

Contextualising Public Value Theory and its Measurement in Public Administration

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ABSTRACT

This article provides the contextualisation of public value theory and its measurement in Public Administration. It explores the various definitions of public value and how the public value theory has evolved over the past two decades. The article also proposes theoretical propositions that influence the provision and measurement of public value. With the acknowledgement that there is no widely accepted definition of public value, the views of various authors on what this concept entails and how to go about creating it are explored. The article focuses on the various frameworks to measure public value, including the contributions of Moore (1995), Meynhardt (2017) and Faulkner and Kaufman (2017) in terms of the most appropriate approach to measure public value as identified for this study. The methodology involves a critical desktop research in terms of a conceptual analysis of the various frameworks to measure public value to develop the most appropriate approach to measure public value.

INTRODUCTION

This article traces the origins of public value management, to its initial introduction by Moore (1995) as an alternative to New Public Management (NPM). While NPM focused on ensuring that government becomes more effective and resourceful, public value management underscores the value public managers must create for citizens through their work. Public value is a relatively recent approach, having

been first introduced as a Public Administration theory just over two decades ago. At its core it includes the needs of citizens as well as ensuring that the goods and services they receive from government are of value to them as individuals and as a community. Beyond the needs of citizens, public value also has significant implications for public managers who, Moore (1995:28) suggests, are tasked with the responsibility of creating public value. This article explores the development of public value and its emergence and relevance in public administration. With the acknowledgement that there is no widely accepted definition of public value, the views of various authors on what this concept entails and how to go about creating it are explored. The definition of public value relevant to this article is presented. The focus then turns to the various frameworks to measure public value, including the scorecards developed by Moore (1995), Meynhardt (2017) and the systematic review of literature on public value measurement of Faulkner and Kaufman (2017). Reflecting on the work by various authors, the most appropriate approach to measure public value is identified for this study.

EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC VALUE MANAGEMENT

Public value was originally created as a “management approach for the public sector” (Strathoff 2016:16). Public value theory was first introduced by Mark Moore in his seminal work *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Governance*, in which he suggests that “the aim of managerial work in the public sector is to create public value” (1995:28).

Moore introduced public value management as an alternative to NPM. According to Bozeman (2007 in Strathoff 2016:17), NPM “to some extent codified and prescribed governance approaches based on economic individualism and market mechanisms”. Drawing on the private sector management *modus operandi*, NPM focused on ensuring that government became more effective and resourceful as well as elevating the individual rather than the collective. Elements of the NPM approach included outsourcing by the public sector; considering the public as government’s customers; and the establishment of regulating processes to be utilised as key performance indicators (Strathoff 2016:17).

Public value is rooted in the concept of the public being the appropriate mediator of public value, emphasising the societal component in public management instead of economic individualism (Benington & Moore 2011:10; Strathoff 2016:17). The public value theory puts forward a public administration theory that is democratic, cooperative and underscores governance (Turlak & Turlak 2016:7). It places the onus on the public sector to broaden its focus and create values that stakeholders and the public require rather than merely ensuring efficiency (Gil-Garcia, Zhang & Puro-Cid 2016:527). While public value acknowledges public

administration's preoccupation with efficiency at the time, it also focuses on other principles such as objectivity, equality, democracy and justice (Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg 2015:5).

Collaboration and engagement emerge as an important aspect of public value management. At the very heart of public value management is the aspiration to attain public value and determine what it constitutes as a process that requires collaboration from public managers and eminent stakeholders. The public value management approach is concerned with understanding what the public considers of significance and as such, stakeholders form an important part of this approach. With this approach, a decision is considered to be legitimate only when the relevant stakeholders have had a say in it (Stoker 2006 in Herder 2017:4; Pyun & Gamassou 2018:252). Todurt and Tselentis (2015:77) also note the requirement for public value goals to be sanctioned by citizens through platforms such as ongoing discussions and negotiations. Turkel and Turkel (2016:3) argue that with democracy and citizens as its focal point, public value aims to meet objectives resourcefully by reaching out to citizens and ensuring communication among citizens, public managers and professionals.

CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC VALUE

Public value can be defined as “the value created by government through services, laws regulation and other actions” (Kelly, Mulgan & Muers 2002:4). It is a complex structure, which arises from a communal articulation. It cannot be achieved just by realising certain outcomes but through a course of action that produces fairness and trust (O’Flynn 2002 in Todurt & Tselentis 2015:75). Moore’s preferred definition of public value is the “managerial success in the public sector with initiating and re-shaping public sector enterprises in ways that increase their value to the public in both the short and long run” (1995:10). In fact, public managers, with the assistance of other role players, are viewed as pioneers, who set out to unearth, explain and ultimately create public value (Stoker 2006:42; Moore 1995:20).

While Moore concentrates on the role of public managers in relation to public value, Bozeman’s interest lies with the “policy or societal level and highlights the intersection of market success and failures with what he calls public value success and failures” (Bryson *et al.* 2015:6). It must be noted that Bozeman’s focus is on the public values of a nation and not individuals (2007:132). Public values are those which give rise to the ideal unanimity of:

- The privileges, gains and entitlements citizens should be permitted.
- The responsibilities citizens have to each other, the public and the state.
- The central beliefs which policies and the public sector should build on (Bozeman 2007:17).

Focusing on the democratic context, Kelly *et al.* (2002:4) state that in such a society, it is the citizenry who define public value. Pyun and Gamassou (2018:252) concur and posit that while public officials are instrumental in the creation of public value, it is the citizens who decide what it should constitute. This value that is decided upon is based on the inclinations of citizens which is then articulated in various ways and somewhat modified through the elected officials' pronouncements (Kelly *et al.* 2002:4).

Herder (2017:5) identifies the three elements of public value as effectiveness, quality and legitimacy. The author argues that with the public value management approach, public managers are tasked with developing systems and ensuring that the institution makes an impact. Furthermore, public managers must be accountable and engage with citizens, interested parties and elected representatives. Finally, while public officials have flexibility in executing their duties, they must do so according to the stipulations of the law, and in accordance with constitutional and democratic principles (Herder 2017:5).

CREATING PUBLIC VALUE

Moore (1995:71), established the notion of "strategy" in the public service to help assess what public value entails and how to go about creating it. This led to the strategic triangle which urges public managers in the Public Service to deliberate on three key ideas before embarking on a specific path. According to Moore (1995:71), the three elements that should be considered include:

- The significant public value the entity wants to create.
- The sources of legitimacy and support needed to give the entity the power to follow a particular path and supply the means to support value creation.
- The operational capabilities the entity would either look to or need to establish to deliver its goal.

These three elements are the requirements that must be met in order to produce public value (Moore 1995:71).

In his explanation of the strategic triangle, Omar (2015:29) states that the crafting of public value relates to the benefit the public institution intends to generate, through its targets and goals. Political sustainability and legitimacy is considered the basis for the mandate and means that the public institution relies on to deliver services. Operational capabilities are linked to the resources – human, technological and monetary – required for the public institution to function (Omar 2015:29). Strathoff (2016:20) postulates that Moore perceives the public managers' responsibilities to extend far beyond the administrative application of policies, encouraging them to become more involved and innovative, and ultimately produce value.

Prebble (2018:104) adds that Moore's theory of public value underscores the significance of participatory democracy and also focuses on the obligations linked to the use of public authority. In Turrel's (2017:1) view co-production is essential to create public value. Public managers, the clients they deliver services to and citizens are expected to work together to plan the provision of services and ensure it actually materialises. Public value allows for the consideration of relevant role players when decisions are taken by government (Pyun & Gamassou 2018:252).

Bryson *et al.* (2015:5) note the criticism levelled at Moore's theory of public value by Rhodes and Wanna (2007:408), who point out that it is "all things to all people" after being described as, *inter alia*, a concept, paradigm, story and model. Rhodes and Wanna further argue that Moore's theory gives much credence to the role of public managers, with limited consideration to elected officials and politics.

Moore's later works also mention the arbiters of public value, who determine how valuable a particular social outcome is when compared to another. The arbiters refer to people acting in their own interests, in collaboration with each other in the context of democratic processes, and the public as a whole (Prebble 2018:104). It is the latter concept – the public as a whole – that Prebble takes exception to. The author (2018:104) argues that the concept of the public as a whole can result in a misguided sense of certainty in knowing what the community considers to be of value. Simultaneously, it also suppresses the opportunity to discover how members of the public respond in relation to the exercise of public authority.

Taking a closer look at Bozeman's approach to public value, Bryson *et al.* (2015:6) argue that the approach infers that in a democratic context, public values are generally disputed and an agreement on these is seldom reached. In Bozeman's view, the failure of public values is the inability of either the markets or the state to deliver the goods and services essential to achieve public values. The author suggests a public value mapping model which includes general criteria, or a set of diagnostics, that could prove valuable when examining public value (Bozeman 2007:144). This model is aimed at detecting failure in relation to public value. "Public values failure occurs when core public values are not reflected in social relations, either in the market or in public policy" (Bozeman 2007:145). The criteria identified include mechanisms for values, imperfect public information, distribution of benefits, provider availability, time horizon, substitutability vs. conservation of resources, ensuring subsistence and human dignity.

In their analysis of public value, Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007:358–369) note 72 registered values that emerged (refer to appendix), which were examined thoroughly. Of these values, the authors identified seven constellations of public value. These constellations included:

- Values associated with public sector's contribution to society.
- Values associated with transformation of interests to decisions.

- Values associated with the relationship between the public administration and politicians.
- Values associated with the relationship between public administration and its environment.
- Values associated with intra-organisational aspects of public administration.
- Values associated with the behaviour of public-sector employees.
- Values associated with the relationship between public administration and the citizens.

While Jørgensen and Bozeman's constellations and registered values are extensive, these are summarised and mirrored in Kelly *et al.*'s. (2002:11) three categories of services, outcomes and trust, which will be discussed. The registered values do, however, become useful when measuring public value, which will be discussed later in this article. Kelly *et al.* (2002:4) place such credence on the creation of public value that the authors argue government's legitimacy is largely reliant on how successful it is in producing such value. The fundamental characteristics of public value can be classed in the three categories, according to the more prominent issues the public veers towards. These categories are services, outcomes and trust (Kelly *et al.* 2002:11). These categories can be described as the foundations of public value creation (Omar 2015:31).

With regard to the category of services, an issue that is essential to public value is citizens' satisfaction with the services provided by government (Kelly *et al.* 2002:11–12). The level of contentment with services is determined by a number of elements which Kelly *et al.* (2002:11–12) describe as:

- **Choice** – A variety of choices was found to raise the levels of satisfaction, even in instances where these choices had no significant effect on the quality of services.
- **Information** – A vital tool in efforts to strengthen interaction between citizens and the government services they receive. While information is not the sole determination of citizens' opinions of services, there is a link between the contentment with the provision and how knowledgeable the consumers are thereof.
- **Customer service** – Citizens place value on how they are treated by public officials.
- **Use of services and advocacy** – Citizens are more inclined to be satisfied with services that they have actually utilised rather than those they have only heard of. Furthermore, citizens tend to place more confidence in individuals who are in their vicinity rather than organisations. This suggests that advocacy by those who utilise services can be effective in raising the levels of satisfaction.

The category of services goes beyond citizens' satisfaction. It also incorporates the equitable delivery thereof as well as ensuring equality among the citizenry

(Yotawut 2018:172). In terms of the outcomes category, Kelly *et al.* (2002:15) note that in the eyes of citizens, outcomes are an important part of the interactions between themselves and government. Public health, the eradication of poverty, caring for the environment and peace and security are some of the outcomes citizens have been concerned with over the years (Kelly *et al.* 2002:15). The authors acknowledge that outcomes often intersect with services, citing the example of improved delivery offered by a school correlating to the outcome of a better educated society. However, Kelly *et al.* (2002:15) are quick to point out that services and outcomes are unique and should, therefore, be administered differently. The value in a better educated population extends beyond the quality of services offered by a particular school. Recently, governments have accentuated outcomes which are viewed as better targets. As a result, funding is now directly coupled with outcomes (Kelly *et al.* 2002:16).

An important factor for outcomes is that public value can be co-produced by public officials and citizens. In certain instances, the delivery of outcomes is not solely dependent on government (Kelly *et al.* 2002:16). For example, improved health care is not only reliant on the services offered by hospitals and clinics but also depends on the lifestyle of citizens and cannot be achieved if they shun exercise, follow poor diets and engage in reckless behaviour. Therefore, the role of the public is critical in producing the desired outcomes. Kelly *et al.* (2002:17) underscore that trust is at the core of the connection between government and citizens. The authors add confidence and legitimacy to the category of trust. Citizens place high value on trust which motivates them to contemplate participating in government actions (Kelly *et al.* 2002:17; Yotawut 2018:172). Trust is a critical issue when dealing with services that have a bearing on freedom and life, such as policing and health. However, it also has a bearing on most other services. Trust is such a critical component that a lack thereof has the potential to quash public value, even in instances where goals related to outcomes and services have been achieved (Kelly *et al.* 2002:17).

There are three principal arguments of what influences levels of legitimacy and trust, namely:

- Citizens' trust in government is moulded by common levels of public trust and the predisposition to place trust in organisations.
- Citizens' trust in government is fashioned by how efficiently it oversees the economy and provides services.
- Citizens' trust in government is influenced by the conduct of elected officials and the institutions they represent (Kelly *et al.* 2002:18).

Kelly *et al.* (2002:17) note that evidence suggests there is a multifaceted underlying connection between government performance and trust. Broader social shifts, service delivery, elected officials and their organisation's conduct, and

outcomes influence this relationship. Efforts to strengthen trust in any of these areas mentioned above could be impeded by changes in any of the other dimensions. Hence, for the purpose of this article, public value is defined as the value public officials create, in collaboration with citizens, through the services they help deliver, laws and their actions (Moore 1995; Kelly *et al.* 2002:4). This value is defined by citizens and key to its creation are three categories – services, outcomes, and trust (Kelly *et al.* 2002:11; Omar 2015:31).

MEASURING PUBLIC VALUE

While public managers are tasked with creating public value, as described by Moore, equally important is the need to analyse and measure the value created. According to Moore (1995:57), public managers are answerable for the value created by the institutions they belong to because these institutions utilise public resources to conduct their daily functions. Failure to justify the value created during the course of this work calls into question the legitimacy of the institution, and as a result, the public manager's leadership abilities (Moore 1995:57).

Moore points to three reasons, in particular, of the importance of measuring public value: These are: "to meet demands for external accountability; to establish a clear, significant mission and goal for the organization and to foster a strong sense of internal accountability" (Moore 2007:97).

Despite highlighting the significance of public managers being accountable for the public value created, Moore offers no clarity on how to measure public value in *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Governance*. The author suggests elements of the strategic triangle. However, Ćwiklicki (2016:21) highlights that these elements are not fully explained and are open to interpretation.

Faulkner and Kaufman (2017: 69) hold that there is no concrete method to measure the public value produced by an organisation. Mendel and Brudney (2014:33) suggest that public value "remains elusive, with little attention and some speculation". While there is no universal measure of public value, efforts have been made to develop methods to do so. This has resulted in the formulation of various frameworks aimed at encompassing public value.

Moore's public value scorecard

Almost 20 years after his seminal work, Moore suggests a scorecard to determine public value. Moore's public value scorecard is an adaptation of the management tool known as the Balanced Scorecard, which the author believes is inadequate for non-profit organisations (Moore 2013:106). Two key elements of Moore's scorecard is that it acknowledges the significance of decreasing costs in producing

value; and provides a means for government entities to track the outcomes, both envisioned and unforeseen, which emanate from their work (Moore 2013:48–53). Meynhardt *et al.* (2017:144), in their criticism of Moore's scorecard, argue that it is a repetition of the strategic triangle and its sole focus is on public sector and non-profit organisations predominately connected to a United States perspective.

Meynhardt's public value scorecard

Meynhardt's public value scorecard "focuses directly on de facto public value creation along the four theory-based basic public value dimensions: moral-ethical, hedonistic-aesthetic, utilitarian-instrumental, and political-social" (Meynhardt *et al.* 2017:144). In an attempt to appease management officials who would in all likelihood reject a framework that does not include a financial measure, Meynhardt integrates financial-economic, which is the fifth dimension, into the instrumental-utilitarian dimension (Meynhardt *et al.* 2017:144). Adopting a psychologically-based approach, in Meynhardt's view, the construction of public value is located in the association between an individual and society (Bryson *et al.* 2014:450). It originates in a person, comprises subjective assessments weighing up basic needs; is triggered and understood in emotional-motivational situations; and created and recreated in systems which are rich in experience. Meynhardt's approach does not consider the organisation's systems that play a role in the production of public value (Bryson *et al.* 2014:450).

Faulkner and Kaufman's systematic review

More recently, in an attempt to offer some clarity on how to measure public value, Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:69) set out to systematically review literature on public value measurement. Their qualitative synthesis of the themes evident in 19 studies measuring public value yielded four central elements, namely: outcome achievement, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality and efficiency. According to Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:69), "these four themes appear to present key dimensions essential for measuring public value". The authors suggest that the themes should be considered when research is conducted on public value measurement in the future.

The four themes identified by Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:81) "constitute public value across a broad array of national and policy constructs". Highlighting the significance of the themes, Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:77–81) assert that these phrases were utilised widely to illustrate elements of public value measurement and can also be applied to most public institutions. The authors argue that the four themes that emerged from their research revealed a group of common elements that could be of value to the majority of people (Faulkner & Kaufman

2017:81). Furthermore, the themes reflect the categories (services, outcomes and trust) introduced by Kelly *et al.* (2002:11) which are considered the sources of public value. It is for these reasons that this study relied on the four themes – outcome achievement, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality and efficiency – to measure public value.

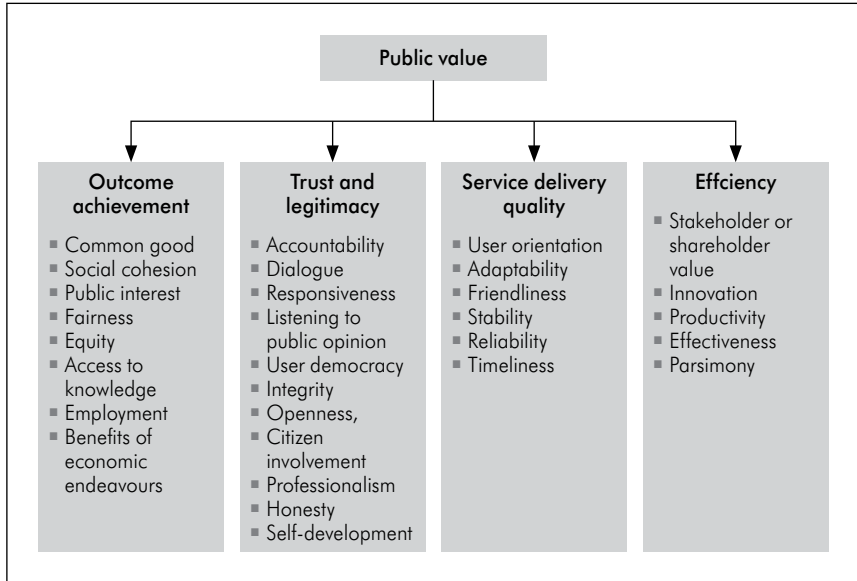
A further exploration of the themes revealed that outcome achievement is described as the degree to which the public sector develops the results valued by the public in a number of sectors. Omar (2015:63) relies on Jørgensen and Bozeman's public value inventories to identify common good, social cohesion, public interest, fairness and equity as factors which relate to outcome achievement. However, all the values listed above are specific to the achievement of social outcomes. Values relevant to economic outcomes, environmental outcomes and cultural outcomes include access to knowledge, employment and benefits of economic endeavours, and social capital/cohesion (Bozeman *et al.* 2015; Benington 2009; Benington 2011 in Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:77).

Trust and legitimacy is described as the degree to which citizens and other stakeholders consider a public organisation and its undertakings legitimate and truthful. This includes issues such as citizens' belief in an organisation, the faith they place in the services and programmes it provides and whether they believe service provision is taking place openly and equitably (Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:79). The 11 values identified from Jørgensen and Bozeman's public value inventories which have a bearing on citizens' trust in government include: accountability, dialogue, responsiveness, listening to public opinion, user democracy, integrity, openness, citizen involvement, professionalism, honesty and self-development (Omar 2015:55).

Service delivery quality is described as the extent to which the provision of services accommodates the needs of the recipient and takes place in the best way possible. Service delivery quality is at its highest when the recipients of the services are happy; they believe the services will make a difference in their lives; services can be acquired easily; and they have been consulted properly (Faulkner and Kaufman 2017:79). Jørgensen and Bozeman's public value inventory points towards the following values which play a role in the quality of service delivery: user orientation, adaptability, friendliness, stability, reliability and timeliness (Omar 2015:60).

Efficiency is described as the degree to which the public organisation achieves the best results for citizens with the limited resources it has to work with. Efficiency is considered to be at a high level when the institution delivers value for money; there is no unnecessary red tape that citizens have to navigate; and the services provided by the organisation are thought to dwarf the costs associated with the organisation (Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:79). In addition, issues of efficiency take into consideration whether the correct measures have been adhered to and

Figure 1: Public value measurement themes



Source: (Adapted from Faulkner and Kaufman 2017:77)

executed appropriately (Kelly *et al.* 2002:6). Stakeholder or shareholder value, innovation, productivity, effectiveness and parsimony are all values in Jørgensen and Bozeman’s public value inventory which has an effect on efficiency.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

While there is no universal measure of public value, efforts have been made to develop techniques to do so. This has resulted in various frameworks aimed to encompass public value measurement, including Moore’s and Meynhardt’s public value scorecards. Moore’s scorecard acknowledges the significance of lowering costs to produce value and also provides a means for government entities to track the outcomes, both envisioned and unforeseen, which arise from daily commitments at work (Moore 2013:48–53). However, both scorecards prove problematic. Moore’s public value scorecard has been described as a repetition of his strategic triangle while its sole focus is on public sector and non-profit organisations predominately connected to a United States perspective (Meynhardt *et al.* 2017:144). According to Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg (2014:450), Meynhardt’s approach does not consider the organisation’s systems that play a role in the production of public value.

Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:69) suggest four central elements that “appear to present key dimensions essential for measuring public value”. These include: outcome achievement, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality and efficiency. Outcome achievement is described as the degree to which the public sector develops results valued by the public in a number of sectors. Factors that relate to outcome achievement include: common good, social cohesion, public interest, fairness, equity, access to knowledge, employment and benefits of economic endeavours, and social capital (Omar 2015:63; Bozeman *et al.* 2015; Benington 2011 in Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:77).

Trust and legitimacy is described as the degree to which citizens and other stakeholders consider a public organisation and its undertakings legitimate and truthful (Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:79). The values that have a bearing on citizens’ trust in government include accountability, dialogue, responsiveness, listening to public opinion, user democracy, integrity, openness, citizen involvement, professionalism, honesty and self-development (Omar 2015:55). Service delivery quality is described as the extent to which the provision of services accommodates the needs of the recipient and takes place in the best way possible (Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:79). The following values play a role in the quality of service delivery: user orientation, adaptability, friendliness, stability, reliability and timeliness (Omar 2015:60). Efficiency is described as the degree to which the public organisation achieves the best results for citizens with the limited resources it has to work with (Faulkner & Kaufman 2017:79). Stakeholder or shareholder value, innovation, productivity, effectiveness and parsimony all have an effect on efficiency (Jørgensen & Bozeman 2007:358–369). Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:69) suggested that the four themes outlined above should be considered when research on public value measurement is conducted in the future. The authors argue that these phrases were utilised widely to illustrate elements of value measurement and can also be applied to most public institutions.

Public value theory has evolved with the advent of time since it was first introduced by Moore, with attempts made to better define and measure it. Despite this evolution, it is important to note that since its conception to date, the role of the public in public value has consistently been underscored. This public has been described in a number of ways over the years and in the modern era, public managers must also consider the digital public – those who use social media. As important as it is to create public value, equally important is the need to measure it. Faulkner and Kaufman (2017:69) suggest that research on public value measurement must consider outcome achievement, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality and efficiency. There are a number of values which are evident in each of these themes, as set out above. It is the four themes of outcome achievement, trust and legitimacy, service delivery quality and efficiency and the values significant to each that were considered throughout this study.

NOTE:

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