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CONCEPTUAL VIEW AND LEGAL REGULATION OF PROJECT-ORIENTED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE (2011-2020) AND FOREIGN PRACTICES

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Abstract

This research paper examines the conceptual and legal aspects of project-oriented public administration, focusing on the Russian experience and comparing it with practices from the USA, UK, and Malaysia from 2011 to 2020. The study aims to identify specific features of project-oriented public administration, provide a comparative analysis of methodologies for managing national projects, and formulate recommendations for improving legal mechanisms based on national experiences from both developed and developing states. The research highlights the formation and implementation of public administration aimed at realizing national projects, emphasizing the establishment of public and legal foundations for their implementation. Using a comparative case study approach, the study employs document analysis, secondary sources, and expert interviews to examine the legal frameworks, organizational structures, implementation challenges, and performance metrics of project management in the selected countries. The findings reveal significant differences in

the legal frameworks and implementation practices across the four countries, with Russia showing a fragmented legal framework primarily governed by federal laws and presidential decrees. In contrast, the UK and USA have more comprehensive legal frameworks with detailed regulations, and Malaysia's framework focuses on government-led initiatives with clear procedural regulations. The paper concludes by proposing recommendations for improving the legal and institutional frameworks for project-oriented public administration in Russia, including systematizing and consolidating its legal framework, improving coordination among government levels, investing in capacity building, and enhancing engagement with the private sector and civil society.

Keywords: *national project, public administration, legislation, project-oriented management, technical regulation, financial control, national development objectives*

1. Introduction

Since 2016, the public administration in Russia has begun the active implementation of the project management methodology in almost all areas – social, economic, and political (Mazina, Syzdykova, Myrzhikbayeva, Raikhanova, & Nurgaliyeva, 2022; Petrovskaya 2023). Project-oriented public administration aims to ensure the efficient and effective realization of national projects (Alidemaj & Haxhiu, 2022). Direct project management is used in various areas of the economy (the industrial sector, construction, agriculture, etc.) (Kassenova, Zhamiyeva, Zhildikbayeva, Doszhan, & Sadvakassova, 2020; Mastilović & Trlin, 2022; Ydyrys, Ibrayeva, Abugaliyeva, Zhaskairat, & Uvaliyeva, 2023).

As a rule, national standards on project management are identical to international standards and represent their professional translation into Russian (Vysotskaya, Repina, Bogacheva, & Kryanev, 2022). Consequently, Russia adheres to the general rules of project management (Polovchenko, 2021; Rybakov, Shichkin, Tolmachev, & Magomaeva, 2022). Thus, ISO 10006:2017 "Quality management – Guidelines for quality management in projects" (ISO 10006:2017, IDT) was translated into Russian by the Certification Association "Russian Register". Technical regulation by standardizing activities in project management has become the methodological basis of the legal mechanism for managing national projects (Goncharov, 2023). The existing project management methodology is being introduced into the public administration system of many countries (Polovchenko, 2023).

In particular, the UK adopted the project management method at the same time as Russia. Given its well-formed civil society and long-term interaction of public authorities with the business community, project management in the UK shows good results. In the USA, standardization of project management took place much earlier (Proyektnaya PRAKTIKA, 2021).

The scientific research and analysis of world experience demonstrate the effectiveness of project management in the public and private spheres due to the concentration and rational use of limited resources (financial, labor, managerial, etc.) and close interaction of participants in project management (vertical – at different levels of public administration; horizontal – inter- and intradepartmental interaction, as well as interaction with other project participants, i.e. business representatives, etc.) (El Khatib et al., 2023; Kumar, 2022). The International Project Management Association claims that project management allows reducing the amount of money spent by 5-20% and time by 20-30% (Kozhevnikov, 2020, p. 69).

The novelty of the article lies in the substantiation of the need to improve the legal management of national projects, proceeding from the fact that the project activity is innovative and should be based on international standards and certain procedural norms (Nuredini & Matoshi, 2021). The article considers the formation and implementation of public administration, whose objective is the realization of national projects. The article is relevant since it establishes public and legal foundations for the implementation of national projects.

The research subject is both conceptual and legal aspects of project-oriented public administration. The article aims at the identification of specific features of project-oriented public administration, comparative analysis of the methodology for managing national projects, and formulating recommendations for improving the legal mechanism considering the national experience of developed (USA, UK) and developing (Russia, Malaysia) states.

2. Methodology

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework presented by Janka and Kosieradzka (2019), which introduces a new approach to strategic project management in public administration. This framework emphasizes the standardization of project and program management methods within public administration, integrating these methods with government strategy through a unified model supported by IT systems. This approach has been used to analyze the project management methodologies in the USA, UK, Russia, and Malaysia, providing a structured basis for comparison.

Research Design

This study employs a comparative case study approach to analyze the project management methodologies in the USA, UK, Russia, and Malaysia. The research focuses on understanding the conceptual and legal aspects of project-oriented public administration in these countries. The comparative study design facilitates the identification of specific features of project-oriented public administration, differences and similarities in project management practices, and the formulation of recommendations for improving legal mechanisms based on national experiences.

The selection of the USA, UK, Russia, and Malaysia is based on their diverse approaches to project-oriented public administration and varying levels of development. The USA and UK represent developed countries with well-established project management practices. In contrast, Russia and Malaysia offer perspectives from countries where project management was implemented later, each with distinct approaches to project management in public administration.

The period under study is 2011-2020. In 2011, the first national standards were adopted and began to be implemented. By 2020, the initial results of these standards had emerged and could be evaluated.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a combination of:

- Document Analysis: Review of national and international legislation, policy documents, and strategic plans related to project management.
- Secondary Sources: Analysis of existing scientific publications and reports on project management practices and their outcomes in the public sector.
- Expert Interviews: Interviews with key stakeholders involved in project management in each country, including government officials, project managers, and academic experts.

Comparative Framework

The comparative analysis was structured around the following key indicators:

- Legal Frameworks: Examination of the legal regulations governing project management, including national standards and procedural norms.
- Organizational Structures: Analysis of the organizational setups for project management, including the roles of different governmental bodies and agencies.
- Implementation Challenges: Identification of common problems faced during the implementation of national projects.
- Performance Metrics: Evaluation of the success and efficiency of project management practices based on predefined performance metrics such as cost, time, and quality of project outcomes.

The study employed comparative analysis to examine the similarities and differences in project management practices and outcomes across the four countries. Additionally, theoretical frameworks, such as the concept of new management, are applied to interpret the findings and formulate recommendations. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the project management practices in the four countries, highlighting best practices and areas for improvement. The findings will

contribute to the development of more effective project management frameworks that can be adapted to various national contexts, promoting better governance and successful implementation of national projects.

3. Legal Landscape of Project-Oriented Public Management in Russia

Project management in Russia is governed by a comprehensive set of federal laws, governmental decrees, and technical standards. These legal instruments ensure a structured approach to planning, implementing, and monitoring projects within the public sector, with the integration of international standards further enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of project management practices.

The legal landscape of project-oriented public management in Russia is characterized by several key federal laws. Federal Law No. 172-FZ on Strategic Planning establishes principles and processes for strategic planning, including the development and implementation of national projects. This law outlines the responsibilities of various government bodies in formulating and executing strategic plans. Additionally, Federal Law No. 115-FZ on Concession Agreements regulates public-private partnership projects by defining terms and conditions for agreements between public authorities and private entities. Another crucial piece of legislation, Federal Law No. 44-FZ on the Contract System in Procurement, ensures transparency, competitiveness, and efficiency in the procurement processes for public projects, detailing procedures for tendering, contract awarding, and monitoring project execution.

Governmental decrees further enhance the legal framework. Initiatives such as the National Projects Initiative, driven by Presidential Decrees like the May Decrees, set ambitious targets for national development in sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and technology. The implementation of these projects is overseen by the Presidential Council for Strategic Development and National Projects. Additionally, Government Decree No. 1288-r on the Comprehensive Plan for Modernization and Expansion of Trunk Infrastructure provides specific guidelines for planning, funding, and managing infrastructure projects.

Technical standards play a significant role in ensuring effective project management. Over the last decade, national standards such as GOST R 54869-2011 ("Project Management. Requirements for Project Management"), GOST R 54870-2011 ("Project Management. Requirements for Projects Portfolio Management"), and GOST R 54871-2011 ("Project Management. Requirements for Program Management") have been adopted. These standards, approved and enforced by the Federal Agency on Technical Regulation and Metrology, define project management processes and competencies required for project managers in Russia.

The institutional framework supporting project-oriented public management includes the Ministry of Economic Development and the Federal Project Office. The Ministry of Economic Development coordinates and supervises the implementation of national projects, developing strategic plans

and monitoring their execution across various sectors. The Federal Project Office provides methodological guidance and monitors progress, working closely with regional and municipal authorities to align local projects with national priorities. The methodological recommendations developed by the Ministry of Economic Development in 2014, while not legally binding, have contributed to the effective implementation of project management in public administration. These recommendations highlight the differences between project-oriented and process-oriented management systems, emphasizing the unique results achieved through project-oriented approaches.

The legal landscape of project-oriented public management in Russia is defined by a robust framework of federal laws, governmental decrees, and technical standards. These instruments collectively ensure a structured and efficient approach to managing public sector projects, integrating international standards to enhance project management practices.

4. The concept and features of a project and project activity

To determine the conceptual specifics of project management, we need to understand the key concept of project activity. Following the recommendations of GOST R IEC 62198-2015. National standard of the Russian Federation. "Project management. Guidance on the application of risk management in the design" (approved and came into force by Decision of the Federal Agency on Technical Regulation and Metrology of November 20, 2015 No. 1910-st) (Rosstandart, 2015), we note that each project is connected with uncertainty and risk. However, Clause 3.1 represents the concept of a project in a different way: a project is "*a unique process* consisting of a set of coordinated and controlled activities, with start and finish dates, undertaken to achieve an objective conforming to specific requirements, including the constraints of time, cost, and resources.

Note 1 to entry: An individual project may form part of a larger project structure.

Note 2 to entry: In some projects, objectives are updated and product characteristics are defined progressively as the project proceeds.

Note 3 to entry: The project's product is generally defined in the project scope. It may be one or several units of products and may be tangible or intangible.

Note 4 to entry: The project's organization is normally temporary and established for the lifetime of the project.

Note 5 to entry: The complexity of the interactions among project activities is not necessarily related to the project size" (Rosstandart, 2015).

Based on the comparative analysis of the corresponding conceptual framework, we can conclude that the key concept of "project" is not sufficiently disclosed in project management in relation to the system of public administration.

While dwelling on labor relations, M.O. Pryazhennikov (2020) determined the five most important features of a project. We believe that projects are implemented "outside the current production and the main labor

function of employees" (p. 27). Consequently, we can emphasize the specifics of labor relations regarding the possibility of a conflict in case of the double subordination of project participants. Interpreting this conclusion for administrative and legal relations arising from the implementation of national projects, it is possible to experience a conflict in case of the double subordination of project participants.

Disclosing the essence of project activities contained in technical regulation, we need to supplement the characteristics provided by Pryazhennikov with at least another three essential features:

1) The presence of *a unique process* that includes a list of controlled and coordinated activities;

2) The possibility of improving project goals and adjusting results in the process of project implementation;

3) An institution implementing some project is created for the duration of such a project.

The legal aspects of implementing national projects occur from the moment of their planning in the strategic documents compiled by public authorities.

This means that project management should be based on certain procedural norms.

D.Yu. Dvinskikh noted the uncertainty of the external environment which can devalue the "absolute majority of planning and distribution technologies" integrated into modern management mechanisms. While describing the regulatory framework of the Russian strategic management, the scholar dwelled on the rigidity and inflexibility of its legislation that hinders the timely adoption of new strategically significant technologies into the state economy. He drew attention to the personnel shortage and insufficient qualifications of most developers and executors of strategic documents. There is also a lack of built-in mechanisms for assessing the potential feasibility of some strategies, including mechanisms for aligning interests with business structures that own labor resources. Dvinskikh referred to the experience of the USA, where most strategic initiatives are supported by the targeted financing of specific projects launched by representatives of business and science. Projects are implemented from the bottom up. Public authorities evaluate the given project and, if its significance for the socio-economic development of the USA is confirmed and there are sufficient resources and competencies for its implementation, they provide financing. Macro projects promoting the structural development of the economy and society are funded and implemented from top to bottom (Eichengreen, 2023).

5. The importance of applying a risk-based approach

An important factor in the sustainable implementation of national projects is the introduction and application of a mechanism for identifying, preventing, minimizing, and eliminating risks. Disruptions arising in the process of implementing programs of national projects must be urgently eliminated and even prevented. In practice, this does not work out based on the

experience of several federal bodies. The most systematic types of risks in public administration are classified in the works of V.G. Oliveira and G. Abib (2023) and A.A. Kiselev and R.V. Kolesov (2023).

We briefly note in this publication the main properties and types of risks in project management:

– are available in all spheres of public administration and sectors of the economy. Therefore, a multidimensional analysis of the occurrence of risks is important;

– it is necessary to distinguish between risks by scale and level of danger. There are guidelines for their graduation. They can also be recurring (economic and financial crises), predictable or, conversely, difficult to anticipate, situational (social tension, shortcomings in the health care system, education...), and force majeure (natural disasters, man-made emergencies, political conflicts (within and outside the state);

– it is important to classify risks within the scope of different branches of legislation (not only public but also private). There are difficulties and weaknesses in scientific research of risks from the point of view of a systematic understanding of risks and the mechanism of complex impact on their elimination.

To prevent risks in project management, they must be included and considered as a mandatory element of the preparation of national projects. Moreover, it is imperative to consider the contradictions between the interests and competence of public authorities and businesses. This requires administrative procedures for the relationship of public authorities within the system and with economic entities.

At all levels of project management, the introduction of a regime for analyzing and overcoming risks is a general recommendation for an indicator of the quality of activities of project management entities and, at the same time, responsibility if project management participants do not comply with their responsibilities.

Events of the end of 2019 in connection with the global economic crisis and the coronavirus epidemic have exacerbated the problems of all spheres of socioeconomic activity. Therefore, it is very important, within the framework of national projects, to provide for backup measures of an economic, social, and other nature.

6. The foreign experience of project-oriented public administration

While analyzing the implementation of project-oriented management in foreign countries, we drew attention to the OECD Recommendations on Digital Government Strategies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014) and compared digital government with e-government. Thus, E.V. Talapina revealed significant differences between digital government and e-government. If e-government activities are based on the use of information and communication technologies by government bodies for "good" governance, then the digital government uses modern digital technologies not only for its own needs but also to involve other participants

and regulators of the digital government infrastructure (citizens, their associations, and businesses) into the process. The scholar concluded that "digital government complies with the network approach in public administration" (Talapina, 2020, p. 25).

To analyze project-oriented management in foreign countries, we should consider the experience of the UK as a state that was the first to apply the project management methodology in its system of public administration. Initially, the Major Projects Authority (HM Government, 2021) was established in the country. On January 1, 2016, the Major Projects Authority was transformed into the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

In supporting and ensuring the implementation of priority projects, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority promotes four key principles:

- 1) Performance – taking responsibility through transparent performance measurement;
- 2) Ability – having the right people to manage projects properly;
- 3) Prioritization – the right prioritization to better align projects and resources and avoid reprogramming;
- 4) Inclusion – the alignment of development and implementation processes to set realistic goals, costs, and timetables.

In October 2018, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority published the first government functional standard for project preparation (HM Government, 2018). The standard is a reference document for all public authorities.

A typical feature is that the Infrastructure and Projects Authority actively studies and adopts the experience of project management in the private sector. While summarizing the best practices, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority claims that their principles should be considered.

The experience of the UK is very useful for states that introduce project management into their public administration. One should consider the development of civil and information society, the involvement of the business community in the state sector of the economy, and the development of public-private partnerships. However, its public and private sectors differ from those in Russia, i.e. they are much more interactive and subject to mutual influence.

Many South Asian countries have also adopted the project management methodology and, on its basis, developed a certain procedural sequence.

For example, Malaysia implementing the project management methodology established a special government structure PEMANDU (translated as "a driver") at the end of 2009 (Low, 2012). It manages the implementation of the government's political priorities under the immediate supervision of the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The project management conducted by the Government of Malaysia (Siti-Nabiha, Jeyaram, & Jalaludin, 2020) is represented in eight steps.

Step 1: outreach government sessions. The objective is to prioritize and develop industries to achieve this goal with due regard to budgetary constraints.

The strategic direction involves identifying and agreeing on priorities with all the key stakeholders of the private and public sectors.

Step 2: Labs and brainstorming sessions.

Laboratories are controlled environments of government, private sector, and civil society representatives who, over six to nine weeks, brainstorm goals to achieve specific results within a specific time frame. The process also encourages the exchange of solutions and best practices.

Step 3: open days are held to present the results of brainstorming to the general public and opposition.

Step 4: the publication of roadmaps for the Economic Transformation Programme and the Government Transformation Programme.

Step 5: setting KPI targets.

KPI Targets are agreed upon with the Ministries and they are assigned to each Minister. All Cabinet Ministers have two sets of KPIs. The first set is common KPIs that are cross-cutting across the entire Cabinet team; the second set of KPIs is unique to each Minister's portfolio. The first set of KPIs encourages teamwork and a collective sense of responsibility, whilst the second set provides direct accountability and responsibility to the Minister and their team. The KPIs are tracked and reported via an online reporting tool to the Minister weekly.

Step 6: implementation of the programs and regular wrap-up sessions, the purpose of which is the identification of problems and their elimination.

Step 7: the independent annual audit of the results obtained by checking ministerial reports on KPI implementation.

The Ministerial KPIs progress reports are reviewed and validated by an external audit firm on an annual basis.

Step 8: the publication of annual reports.

The experience of Malaysia proves that the implementation of project management requires a clear procedural regulation of each stage and its effectiveness is based on a close interaction between society and state.

7. Organizational and legal aspects of project-oriented management in the Russian Federation

When comparing the above-mentioned experience with the implementation of national project management in Russia, we need to consider the organizational and legal aspects of the system of project-oriented management.

National projects are strategic plans. This is indicated by their complexity, volume, duration, and planning. However, as the analysis of the strategic planning documents at the federal level shows, they do not fully reflect the key indicators of national projects or establish indicators that are incomparable with the indicators contained in the passports of national projects (Zaitsev, 2020, p. 214). For example, labor productivity can be calculated as a percentage by the cost method, in relation to the previous reporting period, or by other methods; multiple in relation to the indicator at the selected reference point, peculiar for some industries (for example, in ton-kilometers in the transport industry); in value terms – in thousands of rubles. The number of indicators also differs. Analysts note that the target and additional indicators of

national projects and their constituent federal projects are insufficient to characterize the degree of achievement of goals, and on certain issues, redundancy and duplication of indicators are noted. In the analytical materials of D. Zaitsev (2020), it is proved that such indicators are not associated with the socioeconomic effect of the implementation of national projects, and do not fully cover the goals.

A significant problem in the implementation of national projects, in our opinion, is the weakness of the central stage of their implementation. In Russia, well-developed passports of national projects have been approved, economic aspects have been thoroughly calculated, and budgetary allocations have been consistently distributed according to the stages of implementation of national projects. At the same time, there are no norms in the regulatory legal acts that regulate the implementation of measures envisaged by national projects and the distribution (redistribution) of functions and powers of public authorities in the course of the implementation of national projects. In the article by S.M. Zyryanov (2020), it is revealed that the main means of implementing national projects is targeted budget financing, which is not enough to obtain the planned results due to low executive discipline. In the studies of M.A. Lapina, N.F. Popova and A.V. Ostroushko (2021) and G.B. Kleiner and C.E. Shchepetova (2019), including joint ones with one of the authors of this publication, drew attention to the need to solve the problems of the intra-system organization of the apparatus of the relevant federal executive bodies and their interaction.

National projects are realized following resolutions issued by the main administrative body of a consultative nature – the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for Strategic Development and National Projects (President of the Russian Federation, 2018b).

The President of the Russian Federation is the Chairman of this Council. The functions of the Council are to consider, approve, make decisions, and set targets for federal and national projects. To implement the Council decisions, the head of state has the right to issue decrees and orders, as well as give guidelines and instructions.

The most significant role is assigned to the Presidium of the Council headed by the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation (President of the Russian Federation, 2020a).

After determining the national goals of the Russian development for the period up to 2024, contained in the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of May 7, 2018 No. 204 (President of the Russian Federation, 2018a), initially, 12 national projects were developed.

Today, national projects are realized based on the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of October 31, 2018 No. 1288 which defines the organization of project activities and contains the basic concepts (Government of the Russian Federation, 2018b).

A significant role is assigned to the digitalization of project management. Based on the state automated information system "Management", the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, the Federal Treasury, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass

Media of the Russian Federation, and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, together with the project office of the Government of the Russian Federation, were instructed to create a subsystem for analyzing the implementation of national projects. The same Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation planned to integrate and exchange data of the subsystem for managing national projects of the state-integrated information system for controlling public finances "Electronic Budget" with the state automated information system "Management" no later than September 30, 2021.

An important feature of the mechanism for implementing national projects is its consistency: the relationship between federal, regional, and municipal activities. For monitoring, the corresponding methodological guidelines and recommendations were developed (Presidium of the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for Strategic Development and Priority Projects, 2018; Government of the Russian Federation, 2018a).

To involve civil society in project activities, the autonomous non-profit organization "National Priorities" was established. It aims to raise the awareness of citizens about the possibilities and results of national projects (programs) and encourage their participation in national projects (programs) (Government of the Russian Federation, 2019).

At the federal level, specific requirements may be established for the implementation of national projects on the territory of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. An example is the management decision of the Government of the Russian Federation on the provision of interbudgetary transfers within the framework of the federal project "Comprehensive System for Management of Municipal Solid Waste" of the national project "Ecology" related to the need to get out of the unfavorable situation caused by the spread of coronavirus infection (Government of the Russian Federation, 2020).

These interbudgetary transfers can be provided subject to a set of conditions:

- transition to the organization of activities for the management of solid household waste by regional operators (the existence of an agreement and the establishment of a single tariff);
- determination of the amount of the planned revenue of the regional operator;
- availability of an approved territorial waste management scheme.

The second component of regulation is subsequent control in the form of assessing the results achieved through the implementation of the allocated funds:

- at least 90% of the population must receive the service;
- material support should be provided to all regional operators.

Thus, for the implementation of national projects, a kind of regulation model has been chosen, in accordance with which the governing body determines the key indicators characterizing the results of the implementation of national projects, establishes certain conditions for the provision of financial resources for solving problems and evaluates the achieved result of the

activities of the recipient of budget funds. The constituent entities of the Russian Federation are free to choose the means of achieving the established indicators and the distribution of functions and powers between the direct executors.

Summarizing the analysis of the current legislation governing the implementation of national projects, it can be argued that the legal and methodological foundations for managing national projects have been created, project management bodies have been formed, and their recommendations have been implemented by participants of project management since June 2016. Due to the digitalization of project management, it was possible to record financial costs for the implementation of national projects and their movement in the process of realizing such projects.

However, the planned results of national projects were not achieved. In 2019, the targets were not fulfilled and the implementation of national projects and state programs was disrupted due to untimely funding, as a result of which 148 billion rubles were not used at all.

Consequently, the mechanism for implementing national projects is not adjusted and it is necessary to identify the main causes of such failures that hinder the achievement of the goals typical of national projects.

Summing up the results of project management in 2019, the President of the Russian Federation held a meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects and determined the following four systemic problems:

1. **The human factor of civil servants.** There are proposals to adjust the project targets (Starostina, 2019).

2. **The ineffective interaction between the federal center and regions where the main array of tasks is solved and where funds are invested.** Constant contact between all levels of government and the provision of assistance by federal authorities to regional and municipal bodies are important.

3. **Inconsistent financing.** In 2019, 1.7 trillion rubles were allocated from the federal budget for the implementation of national projects, but their use was "irregular", with the largest amount of funding appointed at the end of the year. The introduction of an "electronic budget" failed to solve this problem.

The President said that the cash execution of national projects amounted to 74.8% at the end of November 2019, including the cash execution of the national project "Digital Economy" (27.3%) and the cash execution of the national project "Ecology" (39.8%) (Starostina, 2019).

4. **Low public awareness.** "Not always and not everywhere people see the results of the implementation of national projects, even where these results exist" (Starostina, 2019).

At the beginning of 2020, the Presidium of the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for Strategic Development and National Projects received a new structure. An important role was assigned to the curators of national projects, who should be personally responsible for the implementation of such projects.

In connection with the coronavirus pandemic and the impossibility of achieving the initial targets, the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of July 21, 2020, No. 474 "On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation through to 2030" (President of the Russian Federation, 2020b) adjusted these targets for national projects with due regard to the tasks set in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.

At various levels, projects are directly managed by project offices. At the federal level, they are created within ministries and departments.

The constituent entities of the Russian Federation implement more than 4,000 projects, which means about 50 projects in each constituent entity of the Russian Federation. The regional project office coordinates, monitors, and participates in the implementation of such projects.

According to the concept of project management, a project office should represent *a temporary organization* established for the implementation of a specific project. They are created as permanently operating organizations headed by an official with general knowledge and general skills in project management, regardless of the requirements for special competencies required for the implementation of specific projects. This system of project management is no different from the traditional management format based on the principle of centralized public administration.

The scientific article conducted by O.A. Petrina and M.E. Stadolin (2020) identified the main organizational problems of regional project offices:

- The ineffective interaction with federal executive authorities;
- A large number of orders and requests from federal executive authorities;
- The lack of resources for analysis;
- The insufficient synchronization of project activities with procurement procedures;
- The unregulated interaction of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and municipalities.

The modern conditions of national project management make the Russian Federation improve the system of external state financial control to avoid economic downturns and welfare deterioration. If there is no unified federal law regulating financial and control activities in Russia, experts note the weak interaction and coordination between legislative and executive public authorities exercising external state financial control. There have been cases when control and accounting bodies resisted external audits. Such factors reduce the effectiveness of any checks on the implementation of national projects.

The above-mentioned problems can be solved through the adoption of the Federal Law "On the System of State Financial Control in the Russian Federation" which will formulate one concept of state financial control, form a clear methodology for exercising such control in the country (Berkovich & Shurygin, 2021), and propose a unified method for exercising state financial control in the context of national projects.

A significant direction of improving state financial control over project financing is the development of methods and tools for a strategic audit (a strategic audit is understood as a special type of state financial control aimed at establishing the compliance of budget allocations with the achievement of strategic goals, as well as a management tool that allows to evaluate and adjust the strategic decisions made). In recent years, supreme audit institutions of many countries have started to use the methodology and mechanism of strategic audit. This type of audit includes the study of how efficiently the budget funds were used to prevent losses; the effectiveness of the results achieved; and the impact made in terms of achieving the ultimate goals and developing the economic and social sphere.

A systemic problem is the emergence of indicators that should lay the basis for summing up the results of national projects after the deadline for preparing reports, which can distort data on achieving national goals and make it impossible to promptly respond to such deviations. Overcoming the information deficit by developing a digital infrastructure for carrying out control, expert, and analytical activities will optimize labor costs and increase operational efficiency.

Public expert councils formed in the structure of the management of national projects are collegial bodies, the composition of which is determined by the curators of national projects or project committees as advised by the project managers. The council includes independent representatives of expert industry communities, public and business associations, and other organizations, the possibility of including representatives of other groups of citizens in the councils is envisaged, but the technical feasibility of implementing this provision seems difficult.

The functions of public expert councils correspond to the form of such temporary bodies and consist of conducting expert assessments in determining the goals and indicators of national and federal projects (target and additional indicators), preparing conclusions on the passport of the national project and proposals for improving the efficiency of the implementation of national projects. Public expert councils are involved in monitoring and control activities, assessing the results of national projects, etc.

This allows considering public expert councils as an element of public control. The development of the institutional and legal framework for the participation of civil society in solving social and economic problems has not yet been completed.

The powers of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation in accordance with Article 9 of the Federal Law No. 41-FZ of 5 April 2013 "On the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation" (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2013a) include the audit of state programs of the Russian Federation, federal innovative projects of a high-risk nature, state and international investment projects.

The Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, being the supreme body of governmental audit and exercising external state control, routinely implements expert and analytical activities and reports which are published in

the Biulleten Schetnoi palaty Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Bulletin of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation) (Izotova, 2020).

The subject of the expert-analytical event is the activities of participants, executors, and co-executors of national projects. In the course of the study, the documents of the national project (project passports, monitoring results, additional materials), regulatory legal acts, methodological recommendations, financial documentation, and budgetary allocations adopted for the implementation of national projects are examined.

The objectives of the expert and analytical event are to assess the materials and documents that are to be examined, the progress of national projects, actual results, and expected results and identify the risks of implementing national projects.

Expert and analytical measures allow identifying the following, for example, violations:

- in the regulatory legal acts adopted for the implementation of the national project on the provision of grants in the form of subsidies under federal programs, the conditions for procurement by the recipients of grants are not defined. At the same time, such conditions must be determined in accordance with Federal Law No. 44-FZ of 5 April 2013 "On the contract system in state and municipal procurement of goods, works and services" (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2013b);

- purchases are carried out mainly from a single supplier, and the concluded contracts are not entered in the register of contracts, while this is provided for by Article 4.1 of Federal Law No. 233-FZ, as a result, the transparency of procurement is reduced;

- the requirements of Article 4 of the Federal Law No. 8-FZ of 9 February 2009 "On Ensuring Access to Information on the Activities of State Bodies and Local Self-government Bodies" (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2009) are not met;

- the requirements of the project committee on the inclusion in the implementation plan of the national project of measures for information support of its implementation are not met;

- a management system is not being formed to ensure interdepartmental coordination of the activities of the participants in the national project;

- the passport of the national project does not fully reflect the objectives and provisions of strategic planning documents;

- the target indicators of the national project are not fully consistent with the indicators established by the strategic planning documents;

- the methods for calculating the indicators of national projects differ from the approved, tested, and traditionally used methods;

- the targets and additional indicators specified in the reporting documentation do not allow for an objective assessment of the achievement of the goals of the national project, etc.

Violations and shortcomings of this kind indicate the negligence of compliance with the requirements of the law, primarily by the federal executive authorities, as well as by the subjects involved in the placement of state orders,

and the distribution of grants and subsidies on a competitive basis. Identification and timely elimination of such shortcomings is the task of intradepartmental control, the weakness of which is demonstrated in reports on the results of expert and analytical activities.

The control and accounting bodies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and municipalities carry out control over the execution of the relevant budget, examination of draft laws on budgets and extra-budgetary funds, external audits of annual reports on budget execution; control over the legality, efficiency, and economy of the use of budgetary funds, over the effectiveness of the provision of tax incentives, etc.

An important aspect of external state financial control is standardization. Currently, a unified system of national standards for state financial control bodies is being formed based on international standards and recommendations.

Thus, the Moscow Declaration was adopted at the 23rd Congress of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (an international organization uniting the supreme bodies of state audit from 194 UN member states) held in September 2019. One of the key points of this declaration is to call on supreme audit institutions to assume the role of *strategic facilitators* in government processes that contribute to the achievement of national goals. For the needs of the further development of the strategic approach to public auditing, it implies among others: "(1) conducting audits in a coordinated manner and linked to the assessment of government's ability to achieve its goals; (2) assessment of the systems' maturity that pinpoints strategic governance – setting objectives, aligning strategies to national goals, and providing feedback and proper controls" (Moskovskaya deklaratsiya, 2019).

8. Conclusions and recommendations

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the conceptual and legal aspects of project-oriented public administration in the USA, UK, Russia, and Malaysia. By comparing these countries, several similarities and fundamental differences in project management practices have been identified. All four countries adhere to international standards in project management, ensuring a structured approach to planning, implementation, and monitoring of national projects. Each country emphasizes strategic planning as a core component of project management, integrating national goals into the project frameworks. Established institutional frameworks coordinate and oversee the implementation of national projects, such as the Presidential Council in Russia, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority in the UK, and PEMANDU in Malaysia. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a significant role in the project management practices of these countries, leveraging private sector efficiency and innovation to achieve public sector goals.

However, the legal frameworks and implementation challenges vary significantly across the countries. In Russia, the legal framework is fragmented and primarily governed by federal laws and presidential decrees, with significant reliance on technical standards such as GOST. In contrast, the UK

and USA have more comprehensive legal frameworks, with detailed regulations that cover various aspects of project management, including specific guidelines for PPPs and procurement. Malaysia's legal framework, influenced by its developmental state model, focuses heavily on government-led initiatives with clear procedural regulations. Russia faces challenges related to bureaucratic rigidity and insufficient coordination among various government levels, leading to delays and inefficiencies in project implementation. The UK and USA, with their well-developed civil societies and mature institutional frameworks, manage to achieve better coordination and efficiency but still face challenges related to funding and resource allocation. Malaysia's project management is characterized by strong government oversight and a clear procedural framework, but it also deals with issues related to capacity building and stakeholder engagement.

Institutional conditions for the application of the project approach also differ. In Russia, project management is heavily centralized, with the federal government playing a dominant role, which sometimes leads to delays due to bureaucratic processes. The UK's approach is more decentralized, involving local authorities and the private sector extensively in the project management process. The USA combines federal oversight with significant input from state and local governments, promoting a bottom-up approach to project implementation. Malaysia's project management is characterized by a top-down approach with direct oversight from the Prime Minister's Office, ensuring strict adherence to national development priorities.

Based on the comparative analysis, several recommendations are proposed to improve the legal and institutional frameworks for project-oriented public administration. Russia should aim to systematize and consolidate its legal framework for project management, integrating comprehensive guidelines that cover all aspects of project implementation and oversight. Improving coordination between federal, regional, and local authorities is crucial, and decentralizing some project management responsibilities could enhance efficiency and responsiveness. Investing in capacity building for public administrators and project managers is essential to address the skills gap and improve project outcomes. Enhancing engagement with the private sector and civil society can provide valuable insights and foster a more collaborative approach to project management. Implementing robust risk management frameworks to identify, mitigate, and manage risks effectively across all stages of project implementation is also necessary.

In conclusion, while there are similarities in the project management practices of the USA, UK, Russia, and Malaysia, each country's unique legal and institutional contexts shape their approaches and outcomes. By learning from these diverse experiences, countries can adopt best practices and tailor them to their specific needs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of project-oriented public administration.

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