

Essays on Public-Private Mixing: A Knowledge Transfer Perspective.

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Abstract:

Cooperation, in all its aspects, among humans is unmatched in nature. Specifically, the idea that one is willing to incur personal costs in order to secure a joint activity that confers benefits exceeding one's own is remarkable (Bowles and Gintis, 2003). Central to these developments and their effects is the human intellectual, linguistic and physical capacity to articulate general norms of social conduct, the emergence of social institutions that regulate this conduct, the psychological ability to internalise norms, and reciprocity amongst group members (Bowles and Gintis, 2003). In many modern day societies, social conventions and governance arises at the crossroads of three evolving meta-institutions, i.e. civil society, the state represented through its government and the market. The responsibilities of these three institutions in the development of society are continuously challenged, and the battle of ideas every so often leads to temporary situations of transitory balance (Wettenhall, 2010). These transitory situations set the agenda on public-private mixing and address solutions for both the development of public goods and services as well as remedies for market and government failure (Estache and Serebrisky, 2004). The dominant discourse therein in the last decades has pulled the centre of gravity towards the workings of the market, expressed in the public sector through for instance, the granting of autonomy to state-owned organisations and enterprises, and the provision of public goods by means of private finance (Wettenhall, 2010). As the entrepreneurial spirit and its accompanying creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934) are introduced into the provision of public goods and services, they bring about a reorientation of strategic objectives, and invoke the need to address underlying coping mechanisms such as the development of knowledge assets and the integration of knowledge management strategy. Thereby allowing for the improvement of strategic decision-making under these circumstances. The research presented in this dissertation studies particular types of public-private mixing with a clear focus on the role of knowledge management and knowledge transfer in these institution-crossing settings. At different organisational levels, the research presented in this dissertation finds that the act of transferring knowledge in an explicit manner is often absent in real life situations

typified by public-private mixing, whilst at the same time finding that explicitly and non-explicitly transferred knowledge does however affect the perceived effectiveness of decision-making ability in these instances. As a result the main findings of the dissertation are somewhat contradictory and their descriptive nature opens up the domain for future research endeavours to come to more normative and instrumental stances on the need for knowledge transfer and management in situations characterised by public-private mixing.