

# *Measuring Empowerment in Democratic Developmental States*

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**Abstract:** The state of Public Administration and Management-related disciplines in developing countries could generally be improved by the adoption of more rigorous research topic selections, designs and methods of data collection, analysis and assessment. There is a need to move beyond a pre-occupation with descriptive summaries of governmental outputs and the identification of policy 'challenges', to an evidence-based evaluation of the results of governmental programmes in order to improve future policy decisions. Although development is a strategic priority for all governments, the developmental role of governments in lesser developed or transitional states is different from that of governments in more developed states. This paper investigates what is needed to evaluate more systematically empowerment programmes in so-called democratic developmental states.

The paper assesses the nature of the democratic developmental state. It traces the origins of so-called developmental states, summarising the different manifestations of the developmental state on different continents. It identifies the characteristics of the contemporary African developmental state and the strong and weak attributes of such states that influence their potential governance outcomes. The paper then summarises the need to deal with a more systematic evaluation of governmental programmes in such states in line with the emerging evidence-based paradigm in policy management. The bulk of the paper is devoted to the conceptualisation of empowerment as an important strategic goal of democratic developmental states and the development of guidelines towards an indicator framework to evaluate empowerment outcomes at different levels in democratic developmental states. This framework is offered as a performance measurement support tool to facilitate a more systematic and rigorous assessment of empowerment programmes in democratic developmental states.

## **Introduction:**

Although development is a strategic priority for all governments, the developmental role of governments in lesser developed or transitional states is different from that of governments in more developed states. This paper investigates what is needed to evaluate more systematically empowerment programmes in so-called democratic developmental states.

Adopting the philosophy of a developmental state, has crucial consequences for any government. It might under certain conditions promote rapid economic growth, but it can also have negative consequences for democracy in that state. This has prompted a number of scholars recently to distinguish a traditional developmental state from a so-called democratic developmental state. This implies that empowerment programmes in so-called democratic developmental states have to comply with additional requirements than is normally expected in traditional developmental states. These include *inter alia* effective and efficient bureaucracies, resilient leadership, a sustainable organisational structure, strong state and nation building initiatives, democracy, rule of law, sustainable economic growth and redistribution, social capital and social equity, also featuring prominently on the developmental agenda of the state.

The paper starts by assessing the nature of the democratic developmental state. It traces the origins of so-called developmental states, summarising the different manifestations of the developmental state on different continents. It then identifies the characteristics of the contemporary African developmental state and the strong and weak attributes of such states that influence their potential governance outcomes. The paper then proceeds to summarise the need to deal with a more systematic evaluation of governmental programmes in such states in line with the emerging evidence-based paradigm in policy management. The state of Public Administration and Management-related disciplines in developing countries could

generally be improved by the adoption of more rigorous research topic selections, designs and methods of data collection, analysis and assessment. There is a general need to move beyond a pre-occupation with descriptive summaries of governmental outputs and the identification of policy ‘challenges’, to an evidence-based evaluation of the results of governmental programmes in order to improve future policy decisions. The bulk of the paper is devoted to the conceptualisation of empowerment as an important strategic goal of democratic developmental states and the development of guidelines towards an indicator framework to evaluate empowerment outcomes at different levels in democratic developmental states. This framework is offered as a performance measurement support tool to facilitate a more systematic and rigorous assessment of empowerment programmes in democratic developmental states.

### **Need for more rigorous policy analysis methodologies**

*Evidence-based policy management* is an approach to policy analysis and management that

‘helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation’ (Segone 2008: 27, quoting Davies. See also Boaz, Ashby and Young 2002, Davies, Nutley and Smith 2000, Radaelli 1995 and the research undertaken by CEandP).

Marco Segone, a senior monitoring and evaluation advisor to the UN and other regional development organizations, distinguish evidence-based policy practices from what he calls traditional *opinion-based policy practice*,

‘which relies heavily on either the selective use of evidence (e.g. on single studies irrespective of quality) or on the untested views of individuals or groups, often inspired by ideological standpoints, prejudices, or speculative conjecture’ (2008:27).

The evidence-based approach to policy analysis is still an emerging approach, because the computer tools needed for effective application of this approach are also still developing and empirical research methodologies still suffer from

‘..unclear objectives; poor design; methodological weaknesses; inadequate statistical reporting and analysis; selective use of data; and, conclusions which are not supported by the data provided’ (Segone 2008:27, referring to the conclusions of Davies, Nutley and Smith, 2000).

Segone also identified a current trend away from *opinion-based* to *evidence-influenced* policy practices that might hopefully result in the end in fully-fledged *evidence-based policy practices* (2008:27). This trend implies that a stronger emphasis is now placed on more rigorous research topic selections, designs and methods of data collection, analysis and assessment that constitute more systematic evidence-based practices. Gone are the days of so-called opinion-influenced observations without hard evidence that can back up subjective observations and conclusions, if one wants to comply with emerging good policy assessment practices. In many lesser developed contexts, however, it is not easy to apply the above general principles of more evidence-based analysis, because of the nature and attributes of what has become known over time as the developmental state.

### **Nature and attributes of the democratic developmental state**

The developmental state has its origins in Chalmers Johnson’s (1982:23) analysis of the development of the Japanese state since 1925 to 1975. Johnson attributed the economic and social successes that turned Japan into the most productive and affluent economy in the world during this period, to the following factors:

- A deliberate centralised socio-economic developmental plan devised by the Japanese government;

- Direct interventions by the government in Japanese society in order to achieve the goals of that plan;
- An autonomous autocratic government (or a so-called *soft authoritarian state* (see also Leftwich 1995, Nzwei and Kuye 2007));
- Guided by a strong, competent central bureaucracy (Nzwei and Kuye 2007) with in-house capacity (see also Edigheji 2007:20);
- Cooperation by government, business elites and civil society (alliance capitalism: Sindzingre 2004, crony capitalism: Landman undated, governed interdependence: Weiss in Edigheji 2005:12, or state embeddedness: Evans 1995); and
- A submissive civil society (see also Nzwei and Kuye 2007, Landman undated).

The success of this approach to national development in Japan was quickly followed by other Asian countries like Taiwan, South Korea, and later also Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines (Beeson 2004), as well as Chile under Pinochet and currently Chavez' Venezuela and Morales' Bolivia in Latin America. After a hiatus of a few decades, the developmental state concept is therefore again in vogue as a specific recipe of governance that is supposed to maximise developmental potential in a country, because of its concentrated focus to apply all national resources as well as those international resources that the national governments concerned have access to, in the pursuance of strategic national developmental and other goals.

Leftwich (1995:401) confirmed Johnson's assessment of this model of development and reformulated the main general characteristics of a developmental state as:

- a determined developmental elite;
- a weak and subordinated civil-society;
- relative autonomy of the developmental state;

- a powerful, competent and insulated economic bureaucracy;
- the capacity for effective management of private economic interests; and
- an uneasy mix of repression, poor human rights, legitimacy and performance.

Developmental states generally follow very conservative fiscal policies and are able to implement their policies through highly effective Weberian-type bureaucracies that are able to operate autonomously because of the strong position of the state in society and a largely submissive population that allows this autonomy to continue (Evans 1995:1, Edigheji 2005:12, 2007: 11, 12). If a population, however, becomes restless and starts challenging the autonomy of the state, it becomes much more difficult to implement a developmental agenda (Edigheji 2005:13), unless this is done increasingly with force, as happened under the apartheid state which also complies with the elements of the developmental state as defined above by Johnson (1982) and Leftwich (1995).

In contrast to Asia and Latin America where developmental states that comply with the above criteria developed successfully - at least for restricted periods of time, (Weaver, Rock and Kusterer 1997: chpts 1 and 4), the same cannot be said for Africa:

‘The developmental failure of the post-colonial African state is attributed to its undemocratic nature, weak internal institutions, and the repression and exclusion of domestic social partners from the governance process... The African state’s weak internal institutional capacity as well as the lack of people’s participation are therefore said to have accounted for its inability to forge and sustain a developmental agenda’ (Edigheji 2005: 21).

Strong developmental growth is, however, not restricted to these political conditions in certain states only. There is therefore no simple correlation between developmental results and authoritarian government. Edigheji (2005:13) states that

‘...if there is a positive correlation between undemocratic regimes and development, then African countries would have been among the most developed countries in the world’.

Four years later Edigheji stated explicitly that ‘(t)here is no contradiction between the developmental state and democracy, as the examples of the Nordic and Irish democratic developmental states have shown’ ( Edigheji 2009:62).

Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, more commonly referred to as the “Four Asian Tigers” displayed evidence of being newly industrialised countries with advanced, high income economies (Leftwich 2007) but in 1998, all the Asian Tigers and the South-East Asian Tiger Cubs stumbled while chasing their prey at full speed, because of the same inherent weaknesses in their respective systems (Cloete 2000). These weaknesses relate to the largely undemocratic, opaque and unaccountable political, social and financial sub-systems that operated in those countries and that created the conditions for their success up to a certain point. Their strengths therefore turned out to be fatal weaknesses after a certain period of time, and they were forced to liberalise and democratise these sub-systems in order to resume their former high growth trends.

Edigheji (2009:7) argues that

‘(i)n every historical epoch, developmental states have been constructed to respond to specific contextual developmental challenges’,

whereas Evans (2009:7) states that there isn’t one mould through which a developmental state could be replicated. Both arguments substantiate the philosophy that each state that allows its socio-economic sector to be motivated by the principles of a developmental state will do so with a full appreciation of the universal conditions such as globalisation, transformation, information communication technology, a knowledge-based new economy and deregulation in the global economy (Lim 2009). The above arguments furthermore support a consideration of national conditions determining the primary triggers, specific challenges, and the developmental characteristics to achieve a state’s developmental goals (De Wet 2011:16).

In order for the developmental state to be sustainable and not isolated in current liberal global politics, Edigheji follows Robinson and White (1998:26) who redefined the concept by adding an explicit procedural democratic element to the developmental state which

‘..retains the autonomous institutional attributes of the developmental state (and) not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizens’ participation in the development and governance processes’ (Edigheji, 2005:13, 22).

However, Edigheji emphasises participatory democracy rather than representative democracy (2005:9). In a later study he argues that

‘..what matters is not the capacity of the state to repress interest groups and impose its will over society but to use its autonomy to elicit cooperative relations from organized interests and citizens, a point that is eloquently argued by Linda Weiss (1998)’ (Edigheji 2007:6).

It is therefore clear that the democratic nature of the developmental state must increase inevitably over time in order to maintain the stability of the state and its acceptance internationally by democratic international organisations and investment institutions that need proof of financial, economic and political stability to protect their investments in such countries. This is the hard lesson that we learned from the Asian economic meltdown in the closing stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cloete 2000).

There is currently an intense discourse whether South Africa is a developmental state and how its policies should change to become more of a developmental state. Edigheji (2007:1) is of the opinion that South Africa complies well with the new democratic element of a developmental state, but that

‘...some of the elements of the New Public Management (NPM) approach, which informed the restructuring of the state, are contrary to aspects of a developmental state’.

He concludes that South Africa has a *developmentalist* government but is not a developmental state because of its strong liberal macro-economic policies and its weak state

capacity for effective public services delivery (Edigheji 2007:1). This lack of state capacity and democracy is also one of the major reasons why African governments cannot become effective developmental states. Therefore, in order to be an effective democratic developmental state, South Africa has to develop a more effective and autonomous bureaucracy that can effectively plan and execute national developmental policies. This is not currently the case.

### **The measurement of the developmental state**

If one wants to evaluate to what extent a state is a developmental state, it is necessary to compile systematic data to assess the degree to which the attributes of a democratic developmental state are present in the state under consideration according to Leftwich's developmental state characteristics (1995:401). Such indicators might include the following:

- a determined developmental elite:
  - clear, attainable developmental priorities (eg in terms of education, health services, land reform, developmental infrastructure).
  - a developmental budget and clear developmental projects rather than status quo maintenance ones
  - the degree of governmental dedication in the implementation of developmental priorities (eg follow-up to ensure successful developmental outcomes)
- a weak and subordinated civil society:
  - trends in government funding for NGOs
  - indicators of centralization of governmental decision-making at national level (eg over-riding provincial and local party structures' priorities, weakening the autonomy of provincial and local government),

- the level of responsiveness of the government to civil society.
- relative autonomy of the developmental state:
  - enforcement of central governmental policies on party structures
  - individual governmental elites that get away with policy or legal contraventions without penalties.
- a powerful, competent and insulated economic bureaucracy:
  - levels of success with government actions against corruption and nepotism in the management of tenders by the public service
- the capacity for effective management of private economic interests:
  - levels of success with government actions against corruption and nepotism in the private sector
  - evidence of ‘crony capitalism’ and favouritism in the allocation of government contracts.
- an uneasy mix of repression, poor human rights, legitimacy and performance:
  - indicators of press freedom and other dimensions of good governance, political dimensions such as state building, democracy and rule of law, economic dimensions such as economic growth and where applicable the redistribution of wealth, and social dimensions, such as nation building, social equality and social capital, including international indices like those of the World Bank, Freedom House, the African Governance Index, the Global Governance Barometer, etc.

The above examples of indicators of the degree to which a state can be regarded as a democratic developmental state, are generic indicators that can be applied to all states. They are further not a closed list, but can and should be expanded with the addition of other relevant indicators for specific contexts.

## **Empowerment as main goal of development**

An important focus of this paper is the link between development and empowerment.

*Developmental policies* are public policies which succeed in providing people the freedom to exercise choices to pursue the most appropriate strategies to achieve their strategic values and goals (Sen 1999). These choices especially refer to the style and quality of life that they would prefer to maintain, and empower them to take full control of their lives. Empowerment is probably the most important developmental goal for any government.

Powerlessness is a direct consequence of suboptimal institutional relations among social segments that prevent individuals from exercising choices to promote goals that matter to them (Sen 1999:190). Powerlessness is frequently identified among vulnerable individuals and groups in society like women, children, peasant farmers, working classes, lower castes and other religious, cultural and language minority groups and communities within a society dominated by a majority from a different background. Sen developed the concept of ‘agency’ to promote the idea that such individuals, groups and communities can and should be their own agents of change and not only passive recipients of resources (1999:11). Development should therefore be seen as empowerment. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007:7) list 32 different definitions of empowerment by authoritative scholars. Empowerment is best conceptualized by Alsop and Heinsohn (2005:4) who built on Sen’s ideas and explains it as:

‘...a person’s capacity to make effective choices; that is, as the capacity to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. The extent or degree to which a person is empowered is influenced by personal agency (the capacity to make purposive choice) and opportunity structure (the institutional context in which choice is made). Asset endowments are used as indicators of agency. These assets may be psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial, or human. Opportunity structure is measured by the presence and operation of formal and informal institutions, including the laws, regulatory frameworks, and norms governing behavior. Degrees of empowerment are measured by the existence of choice, the use of choice, and the achievement of choice’.

Empowerment can occur in different forms, from less effective to more effective: from passive exposure to and access to resources, through active participation in decision-making and implementation that enables influencing and eventually control over decisions and actions that affect one's interests (World Bank, 2004).

### **The measurement of empowerment**

Alsop and Heinsohn use empowerment in the above conceptualization both as a process and a long term multi-sectoral outcome (impact). The two main variables that they use to measure different directions and levels of empowerment, are *agency* and *opportunity structure*.

'..Agency is defined as an actor's ability to make meaningful choices; that is, the actor is able to envisage options and make a choice (eg knowledge, skills and experience). Opportunity structure is defined as the formal and informal contexts within which actors operate' (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005:6),

eg the degree to which environmental conditions or rules of the game enable or promote individuals' developmental choices.

Opportunity structure therefore refers to informal social and cultural norms and practices as well as formal institutional policy or legal guidelines and prescriptions. These might be re-inforcing or contradictory. Agency indicators are conceptualized as psychological visioning, informational access, organizational ability, material resources, social capital, financial capital, or human knowledge and skills that together comprise different '*asset endowments*' (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005:8). The combined interactive effect of agency and opportunity structure results in different degrees of empowerment at different macro, meso and micro levels in the three general sectors of state, market and society that can be empirically measured

*‘ ...by assessing (1) whether a person has the opportunity to make a choice, (2) whether a person actually uses the opportunity to choose, and (3) once the choice is made, whether it brings the desired (empowerment) outcome’ (2005:6, 13).*

Alsop and Heinsohn’s influential 2005 study is the latest in a series of World bank sponsored papers that attempted to give concrete meaning and effect to Sen’s vision of development as the consequence of choices how to promote interests of value. Others include those of PREM 2002, Malhotra et al 2002, Narayan-Parker 2002, 2005, Bennet and Gajurel 2005 and Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006). Koggel (2006:7) critically assessed the above international literature and concludes that although the above framework is conceptually correct and comprehensive, it does not factor in effectively enough the constraints on empowerment that are caused by globalization. However, the concept of opportunity structure is in principle encompassing enough to include such international environmental constraints in different policy sectors. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) also suggest a variation on the theme, while the studies by Pradhan 2003 and Pardo del Val et al address a number of methodological issues in the construction of measurement indicators to assess empowerment. Time and space unfortunately precludes the analysis and assessment of these different nuances on how to conceptualise and measure empowerment in this paper. The basic conceptual elements of empowerment are, however, sufficiently clear to proceed to summarise the main variables that one can use for measurement purposes.

A comprehensive framework of indicators to cover all the above elements of empowerment are suggested and applied by Alsop and Heinsohn (2005:35), and populated with comparative data across the globe to illustrate the practical feasibility of the model and the indicator framework. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) largely support this approach but caution about the methodological challenges in applying these measuring instruments in developing contexts. They also propose a distinction between individual, family, organizational, community and institutional empowerment, in line with Alsop and Heinsohn’s

conceptualization. This approach currently seems to be the dominant one on this topic in the international literature.

Alsop and Heinsohn’s empowerment indicators include the following examples of *agency indicators* (Alsop and Heisohn, 2005:63). These examples clearly does not constitute a closed list, but entails the most widely accepted and therefore legitimate indicators for this purpose. They can and should be supplemented or expanded by the inclusion of other indicators that are more useful in specific contexts:

<p><b>Psychological assets</b>          Self-perceived exclusion from community activities          Level of interaction/sociability with people from different social groups          Capacity to envisage change, to aspire</p>	<p><b>Human assets</b>          Literacy levels          Numeracy levels          Health status</p>
<p><b>Informational assets</b>          Journey time to nearest working post office          Journey time to nearest working telephone          Frequency of radio listening          Frequency of television watching          Frequency of newspaper reading          Passable road access to house (by periods of time)          Perceived changes in access to information          Completed education level</p>	<p><b>Organizational assets</b>          Membership of organizations          Effectiveness of group leadership          Influence in selection of group leaders          Level of diversity of group membership</p>
<p><b>Material assets</b>          Land ownership          Tool ownership          Ownership of durable goods          Type of housing</p>	<p><b>Financial assets</b>          Employment history          Level of indebtedness          Sources of credit          Household expenses          Food expenditure          Occupation</p>

Alsop and Heisohn’s (2005: 65) *opportunity structure indicators* include the formal and informal rules of the game regarding family, social, cultural, religious political, economic, labour and financial interaction in community and society that are tested in their indicator framework through different datasets from the World Bank, Freedom House, Transparency

International, the UN and other comparative international indices. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) supplement these indicators with additional ones at the different levels mentioned above.

Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland (2006:36-37) also summarise an influential case study in empowerment in Nepal, where the following gender, caste and ethnic empowerment and social inclusion issues were measured (Bennett and Gajurel, 2005, quoted in Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006:198-201):

‘An Empowerment Index (EMI) was developed to measure empowerment, using a range of variables that sought to capture the respondent’s sense of agency. The survey sought evidence and indicators of psychological, informational, and social asset endowment, as well as evidence and indicators that the individual had actively demanded access to services or tried to influence local community decisions. The EMI included some data from the “inner” psychological sphere, as well as data on social, economic, and political relations within the community and between the community and various levels of the state. A set of indicators was developed to measure the extent to which an individual had actually engaged with the institutional environment (or opportunity structure) by seeking services from it or trying to change or contest it. The indicators comprised five dimensions: (1) knowledge and awareness of rights and procedures, (2) participation in local development services, (3) confidence and comfort level in accessing services and exercising rights, (4) social networks (economic and political), and (5) efforts to influence local government’ (Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006:198).

The following variables were used in constructing the opportunity structure index (Bennett and Gajural 2005):

<p><b>Knowledge and awareness of rights and procedures</b>            Understanding of police procedures            Understanding of court procedures            Knowledge of human rights codes            Knowledge of local services</p>	<p><b>Participation in local development services</b>            Seeking local services            Participation in programs of child’s school</p>
<p><b>Confidence and comfort level in accessing services and exercising rights</b>            Approaching the police            Approaching the courts            Approaching children’s school</p>	<p><b>Social networks (economic and political)</b>            Connections for getting a job for oneself            Ability to help others get a job            Connections at ward level            Connections to local service agencies as well as to village and district level services</p>
<p><b>Efforts to influence local government</b>            Suggestions or complaints at ward, village and district levels            Advice to school officials</p>	

Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland also explains that the Women’s Empowerment and Inclusion Index (WEI)

‘was designed to also take into account all barriers that are part of the opportunity structure (figure 11.2). The indicators for the WEI cover five dimensions: (1) domestic violence and intra-household behavior; (2) mobility and ability to travel to various destinations alone, and the need for permission; (3) control over fertility; (4) control over self-earned income; and (5) household decision making, (2006:201).

The following variables were used in the construction of the WEI (Bennett and Gajurel, 2005, quoted in Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006:198-201):

<b>Domestic violence and intra-household behavior</b> Experience and frequency of verbal or mental abuse Experience and frequency of physical abuse Treatment by husband initially and now	<b>Mobility and ability to travel</b> Ability to travel to various destinations alone, and the need for permission
<b>Control over fertility</b> Discuss family size with husband Discuss contraception with husband Use contraceptive method	<b>Control over self-earned income</b> Earns cash income Keeps money Decides how to spend
<b>Household decision making</b> Difference between male and female household member’s scores	

The following variables were used to construct a Social Inclusion Index (SII) (Bennett and Gajurel, 2005, quoted in Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006:198-201):

<b>Self-perceived status of own caste or ethnic group</b> Relative economic status and success of own group Relative contentment and comfort with social status of own group Respectful treatment Relative access to opportunity Cooperation from other groups Respect in the community	<b>Restricted access and public intimidation</b> Whether the respondent is restricted from entry into certain public areas (such as temples or people’s homes) or prevented from using public facilities (such as water taps) Whether the respondent faces verbal or physical intimidation, humiliation, or violence in public spaces such as the village or the nearest bazaar
<b>Effectiveness of local political influence</b> Result of complaints or suggestions they have made at ward, village, or DDC level	<b>Effectiveness in obtaining services and opportunities</b> Invited by agencies to participate Promptness of service Consulted for opinion Access to training opportunities

Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland (2006:36-37) also provide a series of very useful examples of indicators of empowerment in different policy sectors like justice, political

participation, public services delivery, production, consumption, labour relations and social interaction at different levels. These indicators can be supplemented with similar ones illustrating the different conceptual elements of empowerment as summarised above, in other policy sectors.

### **Conclusions**

The state of Public Administration and Management-related disciplines can and should be improved by the adoption of more rigorous research topic selections, designs and methods of data collection, analysis and assessment. There is a need to move beyond a pre-occupation with descriptive summaries of governmental outputs and the identification of policy ‘challenges’, to an evidence-based evaluation of the outcomes and impacts of governmental programmes in order to improve future policy decisions. Although development is a strategic priority for all governments, the developmental role of governments in lesser developed or transitional states is different from that of governments in more developed democratic states. This paper investigated what is needed to evaluate more systematically the impact that empowerment programmes might have within the practical constraints of the so-called developmental state.

The above conceptual framework of what empowerment implies and how to apply it to developmental programmes, also provide extremely useful practical measuring instruments to concretise developmental state empowerment processes, outputs and impacts. The adoption of these approaches and instruments to measure progress with social transformation can improve the quality of research in the disciplines of PAM in general and provide a foundation for the assessment of comparative international experiences.

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