

POLICY PLANNING AND COORDINATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE FROM THE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to study, from a Georgian perspective, the theoretical foundations of policy planning and coordination and its practical characteristics. The latter is an integral aspect of public administration and one of the most crucial components and principles of the methodological framework of public administration of the European Union and its Neighbourhood Policy. Georgia intends to implement this framework by synthesizing evidence-based policy (EBP), results-based management (RBM), and whole-of-government models (WGA). Through a theoretical examination, in-depth interviews, and document analysis methods, the research uncovers that the characteristics of policy planning and coordination in Georgia are characterized by inconsistencies between theory and practice. The insufficient level of implementation of EBP, WGA, and RBM models and the root causes of this misalignment include factors such as an administrative and political culture incongruent with the implementation of these models, bureaucratic tradition, system readiness, and political will.

Keywords: Public administration reform, evidence-based policy, results-based management, whole-of-government, policy implementation

Introduction

One of the key components and tenets of the European Union's methodological framework for public administration is policy planning and coordination.²

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² OECD/Sigma, "Methodological Framework of the Principles of Public Administration" (Paris, 2019), 1-263, <https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Methodological-Framework-for-the-Principles-of-Public-Administration-May-2019.pdf>.

At the same time, this issue occupies a fundamentally important role in the methodological framework of public administration of the European Neighborhood Policy which the Georgian government is yet to harmonize after signing the Association Agreement with the European Union in 2014.³

The international academic society demonstrates a profound interest in matters pertaining to policy planning and coordination. These academic trends, which developed mainly in the second half of the twentieth century, have not lost their relevance, with particular emphasis on areas or topics such as: the major traditions and politics of planning theory and its paradigms; the failures of policy planners; the challenges of policy coordination; general methods for policy planning and analysis; policy planning as desired symbolic and substantive outcomes; policy planning and the role of planners; national administrative styles and their impact upon administrative reform, and its neo-institutional approaches; generic problems of planning and processes; policy planning and polity, knowledge, and intervention as aspects; planning and coordination issues in economic policy, etc.⁴

In the Georgian context, empirical research on policy planning and coordination is scarce due to several factors. Firstly, the novelty of the

³ Karen Hill, "Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration: ENP Countries." (OECD/SIGMA, 2018); European Union, "Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part," *Official Journal of the European Union* 57 (2014), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.261.01.0004.01.ENG.

⁴ John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Aaron Wildavsky, Aaron, "If Planning Is Everything, Maybe It's Nothing," *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 127-153; Jonathan Boston, "The Problems of Policy Coordination: The New Zealand Experience," *Governance* 5, no. 1 (1992): 88-103; Carl V. Patton, and David S. Sawicki, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning* (London: Pearson, 1993); John M. Bryson and Barbara C. Crosby, "Policy Planning and the Design and Use of Forums, Arenas, and Courts," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 20, no. 2 (1993): 175-194; Frank Fischer, and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, (Duke University Press, 1993); Michael Howlett, "Understanding National Administrative Styles and Their Impact Upon Administrative Reform: A Neo-Institutional Model and Analysis. Policy, Organisation and Society," *Policy and Society* 21, no. 1 (2002): 1 – 24; J. Barry Cullingworth, *Planning in the USA: Policies, Issues and Processes*, (London: Routledge, 2004); Maarten Hajer, "Policy Without Polity? Policy Analysis and the Institutional Void," *Policy Sciences* 36, no. 2 (2003): 175-195; Dermot Hodson, and Imelda Maher, "The Open Method as a New Mode of Governance: The Case of Soft Economic Policy Coordination," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 39, no. 4 (2001): 719-746.

issue in scientific discourse and the limited number of researchers contribute to this shortage. Additionally, public administration and state policy issues in Georgia are predominantly studied within a normative discourse, limiting the coverage of the field by political science representatives. Moreover, the separation of political science and public administration within Georgian higher education exacerbates this divide, leading to negative outcomes. Despite existing studies on the public administration system and specific policy problems, none of them focus on policy planning and coordination from a theoretical perspective and subsequent practice. However, the significance of policy planning and coordination is highlighted as a priority direction of public administration reform in Georgia.⁵

The Georgian Public Administration Reform (PAR) development process began in 2015, with leadership and coordination at the discretion of the government administration of Georgia. The public agencies responsible for each area or direction of the reform were defined.⁶ At the same time, an inter-agency coordination council for public administration reform was established on the basis of the Prime Minister's order N135 to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the reform.⁷ It is important to note that the goal was declared at the level of state policy and that the priority established for the government was to implement an effective and fair policy to further strengthen the public administration and policy system while establishing a flexible and effective public administration focused on challenges.⁸ This trend was noted in other governmental and state documents too,⁹ in which effective and transparent public administration was highlighted as a matter of importance and was included in policy priorities.

⁵ Ekaterine Akobia, "Public Administration in Countries in Conflict: The Case of Georgia," in *Public Administration in Conflict Affected Countries*, eds. Juraj Nemeč and Purshottama S Reddy (London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2021), 235.

⁶ Government of Georgia, "Public Administration Reform Action Plan 2019-2020", 2019, https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=425&info_id=78221.

⁷ Order of the Prime Minister of Georgia No. 135, "Approval of the Statute and Composition of the Public Administration Reform Council," May 3, 2016.

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Freedom, Rapid Development and Welfare – Government Program for 2018-2020 (FAOLEX), <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC185567/>.

⁹ Government of Georgia, Ordinance No 400 "Resolution on Approving Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia – 'Georgia 2020' and Associated Activities," accessed January 17, 2014, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2373855?publication=0>.

In 2015, a reform guide was approved in which policy planning and coordination was the main issue to be approached in the field of public administration.¹⁰ This has been maintained in the reform action plans throughout 2015-2016, 2017-2018, and 2019-2020.

In 2016, the Public Administration Reform Council was established, initially under the management of the head of government administration. By 2020, it had transitioned into an independent body. Concurrently, the Public Administration Division, operating under the Policy Planning and Coordination Department, assumed the role of Secretariat (2019), facilitating the Council's activities and overseeing action plans and strategies.

The state emphasizes the primary goal of policy planning and coordination: to enhance system development, to introduce results-based management, and to refine coordination through improved monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems. However, the state also acknowledged existing challenges outlined in the 2015 guide, including issues with policy coordination, evaluation, and planning. These challenges, such as a flawed legal framework and fragmented policy planning systems, have been addressed through internally developed action plans.¹¹

Following this, in 2015-2018, policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation standards were created.¹² Also, an important achievement was the creation of the *Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Guide* accompanied by eleven supporting detailed attachments.¹³ At the same time, the Government of Georgia adopted Resolution N629, which establishes the procedure for initiating policy documents.¹⁴ This is an important attempt to improve the system, but what the state declares is one thing, and what it does is another. At this time, it was determined that policy development (planning)

¹⁰ Government Administration of Georgia, "Public Administration Reform Guide 2020," accessed 2015, [https://www.gov.ge/files/425_49309_322150_15.07.21-PublicAdministrationReformRoadmap2020\(Final\)\(1\).pdf](https://www.gov.ge/files/425_49309_322150_15.07.21-PublicAdministrationReformRoadmap2020(Final)(1).pdf)

¹¹ Government Administration of Georgia, 2015, 7.

¹² Government Administration of Georgia, "Guidelines for Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation" (2019).

¹³ Government Administration of Georgia, Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook (UNDP, 2019) <https://georgia.un.org/en/45442-policy-planning-monitoring-and-evaluation-handbook-2019>.

¹⁴ The Government of Georgia, "Approval of the Rules for Development, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Policy Documents, Order No. 629. (2019)."

and coordination, as a field, includes aspects such as (1) policy development, coordination, and implementation; (2) monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation; (3) coordination of anti-corruption policy; and (4) Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). It should be highlighted that the design of policy planning and coordination in Georgia is based on three models: Results-Based Management (RBM), Evidence-Based Policy (EBP), and Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA). This article will delve into the examination of these three models within the realm of political and administrative science theory, exploring their implications and applications in practical components. Thus, the following chapters will deal with their study, and interpretation of the latter.

Theoretical Review

Effective policy planning and coordination are crucial for advancing a state's capacity in the field of public administration and governance. Like many other countries, Georgia has realised how critical it is to improve its policy-making procedures in order to handle the complex problems of the twenty-first century and bring them into compliance with modern international standards. Georgia has used a multimodal strategy in this endeavour, combining the ideas of Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA), Evidence-Based Policy (EBP), and Results-Based Management (RBM). The state's commitment to attaining more open, effective, and outcome-focused policymaking and execution is based on these models.

The intertwining of RBM, EBP, and WGA forms the framework for this theoretical review, which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Georgia's policy planning and coordination mechanisms. By exploring these models individually and in synergy, we can delve deeper into the strategies and initiatives that Georgia has adopted to improve the quality and impact of its public policies.

Results-based Management (RBM) represents a commitment to focusing on tangible outcomes and measurable results, thereby shifting the emphasis from mere processes to their actual impact. Evidence-based policy (EBP), on the other hand, prioritizes the use of empirical data and rigorous analysis to inform policy decisions. It emphasizes the necessity

of making informed choices and crafting policies based on a robust foundation of evidence. Lastly, Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA) emphasizes the importance of a cohesive and coordinated approach, with all government agencies and departments working collaboratively towards common goals, often across traditional bureaucratic silos.

In the Georgian context, these models have been embraced as guiding principles for policy planning and coordination.

Evidence-based Policy

Evidence-based policy includes policies, programs, and practices that are grounded on empirical evidence.¹⁵ The basis of empirical evidence is philosophical evidentialism, which is a set of views entailing that the epistemic justification of belief is determined by the level of evidence of the believer's belief.¹⁶ Empirical evidence may be quantitative or qualitative, representing information and data collected directly or indirectly through observation and/or experimentation, which can be used to confirm or disprove a scientific theory or view, or help to support a given belief. Therefore, a belief is empirically justified if there is sufficient evidence to support the belief.

Social movements for evidence-based policy originated in the health sector in the United Kingdom, in the context of medical practice. This has subsequently spread to various policy areas outside of medicine in the United States of America and Australia.¹⁷ It is important to emphasize that evidence-based policy has suffered from a lack of justification in public policy and empirical research, and the latter movement itself can be seen as a push for greater accountability on the part of public organizations in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (online), (2018), s.v. "Evidence-based Policy."

¹⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (online), (2023), s.v. "Empirical Evidence;" Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies* 48 (1985): 15-34, DOI: 10.1007/bf00372404.

¹⁷ Ray Pawson, *Evidence-Based Policy: A Realist Perspective*, (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 1-208.

¹⁸ Antonio Bar Cendón, "Accountability and Public Administration: Concepts, Dimensions, Developments," in *Openness and Transparency in Governance: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Michael Kelly (Maastricht: EIPA, 1999), 22-61.

According to evidence-based policy reviews, there is a prospect that policymakers should consider the needs and values of the population. In this discourse, it is one thing to know what kind of evidence exists in the policy planning process, and another one to know what kind of values and challenges exist in society. For example, evidence-based policymaking is often hindered by a lack of budget, and often the evidence itself is lacking, which sometimes prevents the implementation of necessary policies.¹⁹ Another hindering factor is that evidence derived from local knowledge, such as the on-the-ground experience of participants in the investigated situation, is unsuitable for evidence-based policy, and it relies entirely on positivist methodologies. There are also cases where decision-makers intervene inappropriately in the policy planning process, and times when the decision-makers require more evidence than is readily available at the extraction level. In such cases, the policy process is linear and incremental, reflecting entrenched political, bureaucratic, and professional interests, leading to the paradox of policy analysis.²⁰

In a critical examination of evidence-based policy, it is important to highlight that although it is widely accepted that policies can be grounded in proof, the controversy lies in determining what qualifies as appropriate evidence within the policymaking process.²¹ There is a risk that evidence-based policy becomes a mechanism for political elites to strengthen their strategic control over what constitutes evidence and knowledge in different sectors. Such hidden forms of knowledge and evidence as professional judgment, practical wisdom, and proofs put forward by ordinary citizens may be devalued. Also, the shift to evidence-based policy does not mean that research or rational policy would automatically be implemented,

¹⁹ John A. Muir Gray, "Evidence-Based Policy Making," *BMJ* 329, no. 7473 (October 28, 2004): 988-989.

²⁰ Ken Young, Deborah Ashby, Anette Boaz and Lesley Grayson, "Social Science and the Evidence-Based Policy Movement," *Social Policy and Society* 1, no. 3 (June 24, 2002): 215-224; Nancy Shulock, "The Paradox of Policy Analysis: If It Is Not Used, Why Do We Produce So Much of It?," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 18, no. 2 (January 1, 1999): 226-244.

²¹ Greg Marston, and Rob Watts, "Tampering with the Evidence: A Critical Appraisal of Evidence-Based Policy-Making," *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, no. 3 (April 30, 2003): 143-163.

and that such a policy approach would have the greatest impact when there is sufficient political will and an appropriate organizational culture that can evaluate and re-evaluate all types of evidence. In this perspective, *what works* is about *what* works, *when*, *where*, *how*, and *for whom*, and thus the narrative of this critique raises two questions: What evidence is needed to verify reality? What evidence is available?²²

Evidence-based policymaking in the academic literature leaves thought-provoking and unanswered questions whose synthesis with reality further illustrates the challenges of an ideal model.

To begin with, it is crucial to emphasize that sufficient political will and appropriate organizational culture are issues that are equally important, both for policy planning elaboration and for its implementation. A conceptually difficult phenomenon is the issue of political will, as it is difficult to measure it as a phenomenon or variable. From this point of view, in the example of Georgia, it is helpful to ask the following question: how can we understand whether the government has real political will in the background, when the declared policy is sometimes absolutely opposite to what we face at the practical level?²³

The consideration of cultural compatibility at the administrative, systemic, or organizational levels is crucial for both planning and implementation. Frequently, the specific culture, encompassing a set of values, plays a decisive role in shaping the stated narrative and its alignment with actual circumstances. For example, the institutional design of the public administration of Georgia is based on the principles of good governance, however, as a result of the study of the system, there is a tendency to reveal patron-client relations and the practices of the Weberian model are at hand,²⁴ which is an important predictor of the importance of culture, highlighted by the study of academic literature.

Concerning matters of pertinent evidence in policy planning, it is justifiable to merge two inquiries: what qualifies as evidence, and what

²² Wayne Parsons, "Modernising Policy-Making for the Twenty-First Century: The Professional Model," *Public Policy and Administration* 16, no. 3 (2003): 93-110.

²³ Bacho Bitari Khuroshvili, "State Policy and Administration Challenges in the General Education System of Georgia," *Public Administration and Law Review* 1 (2023): 4-11.

²⁴ Bacho Bitari Khuroshvili, "Public Servants' Policy-making in the Modern Georgian Public Administration," *Politics/პოლიტიკა* 5, no. 4 (2021).

implications arise in the absence of adequate evidence? In the case of Georgia, the legal situation of students is a problematic issue, although there are very few studies in this area.²⁵ Therefore, from an evidentialist perspective, the question could be formulated as follows: what are the known problems in the field of students' rights, and what is the need to plan a policy aimed at solving these issues? Accordingly, the unit responsible for the planning of the given policy should obtain this evidence and/or data, which is related to large financial and human resources. At the same time, data mining in this sector is quite risky due to the complexity and reliability of data mining itself. Firstly, if we conduct a survey in the secondary school systems, on the order of the state and the results do not reveal the corresponding indicators of a violation of the student's rights, it turns out that this expenditure has been inappropriate, since there is no such data on the basis of which to develop the above-mentioned policy. Secondly, it should be understood that conducting research in secondary schools requires special specificity and ethics in order to protect the respondents from external influences (the teachers' influence on the students, and the hierarchical influence of the principal over the teachers). There are many difficulties concerning the appropriate instruments, sampling, settings, and other aspects. Thus, if appropriate efforts are not made to collect the data and conduct research, the whole analysis risks inaccurate and therefore invalid data with a high margin of error. This alone constitutes an important challenge of evidence-based policy.

In principle, this is why the already reviewed literature highlights the problematic nature of evidence-based policy planning, and the fact that this type of planning may sideline professional judgment, practice-based wisdom, and evidence from ordinary citizens.

²⁵ UNICEF, *National Study on School Violence in Georgia (English)*, 2008, <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/reports/national-study-school-violence-georgia>; The Council of Europe, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *ECRI Report on Georgia (Fourth Monitoring Cycle)*, 2010, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/georgia>.

Results-Based Management (RBM)

Results-based management practices have actively become a crucial component of public management since the 2000s.²⁶ This model is used for performance measurement and evaluation in areas such as budgeting, reporting, and management. The development of these trends is related to public administration reforms.²⁷ RBM is based on clearly defined results and aims to change the way an organization operates by achieving defined goals in a timely and appropriate manner at all levels. These changes concern its values, operational systems, and decision-making procedures which can be considered one of the important challenges of its implementation.²⁸

A pivotal contribution to the model of Results-Based Management (RBM) is made by John Mayne, who articulates the perspective that the effective adoption of RBM often necessitates substantial transformations across all levels of management.²⁹ Mayne indicates that the model applies to such areas as strategic planning, operational management, personnel evaluation, budgeting, etc. He highlights the importance of cultural factors and makes it clear that the introduction of this model is accompanied by “unforeseen cultural change,” which requires appropriate management. Mayne also identifies several crucial components in his overview of RBM. First, it requires fundamental changes. Second, it takes years to plan and implement. Thirdly, the latter has its difficulty. fourthly, RBM requires that the organizations develop the model based on experience and best-practices that need to be learned.

²⁶ The World Bank, *Better Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Development Results (English)*, Board Report, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2007), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/173341468779946663/Better-Measuring-Monitoring-and-Managing-for-Development-Results>.

²⁷ Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis - New Public Management, Governance, and the Neo-Weberian State*, 3rd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁸ Addmore Pazvakavambwa and G.M. Steyn, “Implementing Results-Based Management in the Public Sector of Developing Countries: What Should Be Considered?,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 20 (2014): 245.

²⁹ John Mayne, “Challenges and Lessons in Implementing Results-Based Management,” *Evaluation* 13, no. 1 (2007): 87-109.

In addition, the author proposes two types of challenges concerning results-based management, the first related to organizational issues and the second related to technical issues. Organizational challenges include specific components: fostering the right climate through strong leadership, incentives, a learning culture, and evidence-based decision-making. Realistic expectations for RBM, strategic implementation, outcome alignment with strategy, selectivity in information use, prevention of distorted behaviour, and accountability for results are also crucial. In addition, the technical issues, as outlined by Mayne, encompass measurement, attribution, financial information connection, data quality, and credible reporting. These considerations collectively provide a comprehensive foundation for effective performance management and improvement in organizations. With this in mind, and in the case of Georgia, it is critical to understand the challenges that an inexperienced system may face when transitioning to this model.

Furthermore, Mayne critiques and sets aside certain issues. Given that an evidence-based and results-oriented approach is seen as eroding traditional management, this may be uncomfortable for employees. This is also because implementing such a model requires a cultural change and therefore a change in behavior, which demands effort. Also, "other factors," such as changes in government pose challenges to policy planning and implementation. Finally, time is a significant challenge, with the author noting the lengthy process of determining genuine data and the dynamic nature of data relevance over time. At this point, managers may feel pressured by limited time and resources to implement RBM. All things considered, the systemic approach has inherent difficulties and calls for organizational preparation. Taking this into account, from the perspective of Georgia, whose public administration system is fragile, this type of reform may be bound to fail.

When it comes to RBM, there is a vision that the model of an effective management information system should be introduced and developed simultaneously. This is because the public sector often does not have readily available information and mechanisms for describing the performance of activities, so the management information system provides an effective response scheme to the organization's performance, which can provide timely feedback on the organization's performance.³⁰

³⁰ Arunaselam Rasappan, *From Vision to Reality: Managing for Development Results using the Integrated Results-based Management System*, (n.p.: Ankara, 2010).

When considering the RBM model as a policy transfer in the context of Georgia³¹ several suggestions should be considered. These include value alignment, system knowledge, support for experimental methods, training, stakeholder and beneficiary participation, and sufficient time and resources are a few examples of these issues.³² In principle, this is why the implementation of this model implies additional resources and efforts.

Another author, Burt Perrin, connects the results-oriented management model to meritocratic principles.³³ In this discourse, the success of the above is related to the merit system, personnel selection, remuneration, and career management. This view is based on the logic that if an employee feels valued and satisfied with his career development, one should work effectively and better adapt to the new model. However, it is impossible to prove this in all cases and we can accept it as only a logical assumption.

Examining this model through a Georgian lens and considering its connection to the concept of meritocracy, it seems that, in the current situation, there would be immediate issues associated with its implementation. This is a consequence of the discrepancy between the stated meritocratic ideals, and the way the system operates in policy documents. Essentially, the Georgian public administration system is devoid of strong meritocratic mechanisms in practice, which presents a major obstacle to the effective implementation of this kind of model and according to this, it was a predictable threat from the beginning.³⁴

³¹ Sandro Tabatadze, "Policy Transfer in Georgia: Lessons Drawn from NAEC," *Environment and Society* 7, no. 7 (2023).

³² Janet Vähämäki, Martin Schmidt, and Joakim Molander, "Review: Results Based Management in Development Cooperation," Riksbankens Jubileumsfond [The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences] (Stockholm, 2011).

³³ Burt Perrin, *Moving from Outputs to Outcomes: Practical Advice from Governments Around the World*, IBM Center for the Business of Government, (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2006).

³⁴ Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDIFI), "Challenges of Civil Service and its Policy in the Public Administration System of Georgia," January 22, 2022.

Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA)

One crucial factor in the rise of the whole-of-government approach (WGA) was a response to the adverse effects of New Public Management (NPM) reforms such as structural devolution, performance management and the “single purpose organization.”³⁵ In contrast to the NPM reforms, which were dominated by the logic of economics, a second generation of reforms was launched, initially called “Joined-up government” (JUG) and later known as “Whole-of-Government Approach” (WGA).

WGA originally developed in Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Those who were previously seen as supporters of NPM believed that it had led to significant fragmentation within the public sector, a lack of coordination, and the emergence of self-centered authorities, which hindered the effectiveness of policies and efficiency, creating the need for a unified approach to government.³⁶

In addition, several factors have contributed to the evolution of WGA. First, natural disasters and crises such as tsunamis, earthquakes, or pandemics. They have led to the tightening of government policies and centralization of government measures. Another important threat was terrorism. This highlighted the importance of avoiding conflicting outcomes between governments and sharing information between agencies, which further helped to strengthen the unified approach of government.³⁷

Whole-of-government approach refers to the unity of public agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a common goal and an integrated government response to specific issues. WGA takes into account the characteristics of negotiations at different levels. These can take place between ministries and departments, within the cabinet and between agencies. These structures are involved in sectoral and cross-

³⁵ Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid, “The Whole-of-government Approach to Public Sector Reform,” *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 6 (2007): 1059-1066.

³⁶ Jonathan Boston and Chris Eichbaum, “State Sector Reform and Renewal in New Zealand: Lessons for Governance (Part 1),” *Köz-gazdaság-Review of Economic Theory and Policy* 3, no. 1 (2008): 121-137.

³⁷ Thomas Hammond, “Why Is the Intelligence Community So Difficult to Redesign?,” The 20th Anniversary Conference of the Structure and Organization of Government Research Committee of the International Political Science Association, Smart Practices Toward Innovation in Public Management, (Vancouver, June 2004): 15-17.

sectoral working groups, programs or projects, or specialized agencies that are joint service providers.

The review of the WGA describes a wide range of coordinated and integrated public sector management mechanisms, and identifies the types of connections and the following operational levels in the public sector: Inter-agency, intergovernmental, and cross-sectoral.³⁸

The WGA faces major obstacles. First and foremost, the problem of accountability arises throughout the structure-coordination process. Its centralization and substantial political component create a difficulty and the reality that political executives bear a disproportionate share of the blame for mishaps due to their high level of responsibility.³⁹ These threats also exist in the perspective of Georgia, because the system was already centralized before the introduction of this model, which may have caused its further centralization.⁴⁰ It should also be noted that WGA is a selective project that is not appropriate in all circumstances, or suitable for all public sector activities.⁴¹ The creation of the above-mentioned system is a long-term project, the implementation of which requires a significant amount of time and appropriate resources. In the case of Georgia, the transition to this model was relatively quick.

Another risk of the WGA has is that it is based on the pursuit of coordination, although it may create a potential tension between horizontal cooperation and the task of ensuring vertical accountability, and therefore between structures. Another concern is the knowledge and attitude of civil servants towards the system, posing a significant hurdle to the effective implementation of the whole-of-government approach.

³⁸ Sue Hunt, "Whole-of-government: Does Working Together Work?," Policy and Governance Discussion Papers 05-1, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government, The Australian National University (2005).

³⁹ Christopher Pollitt, Christopher, *The Essential Public Manager*, (Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education, 2003); Christopher Hood, "The Risk Game and the Blame Game," *Government and Opposition* 37, no. 1 (2002): 15-37.

⁴⁰ Archil Abashidze, "აბაშიძე, არჩილ. "საჯარო სამსახურის რეფორმა საქართველოში: ძირითადი მიმართულებები და გამოწვევები" [Public Service Reform in Georgia: Main Directions and Challenges] PhD thesis., ილიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი [Ilia State University] 2016, <https://eprints.iliauni.edu.ge/6594/>.

⁴¹ Christopher Pollitt, "Joined-up Government: A Survey," *Political Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2003): 34-49.

Additionally, Sue Hunt highlights several critical aspects and risks in her review of WGA such as fragmentation.⁴² Although WGA is aimed at defragmentation, the opposite effect may occur within the system, increasing confusion. The second critical risk in the author's view is the issue of accountability. This includes the issue of a new understanding of responsibility and accountability. Hunt believes that the pursuit of real accountability is sometimes replaced by the tendency to work on reporting. In this case, the focus shifts to broader indicators designed to measure the progress of agreed-upon goals and outcomes in the programs rather than developing real accountability. Furthermore, in the author's view, clearly defined functional departments also reinforce departmentalism, while making them easily identifiable targets of interest groups. Ambivalently, departmentalism is considered the antithesis of the WGA, which develops on the basis of a culture of interdependence. In practice, this model involves breaking down barriers between departments and promoting inter-departmental cooperation and coordination. It facilitates the sharing of information, resources and expertise between different units to achieve common goals and effectively resolve cross-cutting issues. Departmentalism and the concept of WGA are interrelated in this sense. While departmentalism emphasizes the autonomy and distinct responsibilities of individual departments, the concept of a unified government approach seeks to promote cooperation, coordination, and coherence across government departments and agencies, although the extent to which these two concepts can co-exist at the systemic level in practice is unclear.

In addition, there are successful practices that demonstrate the desirability of the whole-of-government approach. For example, due to the fact that this model implies high commitment and cooperation from agencies to agencies, according to the authors, it is an effective tool for promoting the development of e-government.⁴³ There are also practices where interagency coordination and WGA have helped manage the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be considered as an affirmative trend.⁴⁴

⁴² Hunt, "Whole-of-government."

⁴³ Mohamed Hairul Othman and Rozilawati Razali, "Whole of Government Critical Success Factors Towards Integrated e-Government Services: A Preliminary Review," *Jurnal Pengurusan* 53 (2018): 73-82, <https://doi.org/10.17576/pengurusan-2018-53-07>.

⁴⁴ Chih-Wei Hsieh, Mao Wang, Natalie WM Wong, and Lawrence Ka-ki Ho, "A Whole-of-nation Approach to COVID-19: Taiwan's National Epidemic Prevention Team,"

Research Design and Methodology

The research aims to study the theoretical foundations of policy planning and coordination and its practical characteristics from the Georgian perspective. Taking this into account, the research objectives were defined as follows: to provide an overview of policy planning and coordination from the discourse of political and administrative science; to study the body of policy planning and coordination in Georgia, identifying administration problems and review of failures; to analyse the policy planning models of the RBM, EBP, and WGA and to critically review them from the Georgian perspective; to analyse and to evaluate the legal framework, reports and policy documents in order to study the practice of the above-mentioned models; to conduct in-depth interviews with experts on the research topic, representatives of the public service system and decision-makers to empower the empirical part of the research.

Having considered these research objectives, two research questions are formulated: Q1. What and how do theoretical paradigms shape policy planning and coordination within Georgia?; Q2. What are the root causes of the inconsistency between theory and practice in shaping the characteristics of policy planning and coordination in Georgia?

In order to answer these questions, the research relies on the qualitative methods of social science research, specifically, document analysis and in-depth interviews.

In the case of the document analysis method, thematic analysis and content analysis have been applied, including the review, analysis, and evaluation of state policy action plans, government decrees, laws and reports, where the smallest unit of analysis – the word and the largest – the provision, as well as main codes (*i.e.*: planning, implementation, deficiency, etc.) and thematic categories have been distinguished. (*i.e.*: WGA, EBP, RBM, coordination challenges, planning challenges, policy failures, etc.). In the case of interviews, guided by units of analysis such as words and phrases, relevant transcripts have been prepared and processed through coding and categorization.

Within the framework of the research, a non-probability, purposive type of sampling was used. In the case of document analysis, the legal and political documents, reports, and action plans covering the issue of policy planning and coordination in Georgia were selected. As for the in-depth interviews, the selection was based on the issue of specialization of the experts' field (public administration, public policy, political science), and in the second case on the relevance and availability of the decision makers. A total of twelve in-person interviews were conducted from April to August 2023. Ten of them with experts, two with former decision makers. The distribution is influenced by the limited access and the small number of decision makers in Georgia. However, including a larger number of experts offers diverse perspectives and more comprehensive insights into the issue under study.

The research may pose a risk and prompt more inquiries from the respondents since it provides evidence of ill practices, which the respondents recognize to the best of their knowledge and experience. With this in mind, their identities have been concealed and encrypted in the text using appropriate codes.

It is important to note that collecting data and conducting research should adhere to relevant standards. research ethics were upheld by following the five guiding principles of the American Psychological Association (APA), which allowed us to get each respondent's informed permission.⁴⁵ No personal beliefs and opinions were disclosed by the researcher during any of the interview settings. Every source and document included in the study was sourced in compliance with Georgian law and the principles of intellectual property protection.

Practical Applications, Challenges and Insights

A theoretical review has shown possible risks inherent in the design of policy planning and coordination. The latter was related to the challenges associated with implementing WGA, EBP, and RBM. This chapter will primarily focus on providing an overview of these practical challenges.

⁴⁵ David Smith, "Five Principles for Research Ethics," *Monitor on Psychology* 34, no. 1 (January 2003): <http://www.apa.org/monitor/jan03/principles>.

In 2019, the Government of Georgia adopted Resolution No. 629, which declares that the implementation of evidence-based and results-oriented policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms in these directions are the main goals.⁴⁶ The development of unified procedures, methodology, and standards is also emphasized. However, the question of how and with what methods, tools and policies the state ensures the achievement of the above is a separate issue.

The policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation guide of 2019 opens with William Thomson's statement: "What we cannot measure, we cannot improve."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, a distinct consideration arises: How do policy planning and coordination determine the measures – what, when, how, and in what qualitative manner to conduct the methodology, and with what tools? Additionally, who, with what competence, qualification, effort, degree of neutrality, autonomy, and professionalism, is involved in policy planning and coordination measurement?

The interviewed experts (respondents 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12) point to the problem of the real will and effort of the government, the deficit of competencies and qualifications, the problem of resources, neutrality and autonomy, which first of all turned out to be an obstacle to the implementation of the above three models in the Georgian public administration system.

Policy planning, according to Resolution No. 629 and the principles of RBM, EBP and WGA, is a rather complex issue and it takes into account many factors, which require significant competencies from public servants. In this regard, one of the experts noted that,

"During the training process, when I had a meeting with officials, some of them for the first time understood about searching systems from which to get evidence, but in some cases, they did not feel the attitude and motivation to learn something new." (Respondent 5).

⁴⁶ Resolution No. 629, "On the approval of the procedure for development, monitoring, and evaluation of policy documents" (2019).

⁴⁷ Administration of the Government of Georgia, "Guidelines for Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation" (2019).

This in itself emphasizes the practice of the previous theoretical review, that when there is a systemic type of change, employees are often skeptical towards the alternatives, and this process of transition from one model to another is associated with difficulties, especially when we face problems of competence and readiness.

A respondent highlighted that,

“It is a very problematic issue that sometimes evidence is not obtained at all, and in this case, the public official should know how to conduct research to obtain this evidence as primary data. Carrying this out requires separate competence and resources, otherwise evidence-based policy does not work.” (Respondent 4)

This view was also presented in the theoretical overview section of EBP.

As per Resolution No. 629, the responsibility lies with the government administration to assess the initiated documents and to determine whether a particular policy document aligns with the prevailing standards. The interviewed former decision maker noted in the interview:

“The fact is that none of these reforms goes smoothly, and such things have steered some people against the government administration. Even though you were the institution that stands higher in the hierarchy and controls the ministries in our system, certain relationships were still personified. For example, if the Minister of Economy was in a hurry to approve a strategy that did not meet the standard and failed to pass the assessment, and the document was returned, at first it was like he would pick up the phone and call the Prime Minister to get a score for the document.” (Respondent 6)

This interview sample highlights significant risks and recognises the fragility of Georgia’s public administration system. Additionally, it demonstrates that the state was not prepared to completely implement the EBP, RBM, and WGA systems due to administrative and political culture. It should be noted that in this direction only one case is visible, but since there is a precedent, no one can determine whether it happened once or many times, or with what intensity this influence was exerted on the government administration by any minister or specific other person.

The same interviewee noted:

“In response to these actions, we mitigated this risk so that this would not happen, when we decided that the ministry would be suspended for the loan because it

had a low score in two indicators, we decided that in January every month, we would consider which strategies and documents would come in this year. If a total of thirty strategies were introduced and we knew that, for example, the Ministry of Health was going to introduce two strategies, we immediately put our employee in their working group, who started by explaining and teaching the 629 standards, so that the minister would already be informed about this strategy, and everything would be well written there. That is why we started strengthening from the bottom, and having our employees in their work group was a prevention." (Respondent 6)

The latter is a sharing of the former decision maker's working practices of how respondents handled existing efforts, although this in itself cannot be taken to mean that the system is functioning properly today. Also, the previous excerpt from the interview highlights a practice from several years ago that would have been implemented by the decision maker – who is no longer employed there. Thus, we have no information on how protected the official is today from pressure, or how the current decision maker responds to such actions.

One of the experts was critical of this issue:

"In our administrative culture, it will not even be necessary for the minister to pick up the phone and call about the increase of the score, as the situation in the country is now." (Respondent 2)

This excerpt once again emphasizes the (lack of) readiness of the system and the cultural incompatibility with the implemented models.

Another crucial challenge in policy planning and coordination is staffing and bureaucracy. The interviewed former decision maker noted that,

"From the beginning, we started retraining the employees of the Ministry and eventually all of them were retrained, although this training needed to be permanent because there was an outflow of personnel." (Respondent 7)

This challenge was also mentioned by the representative of the donor organisation:

"When we invest funds in the educational training of an official, to teach fifteen individuals for instance, there are instances where, upon requesting information about them, we discover that out of the fifteen retrained individuals, only two are currently working in the ministries. This poses a significant problem, necessitating another round of educational training for the staff." (Respondent 9)

In the process of interviews on RBM and WGA respondents noted that:

“Working within the framework of results-based management and a whole-of-government approach model can pose significant challenges for individuals when they do not understand the content of these models at all.” (Respondent 1)

They also remarked that:

“How to work with WGA when the government does not have a unified approach. Ministries work in an absolutely fragmented manner, and if, for example, one public agency wants to request information from another or to assign some task, it causes conflicts.” (Respondent 11)

These excerpts indicate the problem of departmentalism and, once again, the inconsistency of the models within the Georgian reality.

In this context, one of the experts pointed out:

“I can tell you from my working practice that when one public agency subordinate to the ministry is strong and fully autonomous, it is possible to plan policy independently, and the fact that it needs to communicate with the ministry and the policy planning unit about this is problematic, and some ministries do not have such a department at all but have one or two specific persons who emphasise that policy planning is not a priority.” (Respondent 10).

This excerpt shows us that there is a significant incompatibility between the stated goals and the practice. This means that EBP, RBM and WGA exist only on paper and have a tenuous connection to practice.

The Gap Between Theory and Georgian Practice: Should Incremental Intervention Be Deemed a Success?

This section examines the issues and challenges acknowledged, either consciously or unconsciously, by the state in its policy documents.

According to the 2019-2020 action plan implementation monitoring annual reports, the state considers its main achievement to be the number of civil servants trained in policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The number of trainees in the course has increased to 227 and has been increasing every year since it started. The declared success is that the

first stream of civil servants has been trained in the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) module of legislative acts. It was also noted that a new policy planning and coordination system had been put in place, although the implementation of the latter had already been reviewed in the paper. The increase in the number of training modules from nine to twelve was also identified as an achievement.

The given results directly indicate the practice of incrementalism,⁴⁸ because none of these results can be considered a thorough solution to the issue, and an achievement of the goals that the state declared (development of policy planning and coordination system, establishment of result-oriented management, monitoring and evaluation, reporting systems and improvement of coordination).

Conducting training for civil servants is not an activity at the state policy level. This can be done by an educational organization. Therefore, this effort cannot be evaluated as a systemic and/or societal policy course. This implies that status quo has been achieved in the results, and this is best demonstrated by the 2023-2026 public administration reform strategy, where the state itself declares that in this aspect challenges remain. This implies that ambitious values are declared only at the level of institutional design and policy documents.

In the 2023-2026 public administration reform strategy, the low level of implementation of the evidence-based and result-oriented policy planning and coordination system is considered as the first problem.⁴⁹ The word low level in the strategy was later corrected to mean insufficient level. However, to declare this as the first problem in the strategy is to admit that the previous interventions have failed, because otherwise the implementation of EBP, RBM and coordination would not be considered to be "low level." However, there is an alternative perspective in this context, that the government administration used "low level" in the document only to change it during public consultations. The latter is similar to the fact that public consultation is only conducted formally and procedurally, and has no practical consequences.

⁴⁸ Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88.

⁴⁹ Government of Georgia, "Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026," 2023, 19.

The next recognition is that

“the full functioning of the policy-making and coordination system continues to face several challenges. The low level of implementation of new approaches is indicated by the low quality of policy documents submitted to the government for approval.”⁵⁰

In this direction, three data points have been found in the strategy, namely the average scores of policy documents approved by the government: 2019 – 62.75; 2020 – 81.6; 2021 85.9. If the score of these documents was so low for the government administration, then how is the learning outcome of the conducted trainings measured? It turns out that claiming the main achievement has been the training of officials is false because they had went beyond the learning outcomes that the training sessions identified as an achievement. Another issue is that if officials cannot help themselves in writing these documents independently, it correlates with the fact that they will have difficulty working under RBM, EBP, and WGA models.

The next recognition regarding the training and education of civil servants is that,

“even though about 300 civil servants have been trained in the direction of policy planning, monitoring and evaluation, the lack of human resources and relevant competencies (skills) is still a challenge. Accordingly, policy documents are largely prepared with the help of external resources, support from donor organizations and the mobilization of experts.”⁵¹

With this provision, the state again confirms the existing serious problem of human resource management, which may be related to the quality of teaching and training.

In the same document, the government administration mentioned that:

“the experience of agencies in terms of using engagement mechanisms is significantly fragmented and heterogeneous.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Government of Georgia, “Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026.”

⁵¹ Government of Georgia, “Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026,” 20.

⁵² Government of Georgia, “Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026.”

This highlights a shortcoming of the WGA model. It has already been reviewed in the article that WGA should not contribute to fragmentation, but to defragmentation in terms of content. This provision is proof that the “unified approach of the government” needs appropriate implementation and development.

The strategy identifies another critical issue, which is of utmost importance:

“The challenge is access to regularly updated, reliable and segregated statistical data and the lack of the necessary skills for data collection, analysis and interpretation.”⁵³

This implies that evidence-based policy development faces a significant challenge, to the extent that the efficacy of the same model is cast into doubt under these circumstances.

Conclusion

This research aimed to study the theoretical foundations of policy planning and coordination and its practical characteristics from the Georgian perspective. As a result of in-depth interviews, document analysis, and theoretical study of the issue, it is determined that the theoretical foundations of policy planning and coordination from the Georgian perspective encompass a synthesis of three distinct models: Evidence-Based Policy (EBP), Results-Based Management (RBM), and Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA). The characteristics of the latter are defined by the inconsistency between theory and Georgian practice, which is expressed by the insufficient level of implementation of EBP, WGA, and RBM models.

This inconsistency is caused by several factors, including an administrative and political culture incompatible with the implementation of these models, bureaucratic tradition, system readiness, and political will. The research uncovers that these root causes directly affect the practical implementation of policy planning and coordination in Georgia, leading to the observed misalignment between theoretical frameworks and actual practices.

⁵³ Government of Georgia, “Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026,” 21.

The findings and conclusions presented in this article can serve various purposes. Primarily, the paper holds the potential to serve as an academic reference for researchers and individuals interested in delving into theoretical studies on policy planning and coordination. The second advantage is that the paper examines policy planning and coordination models and their practice in Georgia, which has not been researched before. Also, the article has the potential to develop academic discussion and contribute to the development of additional research and related issues both in general and in Georgia. Since the paper identifies practical problems in the field of policy planning and coordination, it may be used by policy planners and decision makers themselves.

Furthermore, in addition to shedding light on the theoretical foundations and practical characteristics of policy planning and coordination within the Georgian context, this research offers valuable insights that contribute to the broader theoretical and empirical literature in several ways. Firstly, by synthesizing three distinct models—Evidence-Based Policy, Results-Based Management, and Whole-of-Government—we provide a nuanced understanding of how these models interact and manifest within a specific national context. This synthesis not only enriches the existing theoretical framework but also offers comparative insights for scholars and practitioners studying policy processes in other contexts.

Moreover, our identification of the inconsistency between theory and practice, and the underlying factors contributing to this misalignment, adds to the empirical evidence base on challenges faced in policy implementation. By highlighting the role of administrative and political culture, bureaucratic tradition, system readiness, and political will in shaping policy outcomes, our findings resonate with scholars and policymakers grappling with similar issues in diverse socio-political environments.