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Performance in public management. A research agenda with bibliometric approach

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Abstract: *In the current context of increasingly limited resources and of constantly multiplying and diversifying needs, the issue of performance (in any form of its manifestation) is becoming increasingly important. This desideratum is even more important in the field of public management, because this sector is a large consumer of resources, of any nature (material, financial, human and informational). The main objective of this paper is to perform a bibliometric analysis in the field of performance within the public management, based on the analysis of scientific production, in order to discover significant aspects and trends. The present research analyzes 3309 documents (articles) from the Web of Science database, using two specific analysis software (VOSViewer and CiteSpace). The conducted research identified three clusters, based on the analysis of titles, abstracts and keywords, which take into account the economic aspects of the analyzed field, concrete ways of evaluating performance in the field of public management and particularities of the public sector in general. Finally, the present paper analyzes which are the main papers in the field (based on citation burst), highlighting the trends in this scientific field in the last 20 years. The novelty of this paper is the bibliometric analysis (combined with a "text mining" approach), being the first of its kind in the field of performance for public management.*

Keywords**:** performance, public management, policy, bibliometric research, text mining, VOSViewer

JEL**:** H11, H80, H83

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Introduction

The issue of efficiency in the field of public services (and in the public sector in general) is a priority in the context in which this sector is a large consumer of resources of any kind (financial, human, material and informational).

In general, the concept of efficiency means the interaction that is established between the volume and structure of the efforts and the volume and structure of the obtained results (Vasilescu et. Al., 2004). If we look through the

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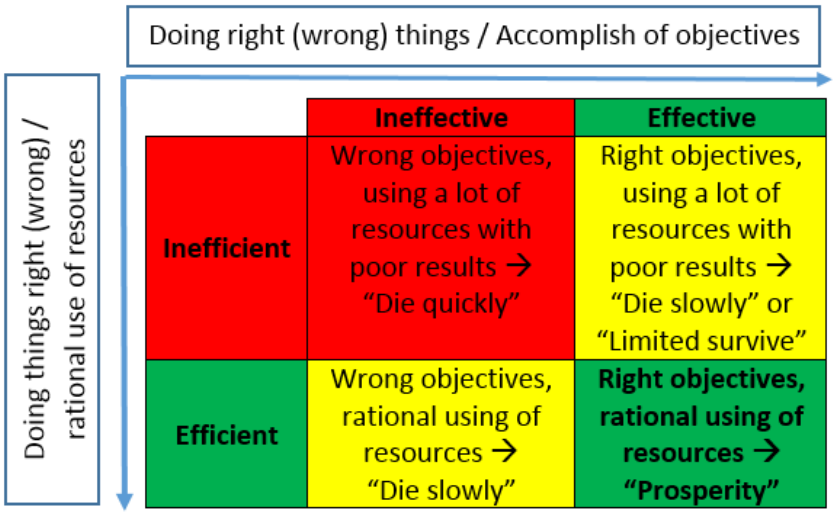
prism of system's theory, efficiency represents a comparison between the INPUTs in the system and the generated OUTPOTs. Going further with the analysis, we can say that the concept of efficiency can take different forms, depending on the field. Thus, it can be translated by "productivity", when we consider especially the field of human resources (of the employees of an organization); also, it can be assimilated to the "profitability", when we consider the financial field of an organization; at the same time, the concept of efficiency can mean "sustainability", in the situation where the activity in question takes into account ecological elements, related to the protection of resources and the environment.

Closely related to the concept of "efficiency" is the concept of "effectiveness". In general, effectiveness means the ability of an activity / action to produce effects. For example, in the managerial field, an effective decision / action is characterized by the ability of that decision / action to meet its proposed objectives.

If we try to make a comparison between the two concepts (efficiency and effectiveness) we can say that, starting from the vision of Peter Drucker (Drucker, 2002) efficiency is doing things right and effectiveness is doing the right things. Starting from this distinction, but also based on the opinions of other authors (Kovit, nd), we can say that there are several situations that can characterize an activity in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1. Comparison between effectiveness and efficiency



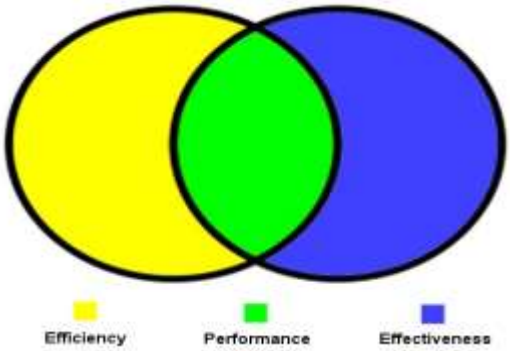
(Source: Author own conception, based on Drucker, 2006 and Kovit, nd*)*

Analyzing the previous figure, it can be seen that in the interaction between "efficiency" and "effectiveness" there are several variants. The most unfavorable, given that the activity is both inefficient and ineffective, contributes quickly to the deterioration of the situation and, inevitably, to "sudden death". Two other options

(indicated in yellow in the figure) are to be avoided, because the activities that are part of these situations have no long-term future. Finally, the optimal situation is when the activity (or organization) is both efficient and effective, thus laying the foundations for future prosperity.

Very often, in order to better express an activity that is both efficient and effective, the "performance" term is used. From this point of view, it is all-encompassing, expressing both aspects mentioned above (there can be no organization / activity that is efficient, without being both efficient and effective). A suggestive representation of the coverage area of the 3 concepts is shown in the figure below.

Figure 2. Trinomial relationship efficiency-performance-effectiveness



(Source: Author own conception*)*

In the figure above, it can be seen that the concept of "performance" is at the intersection between the areas characterized by the concepts of "efficiency" and "effectiveness", which means that it inherits the characteristics of both terms (therefore, a performing activity involves fulfilling proposed objectives at the same time with a rational use of consumed resources).

The concept of performance takes different forms and ways of evaluation, depending on various scientific areas, being analyzed by numerous specialists: in the area of SMEs (Cicea et. Al, 2019a); in the field of transports (Skorobogatova & Kuzmina, 2017), in the construction sector (Bassioni et al., 2004), in agriculture area (Cicea et. al., 2010), in healthcare area (Kallstrom, 2010), in education (Cicea et. al., 2007) etc.

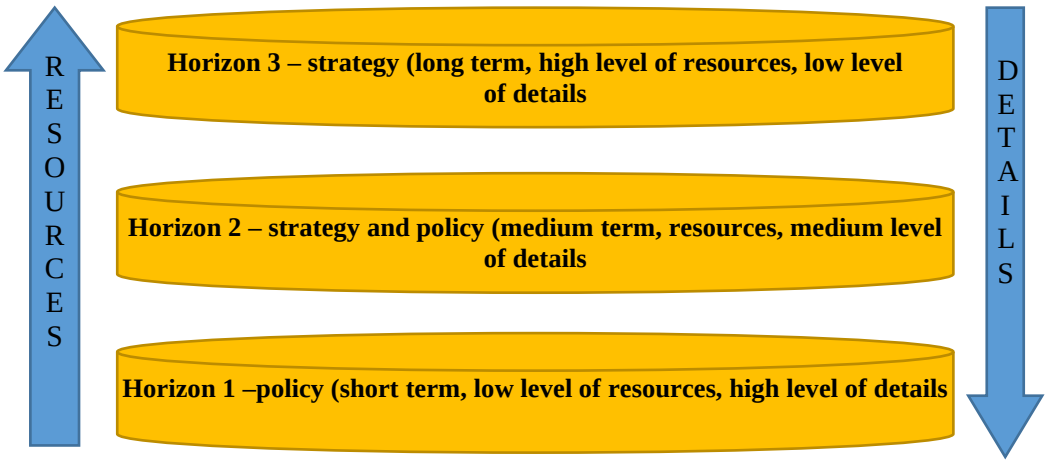
Regarding public management, it can be defined as "the set of well-determined management processes and relations, existing between components of the administrative systems through which in public power, laws are enforced and / or are planned, organized, coordinated , manages and controls the activities involved in providing services that satisfy the public interest" (Androniceanu, 2020, p. 58). From this point of view, public management can be seen as a particularization of management science within the public administration / public sector. In the current context, public management has acquired a very high

importance and complexity, based on the following aspects (University of York, n.d.):

- the impact of austerity (generated by cyclical economic crises or social crises), leading to a permanent shortage of available resources;
- globalization, which, in addition to the major positive effects, generates difficulties / problems at regional, national or international level; as a consequence, these situations are difficult for governments or local authorities to manage (such an example may be represented by the current medical crisis caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus pandemic, which, amid globalization and free movement, has spread very rapidly worldwide);
- the challenges and threats posed by digital technology, which can generate both positive effects (by reducing the time to provide services to the population and streamlining the entire activity in the public domain), but can also involve certain risks, related to cyberattacks; - reducing the borders and delimitations between the public sector, the private sector and the civil society, which makes the communication between them to be more and more important.

The central element of public management is represented by public strategy and policy. Public strategy means the managerial strategy through which public resources and powers are systematically used, in order to achieve public objectives, by public agencies (Mulgan, 2009). On the other hand, public policy is a set of actions taken to solve a political problem (Dente, 2014). From this point of view, public policies and strategies (as well as policies and strategies in general) are similar in their finality (both are tools based on which certain objectives of public organizations / authorities are met, using several resources, within specific deadlines). The elements of differentiation between strategy and policy refer to the horizon of time (longer in the case of strategies) and the degree of details (more accentuated in the case of policies).

Figure 3. Strategy – policy comparison



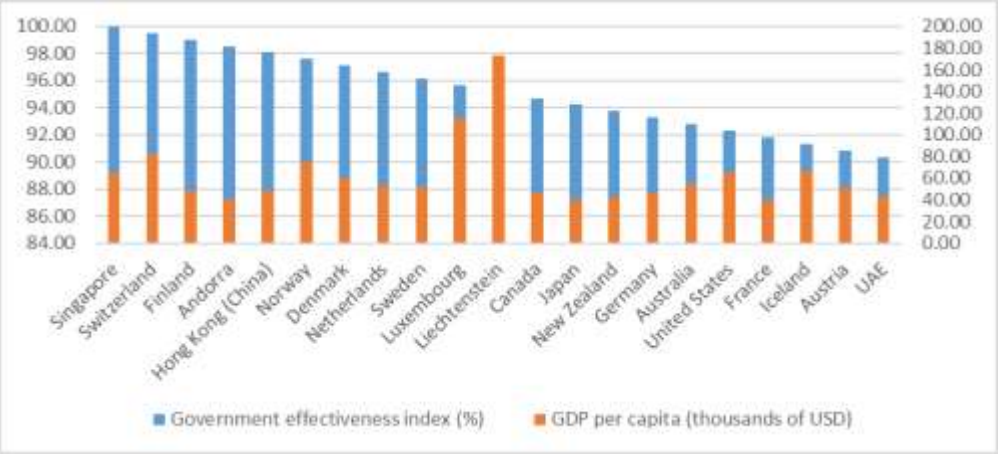
(*Source*: Author own conception, based on Mulgan, 2009)

As can be seen from the figure above, policies aim at a shorter time horizon (horizons 1 and 2) and involve a certain volume of resources, while strategies have a longer time horizon (horizon 2 and 3) and involves a high level of resources.

Having thus the two fields of investigation already defined (on the one hand, the area represented by the concepts of "efficiency", "effectiveness" and "performance", and on the other hand the area represented by "public management", "public strategy" and "public policy"), we can analyze the issue of performance in public management.

One of the most important indicators in this regard (provided by the World Bank) is the "government effectiveness index", which measures perceptions of the quality of public services, the degree of independence from political pressures, the quality of public policy formulation and implementation and credibility for the government's commitment to such policies.

Figure 4. Correlation between government effectiveness index and GDP per capita



(Source: Author own conception, based on data from World Bank*)*

Analyzing the situation presented in the figure from above, we can see that the top countries with the highest values for government effectiveness index (above 90%) have high levels of GDP per capita, well above the international average (the lowest value is represented by Japan, with 40.25 thousand USD per capita). This illustrates that there is a correlation between public administration performance and economic development.

Given these considerations, it is understandable the concern of experts to study the concept of performance in the field of public management, over time. In the following we aim to create a research agenda that analyzes scientific knowledge (articles) in this field, based on a text mining approach and a bibliometric analysis. This paper continues a series of previous papers of the author in the field of bibliometric analysis (Cicea et al., 2019b; Cicea, 2020).

1. Literature review

In the scientific literature, many authors have studied the issue of efficiency (in all its forms) in the public sector. Thus, efficiency in the field of public management was analyzed (Kayl et al., 2017; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013; Volacu, 2018), in the field of public strategies (Fixari & Pallez, 2016) or in the field of public policing (Walner , 2008; Wilensky, 2004; Nebot 2017; Tomori et al., 2020). A brief analysis of the concept of performance in the public sector (especially in the field of public management, public strategies and policies) is highlighted in the table below:

Table 1. Suggestive research papers for performance in public management area

Year	Author	Country	Topic
1994	Neumann P.J. Johannesson M.	Sweden	The paper studies the possibility of using cost-effectiveness analysis in public policies, with a focus on health services; the analysis is conducted for the United States and illustrates the opportunities and limitations of the method in this area.
1995	Haselbekke A.G.J.	Netherlands	It analyzes the importance of efficiency and performance evaluation at the central level (government) and local authorities level, so that the population can judge how public funds are spent.
1996	Boyne G.A.	United Kingdom	The author introduces the idea that performance in the public sector can be improved if large organizations are divided into smaller entities (arguing that large organizations in the public sphere are unresponsive to the public needs and therefore fail to achieve their objectives).
2001	Besley T.	United Kingdom	The study analyzes the link between public policies and economic growth; the analysis states that economic growth is a macroeconomic phenomenon, while policy effectiveness is analyzed based on data at the microeconomic level.
2002	Meier K.J. O'Toole L.J.	United States	The study analyzes the quality of public management and the effects on the organization's performance in the educational field; the research is conducted over a period of 5 years, considering more than 1000 schools in the American state of Texas.
2008	Li Y.M. Song J.X.	China	The study introduces the analysis of efficiency in the public sector considering an approach based on economic criteria, specifying that the fundamental objective of public policy is to use resources in a rational way; in this sense, a high

Year	Author	Country	Topic
			efficiency can be obtained based on the improvement of the resource allocation process.
2010	Cakmak H.K. Erden L.	Turkey	The study analyzes the impact of two public policy instruments (investment incentives and public investment) on private sector productivity in 58 provinces in Turkey
2014	Ting L.	China	The author analyzes the typology of public policies (rigid and flexible), focusing on the evaluation of performance criteria, particularly for the rigid public policies.
2016	Jany Catrice F.	France	The study specifies that at the beginning of the third millennium the evaluation of public policies is more and more rigorous, based on a well-established instrumentation
2016	Neto P.N. Follador D. Schussel Z.D.L. Moreira T	Brazil	The paper analyzes the barriers and challenges in implementing public policies in Brazil; the study states that the principles of efficiency, capitalism and democracy must be addressed simultaneously in order to achieve optimal results in Brazilian society.

(Source: Author own conception, based on WoS*)*

Analyzing the information in the table from above, we find out that there is no study to analyze performance in public Management from a bibliometric perspective. That is why, in the following, we aim to complete the scientific analysis tools with such an approach, which is a novelty in the field.

2. Research method

The bibliometric approach involves to identify scientific knowledge in a particular field and, based on the use of specialized software, to discover trends / patterns belonging to the specialists who have studied that issue. Consequently, the methodology involves the following steps:

1. Specifying the source for data collection.

For the present study, the Web of Science (WoS) database was chosen, considering the scientific notoriety, but also the large volume of documents (articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, reviews, etc.), classified by different categories (starting with Acoustics", "Agricultural Economics & Policy", "Agricultural Engineering" and ending with "Water Resources" and "Zoology").

2. Identifying the collection of documents to be analyzed

For this purpose, 5 keywords were used, namely "public policy", "public strategy", "public management", "efficiency" and "performance". Also, only the

"article" type document was taken into account, and the analyzed time period was 2000 - 2019 (the year 2020 was not taken into account because it is not a completely completed year).

3. Analysis of the collection of documents selected in the previous stage based on a bibliometric approach, using specialized software - VOSViewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2011).

Subsequently, using Citespace software (Chen, 2006) we will go deeper with scientific content analysis and we can identify some documents considered "milestones" for the relationship between the concept of "performance" (with all of its forms) within the public management (with its 2 branches - "public strategy" and "public policy").

3. Results and discussion

Following the implementation of the above methodological steps, a collection of 3309 articles resulted, which correspond to the query criteria described above. Specifically, the breakdown of Web of Science documents is described below:

Table 2. Top WoS categories, according to the frequency of papers (above 100)

No. crt.	Web of Science category	Number of papers	%
1	Public administration	1074	32
2	Management	502	15
3	Economics	459	14
4	Political science	372	11
5	Business	291	9
6	Environmental studies	178	5
7	Business finance	130	4
8	Education educational research	123	4
9	Environmental sciences	121	4
10	Others (Social science interdisciplinary, Urban studies, Sociology etc.)	-	-

(Source: Author own conception, based on WoS*)*

Analyzing the previous table, we notice that almost 1/3 of the documents fall into the "Public administration" category, while the following three categories ("Management", "Economics" and "Political science") have important shares (15%, 14% and respectively 11%). It should be noted that the total percentages do not represent 100%, because a paper can be classified into several categories, in accordance with the classification of the journal where it was published.

Next we will use VOSViewer to identify which are the main keywords in the 3309 documents (the keywords after which the Web of Science database was queried were removed from the analysis, in order to be able to capture exactly

which are the links that are established in within the analyzed field and to obtain pertinent results). The top of the first keywords by frequency is shown in the table below:

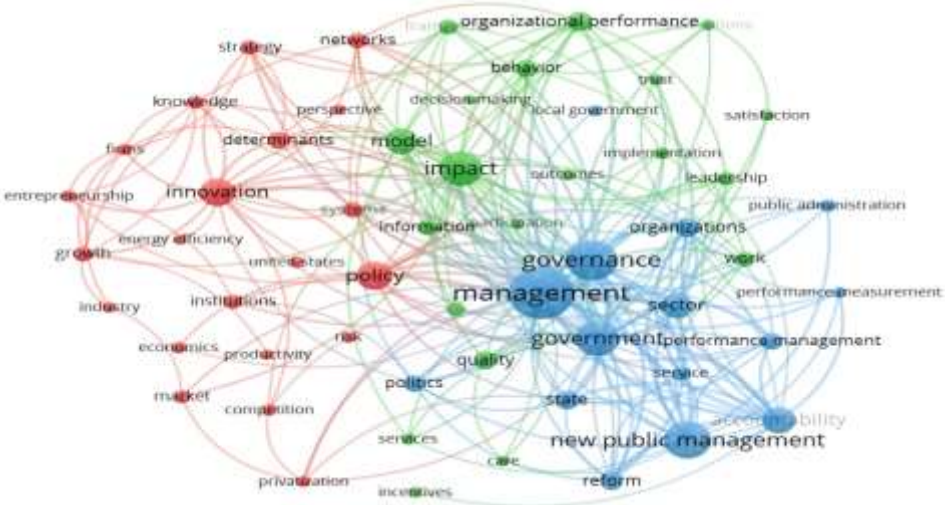
Table 3. Keywords with frequency above 100

Nr. crt.	Keyword	Frequency	Links	Total link strength
1.	Management	339	55	908
2	Governance	252	54	752
3	New public management	226	51	475
4	Impact	210	54	559
5	Government	207	54	690
6	Policy	165	53	446
7	Innovation	160	50	454
8	Accountability	151	48	480
9	Model	148	52	414
10	Sector	141	52	464
11	Organizations	106	49	395
12	Organizational performance	104	46	318

(Source: Author analysis, based on VOSViewer*)*

Going further with the analysis, we can identify 3 clusters consisting of keywords in the 3309 documents.

Figure 5 Clusters visualization according to selected keywords



(Source: WOSViewer*)*

Each of the three clusters formed on the basis of keywords have a specific theme. Thus, cluster 1 (in red) consists of 21 items and generally refers to the economic aspects of performance in public management. Thus, the central elements of this cluster are represented by "policy" (with a total number of links equal to 53) and "innovation" (with a total number of links equal to 50). Other keywords such as "growth", "economics", "determinants", "productivity", "competition", "privatization", "firms", "entrepreneurship", "industry" etc.

The second cluster (in green) consists of 20 items and focuses mainly on the actual evaluation of performance in the field of public management. Thus, the two main keywords in this cluster are "impact" and "model" (with a total number of links of 54 and 52, respectively). Along with these, the keywords "information", "behavior", "outcomes", "satisfaction" also appear.

Finally, the third cluster (in blue) consists of 15 keywords and considers aspects related to the public sector. The main keywords of this cluster are "management" (with a total number of 55 links), "governance" (54 links) and "government" (54 links). Along with these, there are other keywords such as "sector" (52 links), "new public management" (51 links), "reform" (50 links). If we want to go deeper with the analysis, we will use CiteSpace in order to discover those paper with high levels of citation burst and the duration for the citation burst. From this point of view, it is useful to present the following table:

Figure 6 Top articles with citation burst between 1998 – 2018

References	Begin	End	Strength	Years (1998 - 2018)
Terry L.D., 1998	2001	2006	6.6167	
Pollitt C., 2000	2002	2008	15.7849	
DeLeon L., 2000	2002	2006	7.0803	
O'Toole L.J., 1999	2003	2007	10.0633	
O'Toole L.J., 2003	2004	2011	10.9441	
Agranoff R., 2003	2004	2011	10.3296	
Meier K.J., 2003	2004	2011	10.3296	
Meier K.J., 2002	2004	2010	9.4224	
Meier K.J., 2001	2004	2009	8.8329	
Lynn L.E., 2001	2004	2009	6.2971	
Boyne G.A., 2003	2005	2010	9.8558	
Rainey H., 2003	2005	2011	8.7102	
Ingraham P.W., 2003	2005	2010	7.0803	
O'Toole L.J., 2004	2005	2012	6.037	
Pollitt C., 2004	2008	2012	21.7614	
Radin B., 2006	2008	2014	8.8497	
Moynihan D., 2005	2009	2013	5.9072	
Moynihan D., 2008	2010	2016	10.4223	
Provan K.G., 2008	2012	2016	7.4724	
Pollitt C., 2011	2013	2018	18.2279	

(Source: Web of Science, using Citespace*)*

Analizing information from the above table we can discover some interesting facts.

First of all, there are 2 authors which are very prodigious in the field of performance within the public management. They are Cristopher Pollitt si Geert Bouckaert, which are co-authors for the first 3 papers according to the strength of the citation burst. The first paper (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004) has a citation burst strength of 21.7614; the second paper (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) has a citation burst of 18.2279 and the third paper (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000) has a citation burst of 15.7849.

Other authors with important papers in the field are Kenneth J. Meier and Laurence J. O'Toole (Meier & O'Toole, 2001; O'Toole & Meier, 2003).

Another interesting idea that can be deduced by analyzing the previous figure refers to the trends registered over time in the field of performance for public management. Thus, if at the beginning of the millennium the emphasis of experts was on leadership in public administration and on managerial methods that can be used in this field (Terry, 1998) or on reform in the field of public management (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000), at the end of the first decade, the emphasis was on the governance of organizational networks (Provan & Kenis, 2008) and on the dynamics of performance management (Moynihan, 2008).

4. Conclusions

Considering the large volume of documents over the analyzed time interval (3309 articles, for the period 2000 - 2019), we can appreciate that the issue of performance in the field of public management is particularly important for specialists, this being studied more and more in the last period; if at the beginning of the millennium there were 53, 49, 52 articles (in 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively), towards the end of the second decade, an average of over 400 articles were published every year (409 articles in 2017, 414 articles in 2018). Obviously, the explosion of the number of articles in the field lately is also due to the spread of the Internet in the 3rd millennium and the increase in the number of journals indexed in databases; but it is obvious that the authors' interest in studying the issue of performance in public management has also increased.

Going further with the analysis, we can say that experts in the field have studied the connection "performance" - "public management" from several points of view - from an economic perspective (focusing on determinants, the implications of performance in the public domain on economic growth, etc.), from the point of view of the concrete possibilities of performance evaluation (analyzing evaluation models and the impact / effects that performance implies in Public Management) as well as from the point of view of the particularities of the public sector in the current context (emphasizing the concept of "new public management" and reform in the field of public management).

Finally, another conclusion that can be deduced is represented by the geographical distribution of the scientific production in the field, according to the

institutional affiliation of the authors. Thus, it can be seen that in the top 10 positions there are only universities from the United States (1st place "University of Georgia" - 89 articles; 2nd place "University of California" - 72 articles, 3rd place "Texas University" - 69 articles, etc.) with two small exceptions represented by the United Kingdom (4th place "Cardiff University" - 68 articles and 6th place "University of London" - 66 articles). This can only confirm that the concerns of specialists for studying performance in public management is a determining factor for a competitive public sector and finally, for a high degree of economic and social development.

We cannot conclude this paper without referring to the main limits of the present research. The first of these refers to the database used to compile the collection of documents for the analysis (in this case, Web of Science); however, given its notoriety as well as the very wide area of fields, this limitation cannot significantly influence the results obtained. Moreover, in the event of choosing another similar database (e.g. Scopus), the collection of documents under analysis would not change radically, as long as many journals are indexed simultaneously in both the Web of Science and Scopus. The second limitation of the present research refers to the analyzed text (in this case, it is about the title, the abstract and the keywords of each article). It is possible that, based on the "full text" type analysis, the obtained results to be more or less similar to those in this paper.

Author Contribution

The author listed has a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author states that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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