



# The New Model of Swiss Public Management

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s, the need for academic research and teaching in public administration was fully recognized in Switzerland. The response was the creation of the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) in 1981, interestingly, by the same visionary, Enrico Bignami, who had created a similar institution (the IMEDE, today the International Institute for Management Development or IMD) for the needs of private industry—a sector in which Bignami worked as CEO of Nestlé (Marion 2004).

New public management (NPM) emerged in Switzerland, as in many other countries, in the 1990s. One could even say that Switzerland is one of the main loci, at local, cantonal and federal levels, for experimenting with the many managerial approaches it has inspired (Steiner et al. 2014). The management of Swiss public organizations has evolved considerably under the influence of these new approaches, though not all of these evolutions have been successful (Emery and Giauque 2008).

In 2017, the Swiss Confederation introduced a new management model (known as NMG) to better manage the federal administration and “increase transparency and facilitate steering at all levels” (FFA 2017).

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The goal is to apply this model to all administrative units at the federal level. It is worth exploring this model better, to understand how it is applied in practice, and to consider whether it can inspire new ways of managing not just at the national but also at the cantonal and local levels, much as when NPM was introduced (and when it seemed ubiquitous). Will the NMG become the “Swiss way of management” in the public sector, to borrow the title of a well-known book about the Swiss private sector (Bergmann 2000)?

To answer this question, we first look at the history of NPM-inspired approaches adopted by the federal government, in particular the GMEB (in German, FLAG) model, a precursor to the NMG. We then describe the peculiarities of the NMG, and in what manner it is “new” compared with other Swiss and foreign approaches. Finally, we examine the case of the Federal Office of Topography, known as *swisstopo*, an office which was both a pioneer in adopting the GMEB model and one of the first to use the new NMG mode.

## 9.2 THE GMEB MODEL AND NPM-INSPIRED APPROACHES

The first applications (and proliferation) of NPM approaches took place in Switzerland at the local and cantonal levels (e.g., see Delley 1994 or Schedler 1995). In 1997, meaning soon thereafter, the Swiss federal government launched the GMEB, the Management by Performance Mandate and Global Budget program. Its focus was on measurable performance in the federal administration, and on results. After a pilot phase, the GMEB was introduced in about 20 administrative units by 2002 (see FFA 2006 for a program overview and list of the units which used this program at the time).

In 2009, the federal government published a generally positive evaluation of this large-scale experiment. This accorded with commitments made to Parliament during the institutionalization of the model, in turn part of the 2004 revision of LOGA, the Government and Administration Organization Act (in German, RVOG) and the LFC, the Federal Finance Act (in German, FHG). Twelve years later, about one-third of the units in the federal administration were using GMEB, including the Federal Office of Sports, the Federal Roads Office, and *swisstopo*, the Federal Office of Topography. A total of 23 units used GMEB, about one-sixth of the federal administration and accounting for 30% of its expenditures.

GMEB is based on having each administrative unit involved develop a performance mandate specifying the objectives to be achieved by that unit in the coming years, together with the criteria for attaining those objectives. After the Federal Council and Parliament approve the strategic objectives, the performance objectives and the budget, the mandate is entrusted to the administrative unit. It is to be carried out operationally in the form of an annual performance agreement or a service-level agreement.

Figure 9.1 illustrates how the GMEB model is operationalized. It is inspired by the Schedler model (Schedler and Eicher 2013: 380) which summarizes a series of NPM approaches used in Switzerland. It combines political and administrative management by converting political and strategic objectives into administrative objectives geared to the provision of benefits.

This model allows the department to which an administrative unit belongs, and its head (one of the seven Swiss cabinet members who form the Federal Council, the federal executive), to regularly receive the information needed for judging the extent to which stated objectives have been achieved. If necessary, the department can correct the unit's performance. At the end of the mandate, usually after four years, the department reviews the mandate and objectives, together with the administrative unit. Swiss cabinet members in fact are formally the administrative heads of the ten or so units in the department they are responsible for.

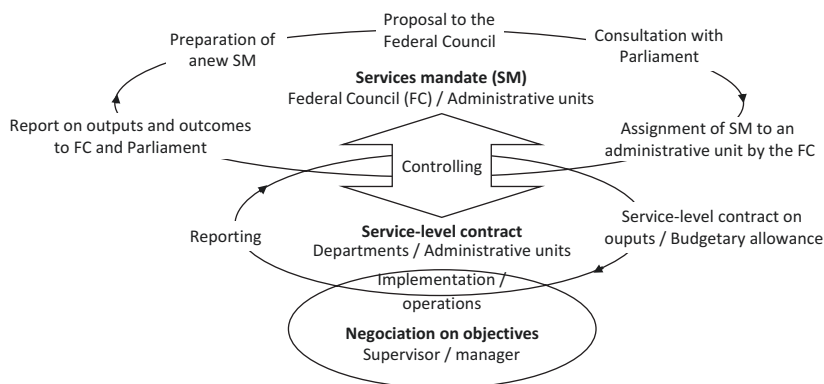


Fig. 9.1 The GMEB model. (Source: [www.flag.admin.ch/f/themen/1-3-1modell.php](http://www.flag.admin.ch/f/themen/1-3-1modell.php))

The transformation of political into administrative rationality which the GMEB (Fig. 9.1) provided nevertheless reached its limits when it came to performance. The GMEB did not go so far as to evaluate the results achieved; we will examine how well the NMG, in place since 2017 (and presented below), is tackling this task.

According to the GMEB website, the following four principles were put into practice ([www.flag.admin.ch/e/themen/1-1-4entstehung.php](http://www.flag.admin.ch/e/themen/1-1-4entstehung.php)):

- Separating strategic management from operational management; implementing management tools;
- Transforming resource-based (input) into service-based (output) management;
- Transforming administrative units into service centers which assume greater responsibility for results (they benefit from greater autonomy in their operations);
- Introducing elements of marketplace competition.

A self-assessment conducted in 2009 by the Federal Council (2009: 7152) concluded that units in which the GMEB had been introduced were satisfied and did not want to return to the earlier model. The GMEB allowed them to have a more integrated planning with respect to available resources and tasks, allowing the relevant bodies to carry out controlling.<sup>1</sup> The departments responsible for the administrative units were also satisfied and found the GMEB facilitated political management. A new accounting system for the federal government was introduced the same year. The departments found “there was still significant room for improvement” in linking GMEB managed using the new accounting system.

A substantial majority of parliamentarians were also satisfied, though some (Rey 2005) found the GMEB “strengthens the position of the Federal Council and the national administration at the expense of the sovereignty of Parliament over the budget”. To better control expenses, the parliamentar-

<sup>1</sup>According to the Glossary of Terms of Evaluation issued by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) in 2005 (page 5), “Controlling is a central management task which is intended to provide a solid basis of information to assist in decision-making. It guides the entire planning process and management of an organization. It includes the selection, collection, analysis and interpretation of data relevant to the goals and objectives of the organization as well as the procedures put in place to achieve these ends. The analysis takes into account the quantitative and qualitative indicators defined to measure the achievement of the different sets of objectives. ‘Controlling’ in Switzerland is taken as synonymous with ‘performance management’”.

ians insisted that the principles of annuity and of specialty<sup>2</sup> in the budget lines should be strictly respected. The socialist group in parliament, however, proposed intensifying the use of the GMEB model, in particular to better take into account outcomes expected beyond the outputs themselves. The self-assessment (Federal Council 2009) noted in particular that, beyond cost efficiency, efficacy and economizing/economy in the federal administration were better taken into account, thanks to the GMEB:

Setting targets based on efficiency models has a motivating effect on employees because it allows them to better measure the importance of their contribution to their office's performance. Developing an orientation towards results and objectives is an ongoing task in managing staff and administering, beyond the GMEB model:

- Relevance or economy: employees in GMEB units felt they were more aware of costs than those in non-GMEB units. However, a review of resource use showed no significant differences between the units. This is why more attention needs to be paid to the specific indicators used to assess the relevance of objectives;
- Global budget: the flexibility administrative units have in operational management is one of the major advantages of the GMEB. This room for maneuver is a result of the principle of a global budget itself, as it encourages administrative units to perform their tasks in a cost-efficient manner. A global budget, however, can only fully deploy its effects when it is combined with indicators one can measure.

In this quote, and in the GMEB approach, we find the well-known trio of efficiency, efficacy and economy, the “triangle of management control” (DIRE 2002) which link objectives, resources (or inputs) and services (or outputs, achievements) (see Fig. 9.2).

The GMEB reflects a general trend observed in integrated models of public management at the turn of the century; they link these three peaks/vertices of the management control triangle. Service-oriented and output-oriented models are now widely used in Swiss cantonal administration (*wirkungsorientierte Verwaltung* in German), and they are used abroad. They are very similar to management models in the private sector, except

<sup>2</sup>“Budgetary specialty” is one of the main public finance principles (along with annuity, unity, universality and sincerity). It consists of ensuring that each budget line item has a clear purpose; the executive or the administration cannot modify it without legislative approval.

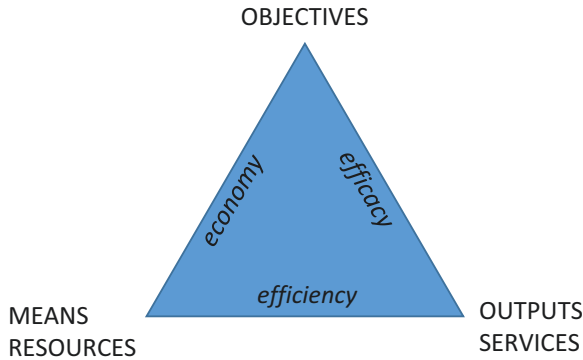


Fig. 9.2 The triangle of performance control

that in private companies, managers do not have to share responsibility with executives and legislators, or even with citizens (see the “Public Management Tetrahedron” (Chappelet 2013) which links the four sides of this solid to the four main stakeholders of public management: public managers, executives, MPs, citizens).

The GMEB five main characteristics can be summarized as follows:

- An orientation toward the tasks and services to be performed in an efficacious manner by the administration
- The coordination of tasks and means or resources (through budgets)
- Global budgets to give more autonomy and responsibility to administrative units in carrying out their objectives-based tasks
- The assignment of performance mandates by the administration
- Performance measurement through management control and evaluation

Following the self-assessment of the GMEB in 2009, Parliament agreed with the Federal Council in 2010 that the GMEB model should be used in the entire federal administration. It would be recast as a new model more focused on results and performance, and be better linked to globally allocated financial means or resources. “From this perspective, planning and reporting will be redefined from the ground up to conform to an integrated, results-based approach. Financial means (resources) and performance will be brought together in a visible manner, with global appro-

priations for the particular domain of the administration. The political leadership will focus more on medium-term objectives; the annual budget will remain the decisive financial benchmark” (Federal Council 2013a).

### 9.3 THE NEW NMG MODEL

Following the introduction of a new model for accounting at the national level, it was felt necessary to improve budgetary management by reorienting it not just to deliver services and assess efficiency and efficacy but to provide services or benefits according to the political objectives to be achieved. In other words, the idea was to engage in performance-oriented budgeting (and auditing) in the manner increasingly practiced in private companies. This approach, called the new management model for the Federal Administration (in French NMG and in German, *Neues Führungsmodell für die Bundesverwaltung* or NFB), was introduced in 2017.

It is based on the GMEB and augments the scope of the performance contract and of the traditional budget by adding a PITF, an Integrated Task and Financing Plan. This is a new way of presenting the budget of a given unit according to groups of services that the administrative unit provides or produces, along with a global budget for each group of services. It also states the political objectives to be achieved, as well as the indicators and target values for the next four years. A department and the administrative units that comprise it then agree on a performance contract. This contract sets out the operational objectives for projects, defines the groups of services to be provided or produced (in principal, from one to maximum of five), and these are accompanied by two global budgets, one for outlays, the other for income.

In other words, the strategic/political aspect of the services provided is included in the budget through a PITF—which allows for better control by Parliament—while the operational aspect is included in the annual performance contract agreed upon between a given unit and its department—which allows for better control by the (political) head of the department. Under the GMEB, the performance mandate combined information about political and operational steering; the NMG separates them better.

The NMG approach is based on five documents or instruments (Federal Council 2013b):

- At the beginning of a parliamentary term, the Federal Council sets priorities for the next decade or so. In light of this proposed political program, the legislature, which is elected for a five-year term, establishes a financial plan, paying particular attention to the foreseeable budgetary expenditures in doing so.
- The annual federal budget includes a PITF for each administrative unit. It describes the ongoing multi-year projects, along with their objectives and target values, and identifies the groups which will benefit. This document is submitted to Parliament, which may amend it following to the rules given in the Parliament Act or in the Finance Act.
- A performance contract is drawn up for each administrative unit. It is the result of the agreement reached annually between the head of the department (who sets policy) and the head of the unit (who lays out the administrative guidelines). It also establishes the annual objectives to achieve relative to the service groups, and it discusses the projects mentioned in the PITF.
- Global budgets and the rules which make it possible to build reserves and/or transfer credits from one group which benefits to another (as in the GMEB).
- An analysis of accounting practices in the federal administration to ensure that the costs of the services are known; this makes it possible to control expenditures.

Figure 9.3 summarizes the relationship between these different NMG management and planning instruments (FFA 2017: 2). The NMG insists that operational tasks be politically steered through the annual budgetary process.

As a basis, the NMG needs a catalog of the services provided by all administrative units. The achievements can be described on the basis of quantity, quality, timeliness, cost, or how satisfied the recipients of a service are. Each administrative unit should identify one to five groups it serves; the federal administration thus will have about 140 such groups in all. This level of detail is to ensure that political actors will not get lost in too long lists of articles and services, and to ensure that administrative managers can still recognize their activities and effectively implement the directives of the political actors. (Federal Council 2013b)



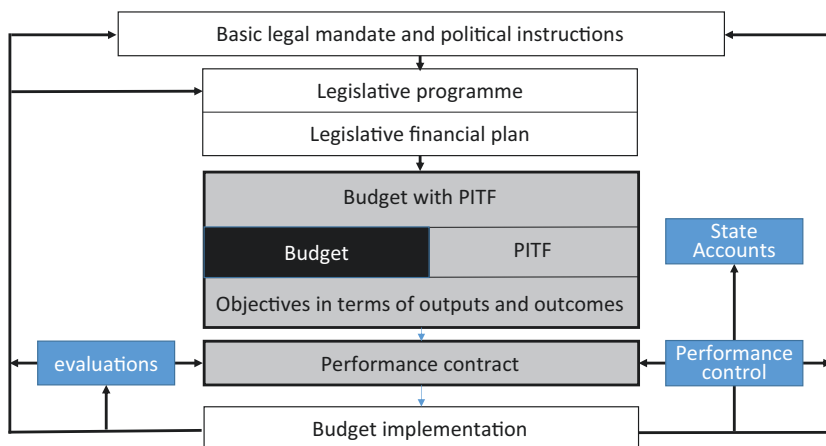


Fig. 9.3 Relationship between NMG management and planning instruments

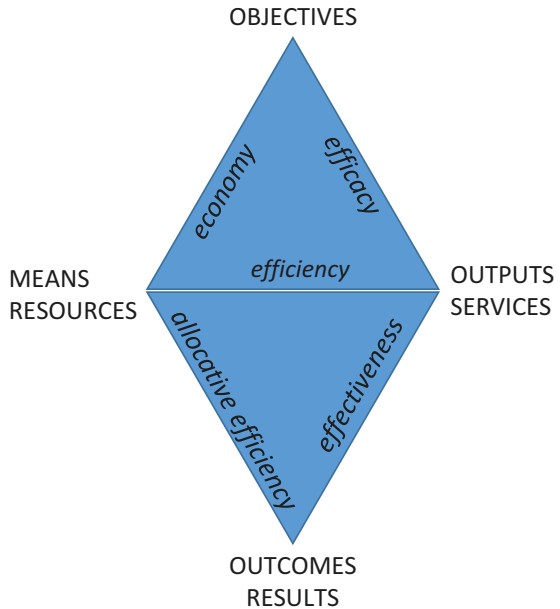
Introducing the NMG was an objective of the legislative session of 2011–15. To facilitate its implementation in 2016–17, the Federal Finance Administration (FFA) made online training available, based on what was learned from introducing PITFs or global budgets at the cantonal level in the Aargau, Bern, Graubünden, Lucerne, Solothurn, Zug and Zurich.

The NMG model should make it possible to abandon the running of two systems in parallel (the new GMEB in 20 units and the old/traditional system in all the other units) and create an identical, homogeneous management model throughout the federal administration. It should improve the units' room for maneuver and improve transparency. In terms of savings, under certain conditions, the units will be authorized to accumulate financial reserves, as in the GMEB model. Ultimately, this will be a shift from a management culture based on resources (e.g., GMEB) to a culture based on goals and results (e.g., NMG).

This evolution can be schematically represented by a “performance diamond” (see Fig. 9.4) where two new dimensions of performance appear: effectiveness and allocative efficiency.

Effectiveness, which is to say the relationship between services and outcomes, measures the real effects, or the results a public policy actually has on the societal problem to be solved (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 17). Allocative efficiency, which is to say the ratio between inputs and outcomes (Knoepfel et al. 2006: 256), is about optimally allocating means or

**Fig. 9.4** The public performance diamond



resources to obtain desired results. Efficiency (sometimes called “technical efficiency” or “productive efficiency”), by contrast, focuses on the unit cost of services (if possible, kept as low as possible). The diamond represents the two dimensions of public performance: output management (top triangle) and outcome management (bottom triangle).

The NMG model is the apex of a number of reforms (NGP, NPM) introduced at the federal level since the late 1990s to better monitor administrative objectives, performance and outcomes. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, and after LOGA was adopted in 2004, the GMEB model was a first step in this direction, tried in a few federal units.

Other changes were also taking place at about the same time. A “debt brake”<sup>3</sup> was enacted. A new model of accounting introduced in 2009 transformed the management of the federal budget management. IT management, as part of an evolving technology, has also been profoundly

<sup>3</sup>The debt brake is a budgetary device intended to guarantee balanced accounts over a complete business cycle. Adopted in 2000 in Switzerland at the national level and implemented as of 2003, it serves as a model for Germany as of 2009. It aims to curb the growth in debt as well as curb structural budget deficits.

changed. Finally, by abolishing the status of federal civil servant and introducing salary elements related to benefits, the formal status of federal employees has also been altered (see the chapter by Yves Emery).

The efficiency and efficacy objectives highlighted in GMEB have also been pursued through reforms such as clearly separating federal from cantonal tasks, or by transferring federal tasks to private sector companies or more autonomous para-public agencies. The result-oriented NMG model should allow greater progress to be made in managing the federal “household”. Since 1999, Art. 170 of the Swiss Constitution has called on the Parliament “to ensure that federal measures are evaluated with regard to their effectiveness”.

#### 9.4 THE CASE OF SWISSTOPO

The Swiss Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo) is responsible for the description, representation and long-term availability of spatial geodata, including national maps, altitude and landscape models, satellite images and orthophotos<sup>4</sup> of the Swiss territory. Swisstopo is a unit (office) of the Federal Department of Defense, Population Protection and Sports (DDPS). It was selected as a pilot project office for trying out the GMEB model when it was first launched in 1997. In 2017, it was also one of the first federal offices to use NMG.

As compared to the GMEB, the application of the NMG in swisstopo introduces new elements. It comments on contextual factors and the results to be achieved globally (e.g., to guarantee the provision of Swiss geodata), provides indicators with deadlines, has a section on the strategy and important projects conducted by swisstopo and provides a new level of detail about services, staff and IT. The part of the 2018 Swiss national budget relevant to swisstopo, which includes a PITF, begins with a list of current projects. It then provides an “overview of the profit and loss statement and of the investment account (including benefit entitlements)” for 2016 and 2017, together with the budget for 2018 and financial plan projections for 2019–21, accompanied by a commentary (FFA [n.d.](#)). Swisstopo sells various services and thus has significant income (more than 23 million CHF in 2017, with costs of nearly 90 million), though investments have been very low in 2017.

<sup>4</sup> An orthophoto is an aerial digital image, in color, of a landscape taken so as to neutralize the influences of camera inclination and terrain relief.

A number of pages in the budget are dedicated to the groups of services (outputs) which are produced by swisstopo. For 2018, as in 2017, swisstopo lists three groups of services:

1. Topography and cartography
2. Measurement and geo-coordination
3. National Geological Service

A page in the PIFT describes each of these, giving the basic mandate along with comments relevant to the group of services. It is followed by a commented table of operating and investment income and expenses, a table of objectives (broken down by services) with the criteria to be achieved, accompanied by contextual information with financial figures. Figure 9.5, as an example, gives all the objectives set in the 2018 PIFT, including information about criteria and performance by unit of measurement for the first group of services (topography and cartography).

The PIFT document concludes with the items relevant to the federal budget, namely income and expenditure. These are explained and compared to the previous three years. Projections for the 2018–21 period are also provided, which allows for planning over four years. In the depart-

#### OBJECTIFS

|  | C    | B    | B    | PF   | PF   | PF   |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|  | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
| <b>Mensuration nationale topographique:</b> les données sont régulièrement mises à jour et adaptées aux nouveaux besoins des utilisateurs    |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| - Orthophotos: surface de la Suisse mesurée par an (% min.)  | 34   | 30   | 30   | 30   | 30   | 30   |
| - Modèles altimétriques: surface de la Suisse mesurée par an (% min.)  | 19   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   |
| - Modèle topographique du paysage: surface de la Suisse mesurée par an (% min.)  | 21   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   |
| - Elaboration d'un modèle de surface de l'ensemble du périmètre (%)  | -    | 22   | 34   | 44   | 57   | 67   |
| <b>Mensuration nationale cartographique:</b> les données sont régulièrement mises à jour et la production est convertie à la forme numérique |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| - Cartes nationales: surface de la Suisse mesurée (% min.)   | 18   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   |
| - Mise en œuvre du modèle cartographique numérique MCN 1:25 000: surface de la Suisse numérisée par an (% min.)                              | 34   | 49   | 66   | 83   | 100  | -    |
| <b>Satisfaction de la clientèle:</b> les clients considèrent que ces prestations sont de très bonne qualité                                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| - Satisfaction des clients en termes d'offre/de qualité (échelle 1 à 5)  | -    | -    | -    | 4,15 | -    | -    |

#### INFORMATIONS CONTEXTUELLES

|   | 2011   | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Géodonnées livrées (nombre)   | 3 125  | 3 325   | 3 837   | 4 309   | 4 148   | 3 560   |
| Mégapixels fournis par l'infrastructure fédérale de données géographiques (nombre, mio) | 86,600 | 162,000 | 225,400 | 321,500 | 329,600 | 509,400 |
| Impressions PDF sur la base des services de l'IFGD (nombre, mio)                        | 1,294  | 1,602   | 1,879   | 2,238   | 2,531   | 3,393   |
| Cartes imprimées vendues (nombre, milliers)   | 698    | 581     | 603     | 513     | 408     | 494     |
| Satisfaction de la clientèle (échelle 1 à 5)  | -      | -       | -       | -       | 4,14    | -       |

(C = accounts, B = budget, PF = financial plan)

Fig. 9.5 Swisstopo group of services 1: objectives and contextual data. (C = accounts, B = budget, PF = financial plan)

ment of defense—where swisstopo was formally placed—performance contracts remain on an annual basis. As swisstopo makes specific products or services (such as maps, models or orthophotos) available, these products or services can be more readily quantified and enumerated for the purposes of the budgetary process. A qualitative indicator (customer satisfaction) is also measured.

The financial data come from SAP accounting software. Reporting is done annually, as part of the federal budgeting process, and quarterly within the department. Parliamentary committees (Finance Committee, Management Committee, and the specialized Committee, which in the case of swisstopo is the Committee on Education, Science and Culture) provide political guidance. Meeting—or not meeting—the stated objectives do not (yet) carry the practical consequences as in other countries where incentives are offered—or sanctions levied—in case the stated criteria are exceeded—or not met.

The NMG model emerged from the strong desire to better link the federal budget with the services or benefits provided and with the final results obtained by the administrative units. Output needed to be linked to outcome. It is reminiscent of the objectives set out in the 2001 French constitutional bylaw on budget acts (known as LOLF) which wanted to modernize the management of the French administration and set quantified objectives for the various ministries. The goal was to move from a budget based on resources to a public administration managed based on results, even if this goal was difficult to achieve (Rochet 2010; Petitbon and Ledenic 2011).

## 9.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the NMG model in the Swiss federal administration, from its origins to its introduction across all federal-level administrative units in 2017, including in swisstopo. Beyond the public services to be provided, the NMG emphasizes the results to be achieved. This emphasis is both operational and political (or strategic), and stands in relation to the main mode of governmental action, namely its budget. That budget also determines the number of posts which can be funded to achieve the stated objectives, both through services and by specifying expected results.

In addition to the classic criteria of efficiency, efficacy and economy, an analysis of the NMG indicates the importance of effectiveness and allocative efficiency (see Fig. 9.4), aspects which should more often be taken into account by managers in public administration positions.

Though it is not wholly original, the NMG has the merit of being implemented on a large scale throughout the entire Swiss federal administration. It is a practical way of combining operational management with strategic or political management. The former is the responsibility of managers in the public administrative units as well as of the heads of their departments—who in Switzerland form the federal executive. The latter is provided by Parliament, and, at times, also by the people through the referendums and initiatives they can launch. The exception here is finances: this remains the responsibility of Parliament, whose power and oversight is now reinforced through PITFs. We therefore have a new and genuinely “Swiss Way of Public Management” (at least at the federal level), and how it will be implemented, given recent changes to the system of national public administration, will be followed with interest in the years to come.

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