian youth policy case-based policy client-accordance evaluation methodology model for evaluating the relevance of any public administrations' policies to the intentions of the policy's respective client target group – the client-accordance index of a given public policy.

The research design essentially consists of 1) selection of public policy areas, 2) identification of main policy intentions and expectations, including the review of methodologies to do so, 3) categorizing the segments of the respective policy's clients' target groups. To conduct the research on these stages, the contents analysis of respective legislative acts and expert interviews are to be conducted. The fourth stage of research design shall be 4) setting of the methodologies to collect the respective policy's clients' target group intentions and evaluations with regard to the co-production process in the public governance in the respective policy area. Large focus of the research is planned to be put on the usage of existing data or collection of data for clients'/co-producer's profiling – their interests, intentions, needs. The uncertain concept of the big-data, the risks of the surveillance state as well as the certain concerns of data privacy issues in relation to state information registers shall be reviewed.

The research methods includes, firstly, scientific literature analyses to review the applications of relevant theories, experts' discussions and analyses of several empirical studies in EU countries. The literature research and experts' discussions forms the basis of creating the draft typology and structure of public policies, its respective services' groups, client target groups, and client-based approaches as an integral part of co-production. Then the feasibility of the author's developed youth policy case study based client-accordance index methodology model shall be analysed.

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The main expected outcome of the research is the classification of typology of public policies, their respective services, client groups, and most importantly adjusted feasibility methodologies of client-accordance index measurement showing the integrity level of coproduction of public services.

## The ever-increasing topicality and its shifts

The post-industrial civil society paradigm is increasingly strengthening in modern democratic public administration systems. That, among other principles, is also characterized by societal equality and participation opportunities; as a result state power is focusing more on the needs of society. This, in turn, is reflected in broad public administration reforms carried out to improve the efficiency of the state power realization according to the needs of society. Public administration reforms in the world's democratic states is a continuous process and their development is also foreseen in the future.<sup>2,3</sup> The strong political will, consensus for just and fair governance practices, expressed through media and suitable administrative innovation, can certainly ensure that the code of conduct is rarely violated. The institutions are nothing but a reflection of society and its values. The official and the citizen carry the same values in the respective society.<sup>4</sup> Among other features, the paradigm of post-industrial civil society which is increasingly strengthening in modern democratic states, it is also characterized by principles of social equality and participation. As a result of having more opportunities of participation, the democratic societies today are having an increasing impact on the public administration, including public policy planning, design and implementation. The role of the societies and their interaction with public administration is changing toward ever closer cooperation and even more – in more and more cases it is changing to the co-production of public services.<sup>5</sup> The concept of the client as the focus of public administration from the New Public Management is not so much losing its `fashion` as it is starting to gain some vibes of even negative or politically incorrect connotation, like it – the label of client – is diminishing the actual role of civic society member in public governance which is more important than that of a client. In some countries, co-creation is increasingly perceived as a new public administration paradigm as it involves a whole new thinking about public service delivery and policy development. Co-created public governance breaks with the classical view that the public sector is the sole provider of public goods.<sup>6</sup> The concept of co-production, as introduced by John Alford<sup>7</sup>, professor of Public Sector Management at the Australian and New Zealand School of Government, emphasizes the cooperation between producers (state and public institutions) and receivers or beneficiaries of public services where the latter is taking an increasing role participating in the creation of the public good. The road from the state clients as a part of the society that is at the end of public administration bureaucracy functions as it was and for a large part in many countries still is practiced by Max Weber classical bureaucratic public administration model to the state client as a co-producer of public services as it is developing in the *new public governance* model has taken the last almost 100 years (M.Weber's "*Bureaucracy*" was published in 1922). During this time many different but interchangeable roles of a state client have been explored including such as citizen, individual, society, customer, client, beneficiary, service receiver, and obligatee. The mix of client roles in public administration is often confusing for clients themselves and also for public service employees, too. However, despite the role there is growing awareness in public administration about the

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission. (2015). Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 1305/2013, COM(2015) 701 final, 2015/0263 (COD), Brussels, 26.11.2015.

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2019), *Digital Government Review of Sweden: Towards a Data-driven Public Sector*, OECD Digital Government Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4daf932b-en>.

<sup>4</sup> Rajneesh, S. (2015). Value Creation in Citizen Services: Sakala as India's Most Effective Citizen-first Public Engagement Model. *Journal of Creating Value*, 1(2). pp. 275-291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2394964315604096>

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2011), *Together for Better Public Services: Partnering with Citizens and Civil Society*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264118843-en>.

<sup>6</sup> Torfing, J., Sørensen, E., Røiseland, A. (2016). Transforming the Public Sector Into an Arena for Co-Creation: Barriers, Drivers, Benefits, and Ways Forward. *Administration & Society*, 51(5). pp.795-825. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399716680057>

<sup>7</sup> Alford, J. (2009). *Engaging public sector clients: From service-delivery to co-production*. Basingstoke, UK:Palgrave, p.28, 272.

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existence of their clients and the need to satisfy their needs for common public good. In order to do so the public policies must be designed in line with the intentions of respective policy's client target group. Citizens, who evinced trust and faith, coupled with their continuous feedback that helped the project grow from strength to strength. This means that within the growing concept of co-production the society holds an equally important role as the very public administration does.<sup>8</sup>

The notion and the concept of the client within public administration were gradually adopted from the private sector in the course of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was fostered by changes in private sector development methods, particularly in the field of strategic planning, which later was also adopted and now is used as an important instrument in public administration development planning. As a result, much greater attention was paid to the customer and customer service within the company's existence and development. Such changes in the private sector contributed to the public pressure against the bureaucratic public administration, demanding equal attitudes, efficiency and level of cooperation from the public authorities as to that which was forming between service providers and recipients – customers – in the private sector. This, in turn, contributed to the start of reforms in public administration in the 1980's and 1990's, adopting a variety of management and organization methods from the private sector, which marked a turning point in public administration's and society's – their clients – relations (Figure 1.), including identification of clients and their needs and striving for their satisfaction. The author concludes that the client's concept in the public sector has evolved gradually and still continues to evolve as public administration theory specialists are exploring and offering new ideas for more appropriate public sector management and governance.

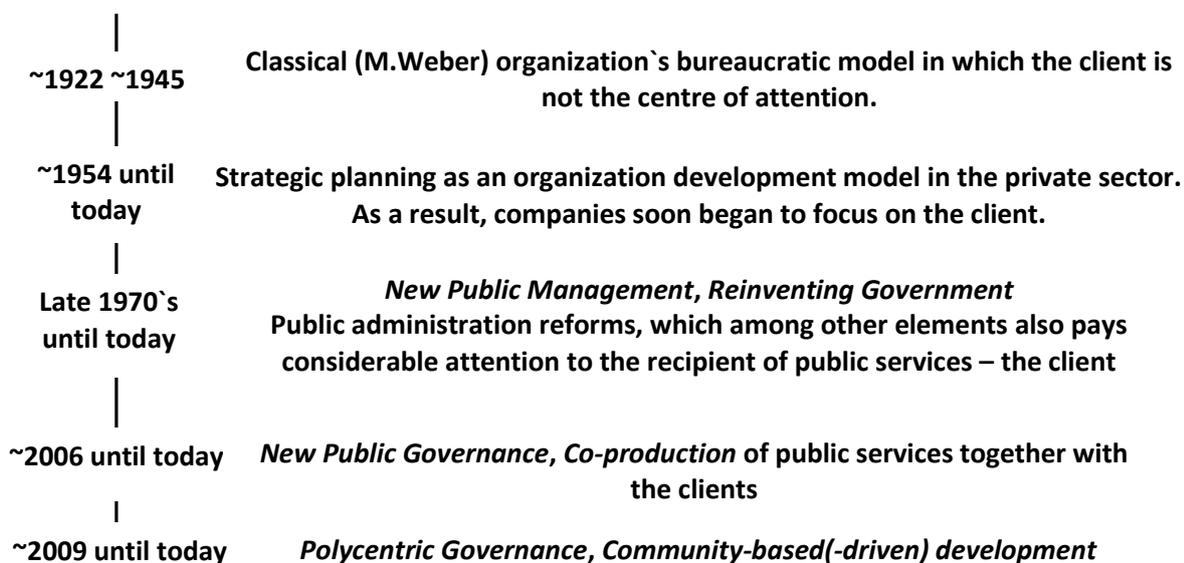


Figure 1. **Public administration's client's concept development over time**

Source: Author's construction based on theory research and scientific literature review<sup>9, 10</sup>

Since around 2006 the back then new concept of public administration and public services theory started to being developed, which emphasized the need for cross-sectoral co-operation governance (governmental, non-governmental and private sector) – the *new public governance*. The new public governance concept is

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<sup>9</sup> Briggs, L. (2013). Citizens, Customers, Clients or Unwilling Clients? Different and effective strategies for citizen-centric delivery. In: Lindquist, E.A., Vincent, S., Wanna, H. (eds) *Putting Citizens First. Engagement in Policy and Service Delivery for the 21st Century*. Canberra: The Australian National University, pp.83.-94, 220.

<sup>10</sup> Osborne, S.P., Radnor, Z., Nasi, G. (2012). A New Theory for Public Service Management? Toward a (Public) Service-Dominant Approach. *American Review of Public Administration*, 43(2), 135-158.

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focused on the creation of a joint governance system for the provision of public services<sup>11</sup> rather than the improvement of the organization and work of each separate institution involved in the provision of public services. The new public governance concept is strongly connected to the co-production concept of public services and they complement each other.

The close interaction between these two concepts to a large extent changes the roles of contemporary public service provision system's participants – politicians, officials of the governmental institutions and the recipients of public services (Figure 2.). These changing roles are defined by both the characterizing principles and values of the respective public administration model as well as by the mechanisms of cooperation among the participants of the process of the “producing” and receiving of public services.

The model of public administration	Values and principles of the respective model	Society's role	State officials' role	Politicians' role
Old (classic, bureaucratic) public administration model	Hierarchy, control, bureaucracy	Receivers, consumers	Providers, executors	Leaders, lawmakers, teachers
New public management model	Market model principles, focus on results, outsourcing, competition	Clients, customer	Managers	Controllers, supervisors
New public governance model	Cooperation, cross-sectoral, inter-institutional relationships		Mediators	Coordinators
	Suppliers	Clients		
	Participants, Co-producers			

Figure 2. **The development of the participants' roles involved in the provision of public services**

Source: Author's construction based on Sicilia, M. et al<sup>12</sup>, Alford, J.(2014)<sup>13</sup> and Alford, J.(2015)<sup>14</sup>

Each of the public administration's theoretical models corresponds to a separate paradigm of organizational ideology, which respectively assigns certain roles to politicians, state officials and society as well as defines the organizational mechanism for the provision of public services.

Service- and client-oriented approach in public administration is considered to be one of the milestones of good public governance, because it focuses on governing efficiency, transparency and responsibility to the clients. Service-oriented development of public administration is one of the main principles reflected in development planning documents of the UN, WB, IMF, OECD and other international organizations as well as the EU. The significance of the client, the recipient of public services, and efficient provision and delivery of public services as well as the client service itself is defined in various development planning documents including their aims and tasks, which emphasize the intentions of widening the accessibility of public services and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures in the delivery of public services. To stimulate society's civic and social participation and contribution to the common wellbeing and to encourage society's loyalty towards the state, it is essential to provide the opportunities for public administration clients to receive public services, including fulfilling the obligations, in a quick and suitable manner. To ensure the systematic improvement of the provision of public services through client satisfaction surveys, it is equally essential to understand not only the failures in public service provision, but also the reasons of clients being satisfied with the service and its delivery; this will allow applying the good practices for other services and clients' target

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Sicilia, M., Guarini, E., Sancino, A., Andreani, M., Ruffini, R. (2015). Public services management and co-production in multi-level governance settings. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Published online before print June 5, 2015, doi: 10.1177/0020852314566008, p.4, 1-21.

<sup>13</sup> Alford, J. (2014). Engaging public sector clients: From service-delivery to co-production. *Public lecture at the Copenhagen University, Denmark*. 24.04.2014. Copenhagen, Denmark.

<sup>14</sup> Alford, J. (2015). Co-production, interdependence and publicness: Extending public service-dominant logic. *Public Management Review*, Published online before printing on 20 Nov 2015, doi: 10.1080/14719037.2015.1111659.

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groups.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the overall clients' satisfaction and an state's image in society will improve. Performance of the public institutions is heavily affected by the number of economic, political, technological, social and other factors, which may increase the amount and variety of the public administration's functions and tasks. In fulfilling only the instructed bureaucratic functions, and not planning and implementing the changes, high risks may occur to fall behind the developments in rapidly progressing and changing private business and NGO sectors.

### **The need of change on the awareness of a public service**

Provision of public services derives from the realization of the public administration functions – it is one of the forms, set in the legislation, of realization of public administration functions in interactions with the recipients of public services, the clients. Public services are characterized by complete or partial public funding, however its implementation can be delegated or outsourced to a third party, mostly the private sector, or less often the NGO sector, e.g. such public services are social care, public transportation, public road maintenance and others are often outsourced to private companies or NGOs.

The definition of public service proposed in Latvian legislative acts and drafts emphasizes the public service being a *benefit to the client*. This is an arguable contradiction to other definitions and descriptions of administrative public service, proposed in the same legal acts, as it encompasses the execution of the client's obligations towards a public person – “..these services are nudged upon its specific recipient while the actual beneficiary is the society”. The emphasis on the public service as a *benefit to the client* also contradicts widely reviewed cases in scientific literature about nudged public services, i.e., such services which according to the respective client do not provide individual or private benefit to him or her, for instance, imprisonment for prison's “client”, various fines and penalties or payment of taxes.

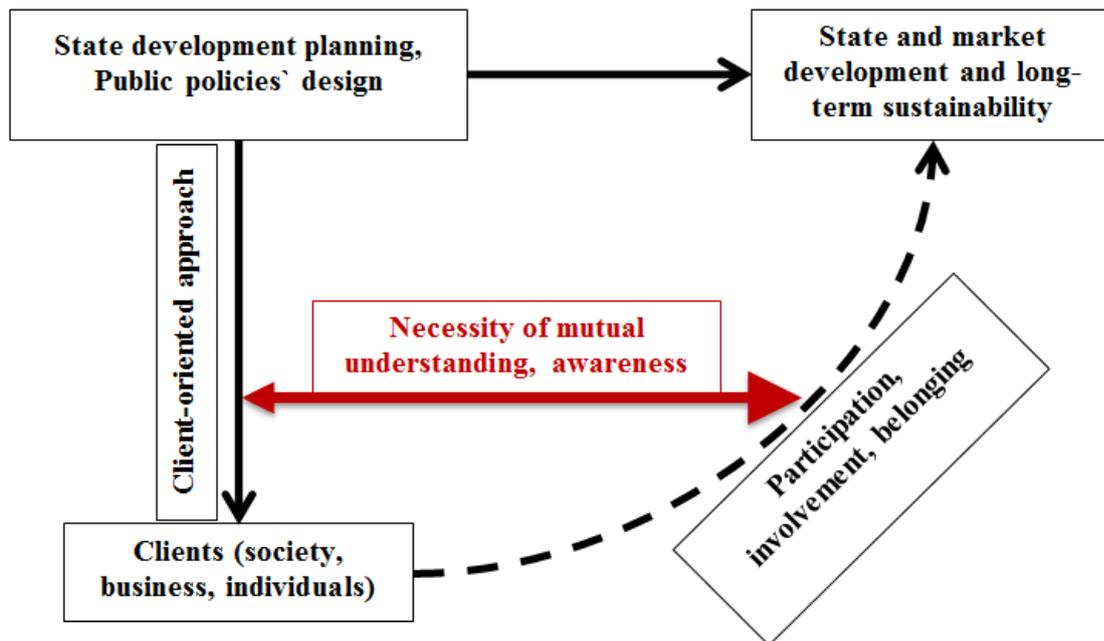
Based on the research and analysis of the scientific literature and legal acts, the author proposes to improve the definition of public service as follows: *Public service is, in pursuing public administration's functions, ensured or delivered material or non-material, direct or indirect benefit to the client or to the society as a whole*. The author also suggests adding to the definition of a public administration client the aspect of society being the beneficiary as a whole of the public services: *the client of the public administration is any person or entity that has the rights to receive any public service, and society as a whole* (see Figure 2.1).

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<sup>15</sup> Hertog, den P., Aa, van der W., Jong, de M.W. (2010). Capabilities for managing service innovation: towards a conceptual framework. *Journal of Service Management*, 12(4), 490-514.

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**Figure 2.1. Public policy's mediated effect on state and market development**

*Source: Author's construction based on logical construction and content analysis of legislative documents*

The collaborative planning of public policy as an integral part of national strategic development planning, the formation of public administration attitudes towards society as still both, the public administration clients and partners, and striving for maximal but balanced satisfaction, the PCAX, as well as being aware and respecting the clients' intentions – all of these aspects form an important basis for and are closely linked to sustainable development of the state, its public administration and the society, which ultimately is above all and covers the two.

### **Public Policy Client-Accordance Index**

Within his doctoral thesis, the author developed a methodology model based on Latvian youth policy to evaluate quantifiably the relevance of public administrations' policy to the intentions of the policy's clients' group. For the purposes of further feasibility explorations author have named this relevance as the policy-client-accordance (PCA) index – PCAX. The essence of PCAX is first to identify the policy makers' expectations contained in policy planning documents and second – identify (survey, observe, collect, extract – the method still under research) the very policy's target audience's (beneficiaries, clients, co-producers) intentions in respect to policy makers' expectations (see Figure 3).

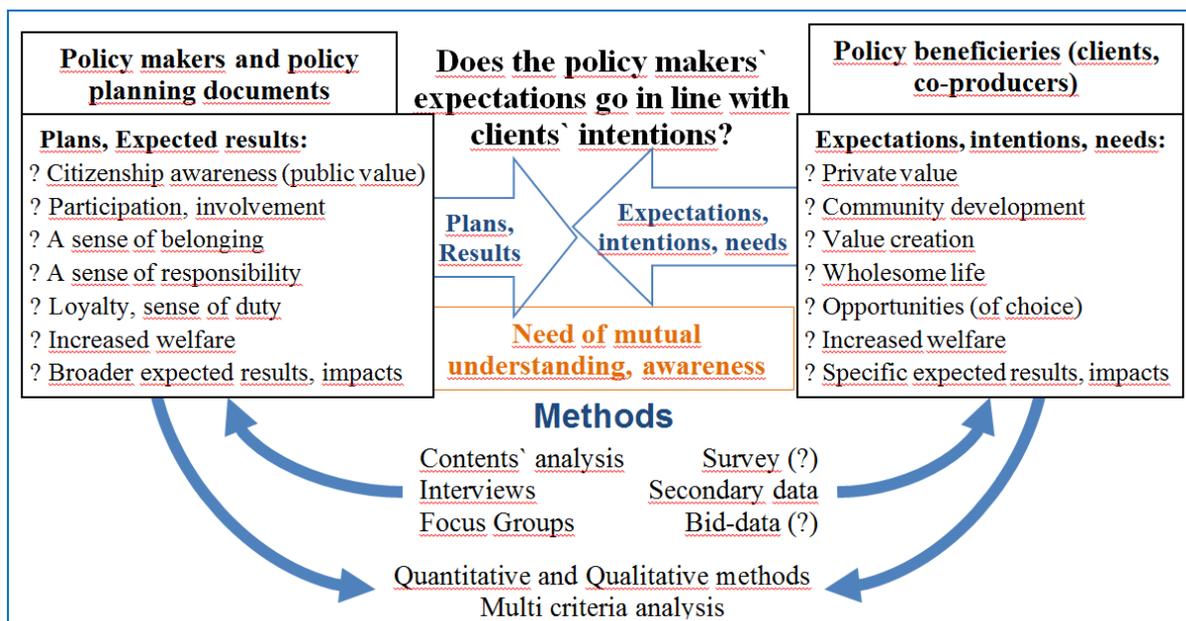


Figure 3. **Principal Policy Client-Accordance seeking scheme**

Source: Author's construction based on conceptual research analysis

For instance, in terms of active participation and involvement in state development which was one of the main policy makers' expectations in author's case-based Latvian youth policy, the result of research led to conclude that Latvian youth policy PCA index is 40% meaning that there is a space for improvement. The later conducted feasibility study – to identify the applicable and challenging aspects of the application of youth policy case-based methodology model for evaluating the relevance of any public administrations' policy to the intentions of the policy's clients' group – showed that the model is feasible in wider public administration area however it requires specific adjustments.<sup>16</sup> The major findings which were peer verified using all of the abovementioned research methods led me to conclude that from the perspective of the state the policy makers' expectations towards youth are rather clear and structured while the youth's perspective is still developing through interacting, reasoning, adjusting ambitions to expectations etc. Given the limitless needs of the society which is one of the economic development pillars, the same pattern of structured policy versus undefined needs of its clients can be applied also in other fields of public policies. Another consequent conclusion was that the state and its governing institutions as well as the society places and treats the youth as a separate group of state clients and society members. The attitudes alter from socially marginalized *citizens-in-waiting* to the youth as a crucial asset of state development. Youth as a separate state clients' group can be identified in various policy areas e.g. in education system, justice system, socio-economic area. This pattern, in its turn, cannot be placed upon policy in its clients relationships in most of other public policies due to the uniqueness of youth as sociodemographic group and generality of other sociodemographic groups. The summarizing conclusion of the feasibility study showed that the youth policy based PCA evaluation model is feasible in wider public administration area however it requires specific adjustments. The methodological approach is directly applicable to other policy areas, i.e., it is possible to identify the clients' groups for each of public policy areas once they are defined. Thus it is possible to identify the respective policy's client orientation aspects and expectations towards its clients' group. Accordingly, it is possible to research the intentions and perceptions of the policy's clients subsequently providing the PCA index. However, the challenging aspects of the feasibility of the case-based PCA evaluation model in wider public administration area relate to different features of the public policies and their clients' groups. It means

<sup>16</sup> Putans, R. (2015). Modern Interactions between the Society and the State: In Search of Clients within Public Administration. *Voices from the Sylff Community*, Available at: [https://www.sylff.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/06\\_SRA\\_Putans\\_Article-web.pdf](https://www.sylff.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/06_SRA_Putans_Article-web.pdf)

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that the factors used for PCA index in different policy areas shall differ considerably and thus the PCA indexes shall not be compared among different policies. Nevertheless, the compilation of all PCA indexes can be used for the overall public administration system itself.

To quantify the evaluation of policy-client accordancy which would provide a comprehensive assessment and would allow policy makers, industry and society leaders and to overview the state of affairs regarding the relevance of the public strategy or policy to their target group, author proposes the PCAX indicator to be calculated in the following way (see Formula 1 and 2).

**(Formula 1)**

$$\bar{F}_i = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m \frac{\bar{x}_i * \bar{w}_i}{10}}{\max \bar{x}_i} (\%);$$

$$\bar{x}_i = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n}; \bar{w}_i = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i}{n}; F_i = \frac{\bar{x}_i * \bar{w}_i}{\max \bar{x}_i} (\%); \bar{F} = \frac{\sum F_i}{m} (\%);$$

**(Formula 2)**

$$\bar{F} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m \frac{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n} * \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i}{n}}{10}}{\max \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n}} (\%);$$

, where

$\bar{F}$  – the overall PCA index

$i$  – defined policy expectation statement (factor)

$F_i$  – mean of the factor  $i$  expressed in % of  $i_{\max}$  value

$x_i$  – individual client assesement of the factor  $i$

$\bar{x}_i$  – mean of the factor  $i$

$w_i$  – significance assessment of the factor  $i$ . To some factors the weighted average is not applied because it is assumed that their significance or importance in the overall assessment is undisputed, for example, factors such as bad experience with PA do not require a significance assessment.

$\bar{w}_i$  – mean of the significance assessment of the factor  $i$

$\max_i$  – maximum possible value of the factor  $i$

$n$  – number of respondents (for a survey)

$m$  – number of factors used in the respective PCAX calculation

Overall, this methodology and PCA index would improve the mutual understanding of between policy makers and their clients, which is crucial for sustainable and all-sides` supported development of the state, its society and its communities, including the awareness of the growing importance of the client/co-producer in public administration, better customer service as well as inclusive co-produced and client-oriented public policy design positioning these as important strategic development elements in public administration. The very essence of the public administration is the efficient management of joint resources and the cooperation between the society and elected or selected public servants, where the latter are mediators and coordinators for ensuring efficient use of state recourses according to public (which they are part of) needs.

## Conclusions

1. The transition of the client concept from the private sector to the level of government was influenced by the development of post-industrial civil societies as well as changes in private sector management

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development techniques that emphasized the need to focus on the client. That created a growing public pressure for more efficient public administration and contributed to the beginning of the public administration reforms in the 1980's and 1990's, including the development of the client-oriented approach.

**2.** The development of public administration models – classical (bureaucratic) public administration model, the New Public Management model and the New Public governance model – and the differences they imply on public administration's relationships with society reflect the socio-economic situation in a specific development stage of societies. Although these organizational models of public administration have been and are evolving gradually one after another, they however co-exist and in different modern public administration systems, elements from each model can be found.

**3.** Taking into account that the essence of the client concept in public administration is characterized by efficient execution of public administration's functions according to the needs of society, the national and supranational development planning documents in the European Union and in Latvia, in the framework public administration reforms, emphasizes the need for the client-oriented and further co-produced approach along with the realization of public administration functions, particularly where they interconnect with society.

**4.** Within the typology of the relationships between public administration institutions and their clients, two separate major roles of the clients are being distinguished depending on which of the clients' needs the relationships are targeting – public administration clients as recipients of public services when the relationship satisfies their private needs for their private value or public administration clients as citizens when, in addition to the private value, the public value is also being served.

**5.** At the same time, scientific literature does not offer any conventional definition for the public administration's client and to a very little extent it studies the public services on a meta-level. Therefore it does not offer also any conventional definition of the public service. This is recognized as one of the main challenges in the development of public services provision systems in many countries.

**6.** The concept of the co-production of public services emphasizes the cooperation between the service providers and recipients, i.e., the clients' involvement in public policies' decision-making in provision of public services mainly through the organized civil society.

**7.** The importance of social and civic participation is also supported by the prospect of negative consequences of the alternatives, i.e., the non-participation or critically low social and civic participation of people threatens the democratic public governance system. Therefore, maximizing the active social and civic participation is also a politically, socially and economically driven necessity. In this respect, the social and civic participation is not driven by society's rights or motivations, but includes number controlling and nudging elements to enhance public participation.

**8.** The important role of the client-oriented approach in the development of public administration can be justified by its positive impact on the empowerment of participation opportunities and social coproduction as well as on the strengthening of active civil society. Such a way of cooperation between public administration and society contributes to awareness-based relationship between public administration and its clients that, in its turn, ensures more tailor made provision of public services, equal distribution of responsibility about the service quality, as well as increases the legitimacy of public administration actions, including its development implementation.

**9.** The author's proposed policy client-accordance index methodology allows an identification of the strong and weak points of the public administration's client-oriented approach based on a detailed quantitative comparison of results between different factors thus allowing for planning and taking appropriate policy-making adjustments.

**10.** The feasibility study shows that the author's proposed youth policy based PCA evaluation model is feasible in the wider public administration area, however it requires specific adjustments that are related to the identification of clients' target groups for the respective public policies as well as policy's expectations towards these target groups. For comprehensive and standardized PCA index applicability, further research is necessary.

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