

UTILIZING CONSENSUS MODELS IN DECISION MAKING. A PROCESS FOR DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM SYSTEM: METHODOLOGY, ASSESSMENT, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

John D. Bouris, MBA, PhD*

TEI of Athens, School of Business and Economics,
Department of Business Administration,
E-mail : jbours@teiath.gr

Abstract

The increasing complexity in structures and operations of the Greek Public Administration Reform (G.P.A.R). system with "deterministic " and stochastic characteristics demands the application of model that would portray the dynamic elements and interpretive relationships of this system.

In this article, we introduce a new approach to the description, analysis and synthesis of a public administration reform system. Through consensus models of decision making we try to develop methods for idea generation and classification in order to eliminate barriers that could impede the system success in relation to his vision, mission and objectives.

Given, the increasing complexity in the system structure and functions the consensus methodology that we develop in the article constitutes an essential problem-solving approach as far as design, control, co-ordination and reengineering concern. As systems become increasingly complex, the need for such techniques of analysis becomes more intense. In response to this need, system thinking theory through consensus models has developed to incorporate both the deterministic and probabilistic characteristics of a social organization.

Περίληψη

Στο άρθρο αυτό, αναπτύσσεται η μεθοδολογία αντιμετώπισης πολύπλοκων προβλημάτων μέσω συναινετικών προτύπων (consensus models) γένεσης, κατηγοριοποίησης, και πολυεπίπεδης δόμησης ιδεών και θέσεων για την άρση παθογόνων καταστάσεων που δυναμιτίζουν την δομή και λειτουργία των κοινωνικών συστημάτων. Εφαρμόζεται, ένα πρότυπο συμμετοχικής μεθοδολογίας λήψης αποφάσεων που στοχεύει στην υπέρβαση των εμποδίων για την υλοποίηση του οράματος, της αποστολής και των στόχων της κοινωνικής οργάνωσης.

Δεδομένης, της αυξανόμενης πολυπλοκότητας τόσο στα συστατικά μέρη του συστήματος όσο και στην δυναμική αλληλεπίδραση τους, το συμμετοχικό πρότυπο λήψης αποφάσεων του άρθρου μας, αποτελεί απαραίτητη μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση για τους εμπλεκόμενους κοινωνικούς φορείς με τομείς ευθύνης τη σχεδίαση, τον έλεγχο, το συντονισμό και την αναμηχάνευση (reengineering) οργανώσεων του δημόσιου και ιδιωτικού τομέα.

Keywords: Decision-making, nominal group technique, interpretive structural modeling

JEL: C92;C93;L38

1. Introduction

The increasing complexity in structures and operations of the Greek Public Administration Reform (G.P.A.R). system with "deterministic " and stochastic characteristics demands the application of model that would portray the dynamic elements and interpretive relationships of this system.

In this article, we introduce a new approach to the description, analysis and synthesis of a social system. Through consensus models of decision making we try to develop methods for idea generation and classification in order to eliminate barriers that could impede the system success in relation to its vision, mission and objectives.

A hallmark of the methodology is the formulation of its scientific foundations, its use of structure and its constant empirical testing in the arena of practice.

The study presents guiding principles, for conducting dialogue in complex situations and their implications in terms of:

- Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety;
- Miller's Law of Requisite Parsimony;
- Boulding's Law of Requisite Saliency;
- Peirce's Law of Requisite Meaning;

* Dr. John Bouris is a Professor of Management Science at the Athens Technological Institute. His research focuses on Managing Human Resources, Leadership, Project Management, Organizational Performance.

- Tsivacou's Law of Requisite Autonomy in Distinction Making;
- Dye's Law of the Requisite Evolution of Observation

The embodiment of these six laws within a designing methodology which aim to reform and improve the Public Administration in Greece, supports a disciplined approach to dialogue, called "*dialogue-ware*".

It enables collaborative interaction among participants.

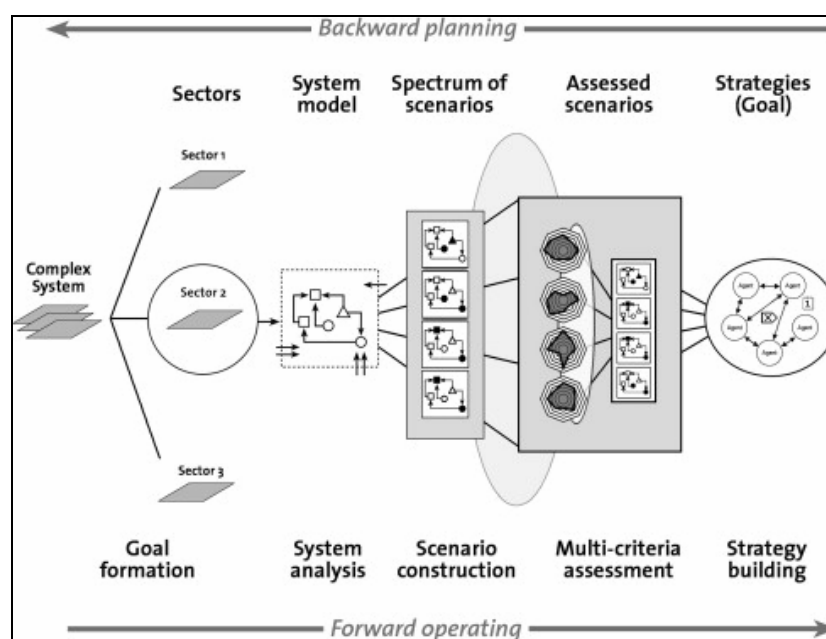
It enables participants to generate and clarify a large number of ideas in relation to the emergence of a situation in highly complexity-we call *problematique*. On the *problematique*, which is the Public Administration Reform system, the participants have designed an action plan, which is co-owned by them because it has been co-created by them.

Our **Greek Public Administration Reform (G.P.A.R.)** system originates proposals and design concepts aimed at changing existing methods and procedures or reforming the system itself. It articulates objectives of the system, to furnish the rationale for action and guidance for implementation.

By making a maximum effort to anticipate key performance results, it seeks to make present actions meet both present and long-range system goals grouped into three clusters: a) employee results b) citizen results and c) society results

The consensus methodology we have incorporated, enables constructive dialogue among participants, encourages the huge amount ideas generation in the context of designing both alternatives and action plan in response to a complicated situation.

It seeks to embody a vision into the Greek Public Administration through a spectrum of proposals, strategies and action plan within specific time, cost and quality dimensions..



The complicated situation which is the article main theme, refers to constructing a methodology which will be the cornerstone for reforming and improving public administration in Greece.

In lieu of designing a methodology as a device for **Greek Public Administration Reform (G.P.A.R.)** system, we developed the following four stage approach

1. STAGE ONE : ELUCIDATION

1.1. Generation and clarification of terms in response to the triggering question :

'.....what are the critical current and anticipated issues(= obstacles, barriers) to be shortcomings and weaknesses in achieving civil service vision, mission, goals, strategies ?.....'

A list of 268 proposed issues is shown in TABLE 1 : Unstructured List of issues to be addressed for achieving civil service vision, mission, goals, strategies

1.2. Classification of issues into affinity clusters

As a result of the dialogue the participants produced a pattern showing the classification of the issues into five affinity clusters.

CLUSTER #1 : Leadership

CLUSTER #2: Strategy & Planning (Primary Design-Planning-Analytical Design)

CLUSTER #3 : People (Human Resource)

CLUSTER #4 : Partnerships & resource (citizens relationships, innovations, best practices utilaztions)

CLUSTER #5 :Process (service performance, change management)

The generic question used for implementing step #2:

‘.....in the context of civil service vision, mission, goals, strategies does:

[issue-x]

have significant attributes in common with

[issue-y].....’

The issues classification into five affinity clusters are shown in TABLE 2

These five clusters are considered as **enablers** (#1,#2,#3,#4,#5) in producing **results** also classified into four clusters (#6,#7,#8,#9) as depicted graphically in Figure 1 and 2

Figure 1 : A diagnosis and improvement actions against nine clusters of issues.

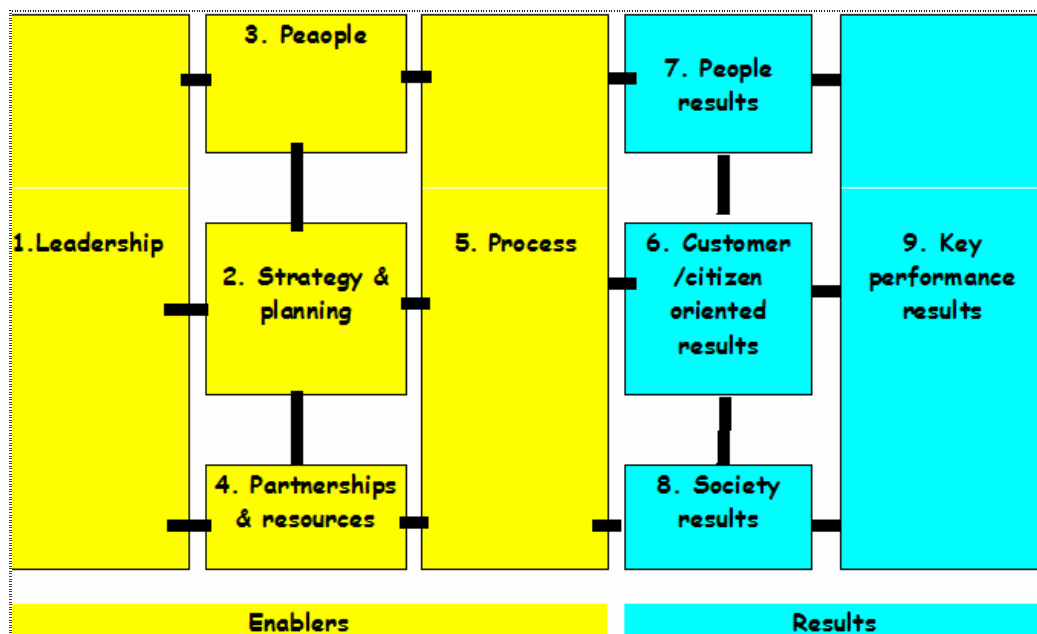
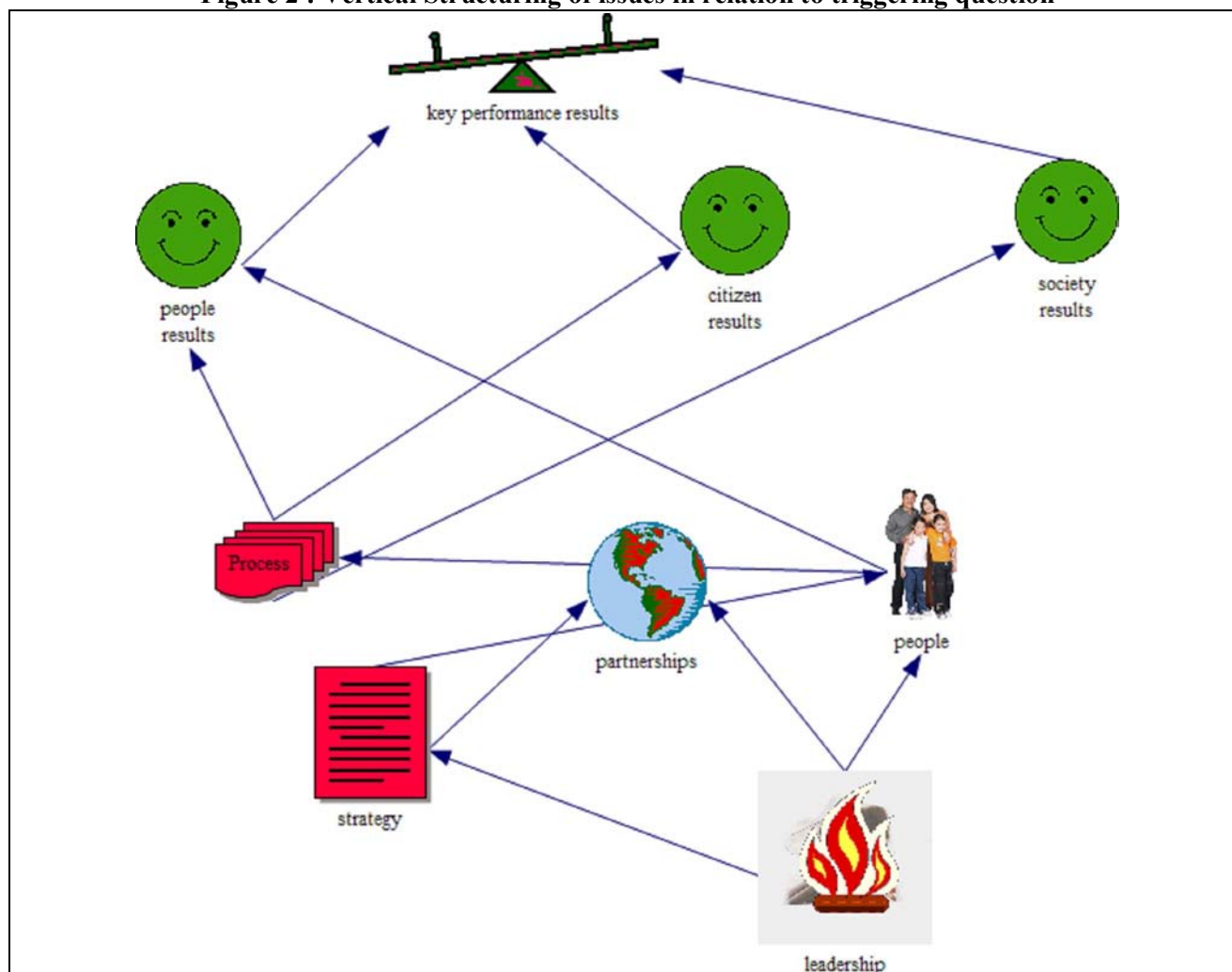


Figure 2 : Vertical Structuring of issues in relation to triggering question



2. STAGE TWO : DESIGNING ALTERNATIVES

In the design stage, the participants constructs alternative scenarios for the resolution of the *problematique* described in our carefully framed '*triggering question*'

2.1. Generation and Clarification of Options (=proposals)

The 100 options proposed by the participants are shown in **Table 4**: Unstructured List of Options for Resolving the *civil service vision, mission, goals, strategies* problematique

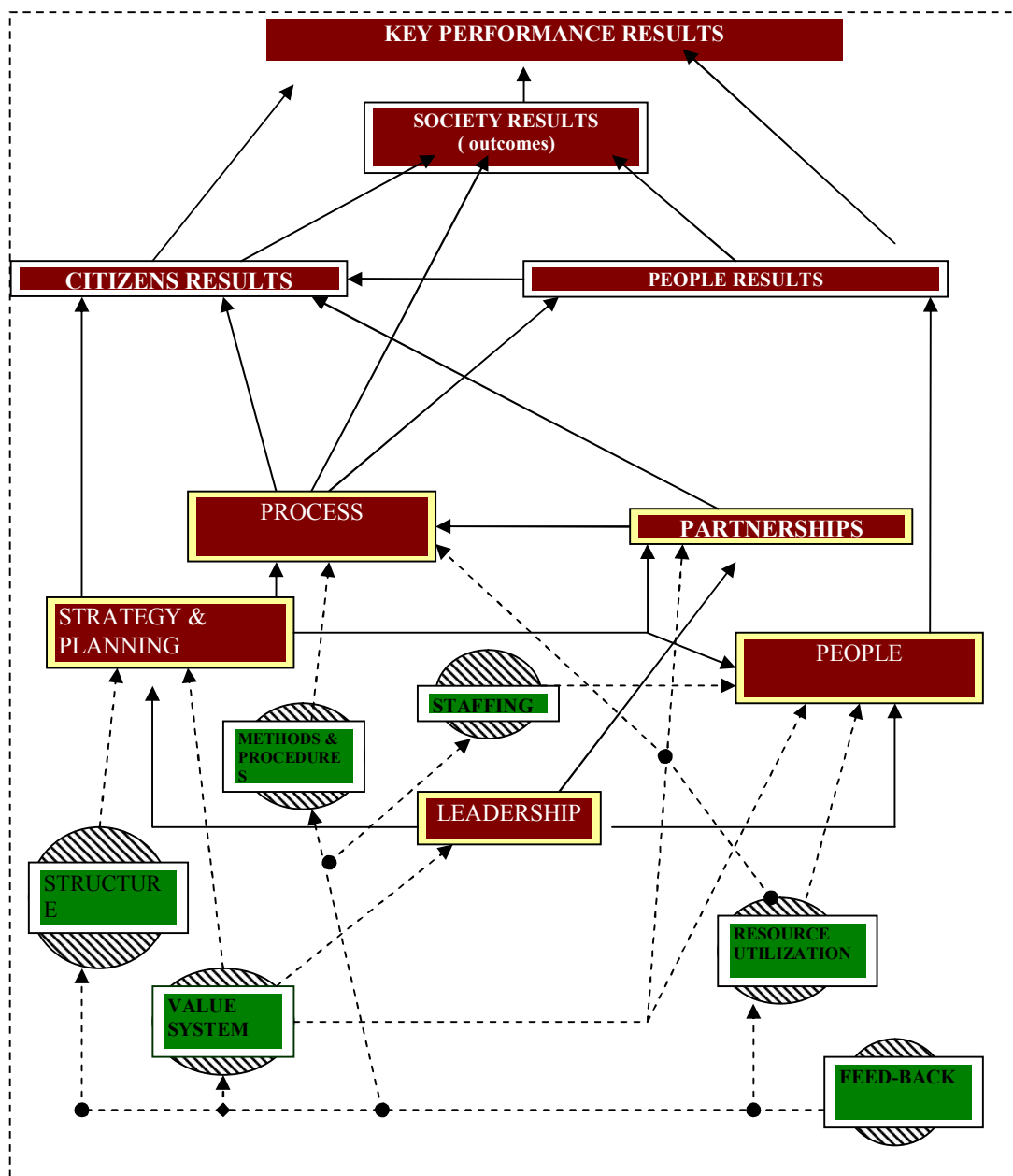
2.2 Classification of Options through Option Field Method (O.F.M.)

The six clusters of Options(=proposals) for Resolving the *problematique* are shown in Table 5: Options Classification for Resolving the *problematique*.

Table 5: Options (proposals) Classification for Resolving the problematique.

CLUSTER #1 : 'Value' system
CLUSTER #2: Structure
CLUSTER #3 : Staffing
CLUSTER #4 : Resource Utilization
CLUSTER #5 : Methods and Procedures
CLUSTER #6 : Monitoring & Performance evaluation

In Figure 6 we depict the Proposals for Resolving Barriers in relation to the *problematique* which is to achieve civil service vision, mission, goals, strategies



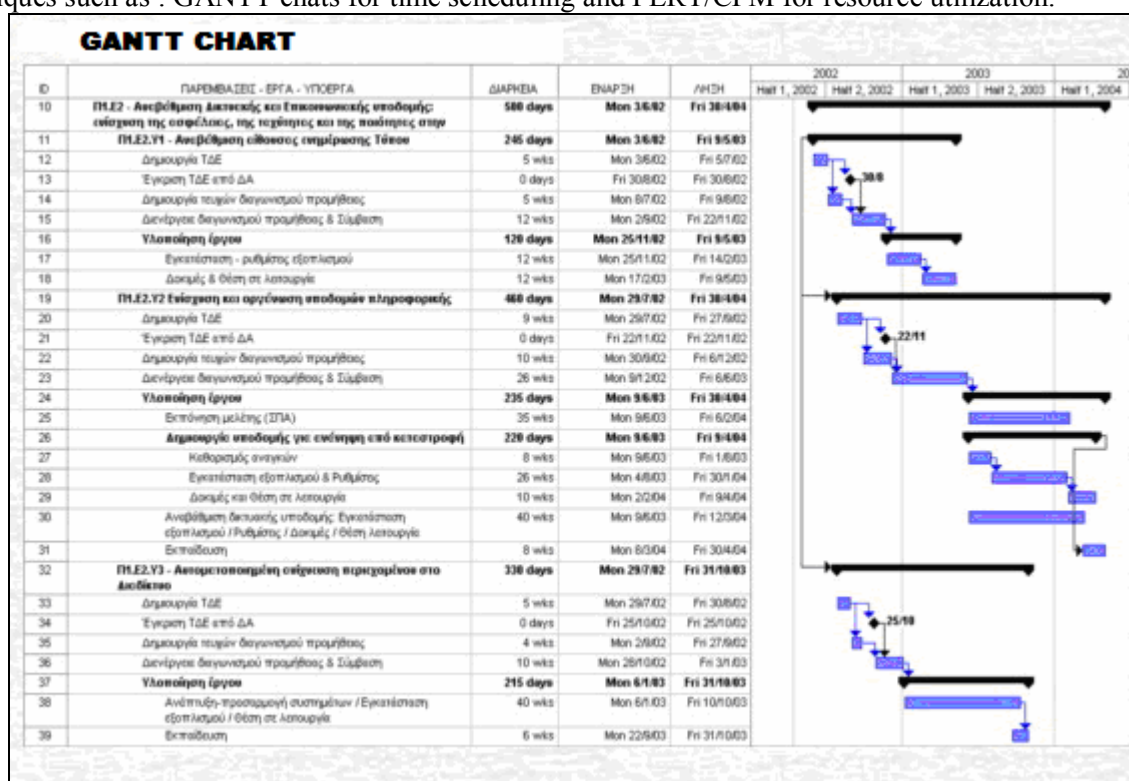
3. STAGE THREE : CHOICE

During this stage we evaluate the proposed alternatives based on the following criteria:

- Participation
- Transparency
- Consensus orientation
- Responsiveness
- Equitability and inclusiveness
- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Government effectiveness
- Regulatory quality
- Rule of law
- Control of corruption
- Voice and accountability
- Long-term pay-off
- Competitive advantage
- Productivity gain
- Cost saving

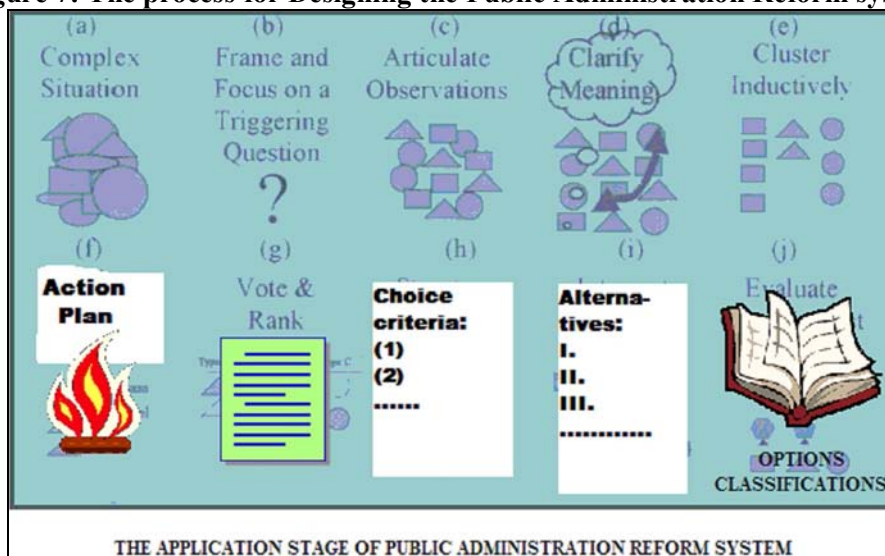
3. STAGE THREE : ACTION PLAN

Having selected the preferred alternatives, we transform the alternatives into project management task sequence for actions. The detailed blueprint for action is depicted by employing project management techniques such as : GANTT charts for time scheduling and PERT/CPM for resource utilization.



Our process in Designing the Public Administration Reform system is briefly depicted in Figure 7

Figure 7: The process for Designing the Public Administration Reform system



Given, the increasing complexity in the system structure and functions the consensus methodology that we develop in the article constitutes an essential problem-solving approach as far as design, control, co-ordination and reengineering concern. As systems become increasingly complex, the need for such techniques of analysis becomes more intense. In response to this need, system thinking theory through consensus models has developed to incorporate both the deterministic and probabilistic characteristics of a social organization.

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