

Barbier, L. (2025). Reform, Responsiveness, and Resilience: A Unified Framework for Agile Public Administration. *Applied Research in Administrative Sciences*, 6(3), 16-28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24818/ARAS/2025/6/3.02>

Reform, Responsiveness, and Resilience: A Unified Framework for Agile Public Administration

Lance, BARBIER

PhD Public Administration, Independent Author, Cape Town, South Africa
lance.barbier@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper is based on the premise that fragmented reform efforts in developing countries fail to deliver sustained public value unless they are unified through an integrated governance model. It presents an in-depth thematic literature review of secondary sources published between 2000 and 2025, examining how Knowledge Management (KM), governance reform, and VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) preparedness have evolved and influenced Public Administration practice. The object of research is the development of the 3R Framework, which synthesises three pillars, Reform, Responsiveness, and Resilience, to address the persistent gap between policy intent and operational reality. The investigated problem is the limited success of administrative reforms in resource-constrained environments, where outdated bureaucratic systems, siloed knowledge practices, and low VUCA-readiness undermine service delivery and citizen trust. The most important finding of this literature study is that integrating KM, RBME, and OKRs into multi-tier planning architectures can transform Public Administration from compliance-led to impact-driven governance. The framework positions directorates/business units as central delivery units and introduces Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) as instruments for strategic alignment, learning, and resilience-building. This paper will be useful to Public Administration practitioners and policymakers seeking scalable, citizen-centric reform strategies. The implications are twofold: theoretically, the study contributes a unified model that bridges KM and VUCA preparedness within governance literature; practically, it offers a roadmap for governments, particularly in South Africa, to embed continuous learning, ethical leadership, and adaptive planning into their operations. Further empirical research is encouraged to validate the framework and explore its application across diverse governance contexts. The study asks why reforms fail in resource-constrained contexts and hypothesises that integrating KM, RBME, OKRs, and VUCA tools into a unified framework can enable adaptive, impact-driven governance.

Keywords: Knowledge Management; Good Governance; VUCA; Strategic Planning.

JEL: H83, D83, H11

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24818/ARAS/2025/6/3.02>

INTRODUCTION

The literature identifies two major challenges in Public Administration within developing countries: outdated bureaucratic systems that slow service delivery and a volatile global environment marked by VUCA, which complicates planning and response (Aliyu, Singaravelloo, & Mansor, 2021). These issues are intensified by resource constraints, resistance to change, and shifting political priorities, leading to persistent reform failures (Sikhosana, 2025). Despite citizen-focused principles and digital strategies, service quality remains poor, eroding trust and exposing weaknesses such as inadequate accountability and leadership (Sikhosana, 2025). Research suggests that reforms are often fragmented and poorly adapted to local contexts. Synthesising prior studies, three interconnected pillars emerge: Reform, which calls for shifting from rigid systems to collaborative models using tools like OKRs and RBME; Responsiveness, which emphasises embedding KM for evidence-based decisions and real-time feedback (Barbier & Tenegh, 2022a); and Resilience, which promotes VUCA-

readiness through scenario planning, agile methods, and ethical leadership to strengthen institutional capacity (Barbier & Tenge, 2022b; Covarrubias, 2025).

The synthesised research provides scalable, context-aware insights, positioning KM as a catalyst for agile action and VUCA tools as foundations for durability. Emphasis is placed on outcome-oriented approaches over procedural compliance, yielding tangible citizen benefits such as improved health and economic access. To operationalise these insights, the literature proposes multi-tier planning architectures that align strategy, execution, and learning across organisational levels and timelines. Recognising directorates as key delivery units, studies highlight quarterly performance reports as mechanisms for responsiveness and learning, integrating OKRs, RBME, and KM with citizen input, scenario testing, and adaptive adjustments (Bryson, 2018; LGSETA, 2023; Naidoo, 2020).

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to design and present the 3R Framework, a unified governance model that integrates Knowledge Management (KM), Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME), Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), and VUCA preparedness into multi-tier planning architectures, providing practitioners with a practical roadmap for transitioning from compliance-driven processes to adaptive, impact-focused service delivery.

This study addresses the following research questions:

Why do reforms in resource-constrained Public Administrations fail to deliver citizen-visible outcomes, and how can KM, performance tools, and VUCA preparedness be integrated to close this gap?

The working hypothesis is:

Fragmented adoption of KM, RBME, OKRs, and VUCA tools within compliance-driven bureaucracies causes reform failure. A unified, multi-tier framework anchored in directorates and Quarterly Performance Reviews can shift governance from reactive compliance to adaptive, impact-driven delivery.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thematic review synthesises scholarly and practitioner literature on KM, governance reform, and VUCA preparedness in Public Administration. Drawing from academic journals, reports, government publications, and professional sources spanning the past 23 years, the analysis focuses on English-language materials using search terms related to KM, Good governance, and VUCA. The qualitative synthesis approach, as employed in complex Public Administration studies, enables interpretive integration of diverse perspectives where quantitative data is often sparse (Bryson, 2018).

1.1. Institutional Learning (KM) in Government

The literature underscores KM's role in bridging the knowing-doing gap in public sectors (Al Ahbabi, Singh, Balasubramanian, & Gaur, 2019). In developing countries, challenges like staff turnover and siloed data systems amplify this divide, but KM frameworks offer structured approaches to capture, disseminate, and apply knowledge, enhancing institutional memory and evidence-informed decisions (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019). Research aligns KM with innovation-driven reforms, though its efficacy in low-resource settings is constrained by technological deficits and cultural barriers to information sharing. Synthesised studies suggest integrating KM with outcome-focused systems to yield measurable citizen impacts, addressing these limitations through adaptive models.

1.2. Evolution of Governance Approaches

Public Administration has shifted from Traditional Public Administration (TPA), which emphasised rigid rules and hierarchy, to New Public Management (NPM), focused on efficiency and performance metrics, and now toward New Public Governance (NPG), which prioritises collaboration, networks, and citizen participation (Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024). This evolution shows that effective governance requires not only efficiency but also legitimacy, transparency, and inclusiveness (Barbier & Tenge, 2023). In developing nations, TPA's rigidity and NPM's resource demands often limit success, while NPG's collaborative promise is constrained by political interference and weak institutions (Naidoo, 2020). The 3R Framework builds on these lessons by promoting adaptive governance tailored to resource-constrained environments, with a strong focus on impact-driven results that citizens can see, such as improved healthcare access. In a VUCA world, leaders must embrace adaptability and systems thinking to anticipate challenges and make real-time adjustments (Covarrubias, 2025; Mintrom & O'Connor, 2025).

1.3. VUCA Preparedness and Institutional Resilience

The VUCA environment requires governments to prioritise foresight, agility, and toughness over simple rules-following (Covarrubias, 2025). Tools like scenario planning (preparing for different futures) and agile methods (flexible project management) help institutions navigate uncertainty and recover from shocks like pandemics (Mintrom & O'Connor, 2025). However, developing countries often don't fully use these tools, leaving them vulnerable (Covarrubias, 2025). Leaders must be willing to embrace uncertainty and learn from mistakes to build resilience. The 3R Framework embeds these tools within a resource-sensitive model to enhance institutional toughness and ensure service continues even during crises.

1.4. Synthesising Reform, Responsiveness, and Resilience from the Literature

Literature integrates these themes into cohesive models for Agile Public Administration, focusing on citizen-visible impacts over internal processes.

REFORM

Research on governance in developing nations highlights structural and policy shifts aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and accountability, aligned with national development plans and SDG 16 (Reddy, 2016). Administrative paradigms have evolved from Traditional Public Administration's hierarchical control to New Public Management's performance metrics and New Public Governance's collaborative partnerships (Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024). To close persistent implementation gaps, studies recommend strengthening KM and linking it to planning and evaluation systems (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019; LGSETA, 2023). A notable insight is the adoption of OKRs to break ambitious goals into measurable steps, fostering focus and adaptability (Business Chief, 2023; Adaptovate, 2023). When KM, RBME, and OKRs operate together, they create a continuous learning cycle setting clear goals, tracking long-term results, learning from data, and adjusting strategies in real time, transforming government from reactive compliance to proactive improvements in economic opportunities and citizen welfare (Naidoo, 2020; EvalCommunity, 2023).

RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness in Public Administration means adapting quickly to citizen needs and feedback to deliver tangible results. KM plays a central role by enabling departments to collect, share, and apply information for evidence-based decisions. In many developing countries, KM remains the "missing link" for sustainable governance because institutions often lack effective systems and a culture of

knowledge sharing (LGSETA, 2023). Complementary tools include service charters and community participation platforms, which enhance transparency and give citizens a voice, and RBME, which focuses on outcomes and impacts rather than activities, ensuring that long-term goals such as improved service delivery and public trust are achieved (EvalCommunity, 2023). However, RBME often fails because KM is not fully integrated. Many departments have separate data systems and weak KM cultures (LGSETA, 2023). Linking KM, RBME, and OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) creates the necessary continuous feedback loop. This shift creates a proactive, impact-oriented system that leads to visible external changes, such as improved access to education and healthcare (LGSETA, 2023; Naidoo, 2020; EvalCommunity, 2023).

RESILIENCE

In uncertain and fast-changing environments, research stresses the importance of strong planning, effective change management, and flexible methods such as PMBOK, PRINCE2, and Agile to help governments adapt (Naidoo, 2020). Scenario planning is widely recommended to prepare for disruptions, but many administrations struggle with limited capacity and political tensions that slow implementation (DPME, 2014). To overcome these barriers, studies point to the need for a culture of continuous improvement, ethical leadership, and systems thinking (DPME, 2014). Across the literature, three pillars stand out as essential for effective governance in developing countries. Reform involves moving away from rigid, rule-based systems toward collaborative approaches that align with national development plans and prioritise citizens. Common obstacles include inconsistent implementation and bureaucratic resistance to efficiency. Responsiveness focuses on using KM, service charters, and results-based monitoring to support evidence-driven decisions and real-time feedback, though poor integration of KM and fragmented data often limit success. Resilience emphasises readiness for volatility through scenario planning, strategic foresight, and agile project management, but faces challenges such as uneven staff capacity and political-administrative tensions. Together, these pillars show that technical tools alone are not enough; leadership commitment and institutional learning are critical (Barbier & Tenengeh, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; Naidoo, 2020; LGSETA, 2023). These principles are not new, but they have become more urgent in today's global context, highlighting the need for governance that is effective, adaptable, and trusted (Peters, 2018; Bovaird & Löffler, 2020).

1.5. Multi-Tier Planning Architectures Aligned to Key Pillars

The literature shows that reform, responsiveness, and resilience are best achieved through planning systems that link policy to day-to-day practice. At every level, from long-term strategy to quarterly reviews, research recommends embedding tools such as KM, RBME, OKRs, citizen engagement, and VUCA-readiness measures (Bryson, 2018; Reddy, 2016; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2023). For example, five-year policy and strategy documents should set clear reform goals aligned with national priorities like NDP 2030 and SDG 16, while also incorporating scenario planning for future risks. Project and change management plans need to translate these goals into actionable steps, supported by KM systems and stakeholder engagement to ensure adaptability. Annual business and operational plans should break down objectives into measurable targets, integrate citizen feedback, and include risk heatmaps and surge-readiness protocols. Performance agreements can reinforce accountability by linking individual and team goals to reform and resilience indicators, while quarterly reports and dashboards provide transparency by tracking progress, learning outcomes, and response times. This layered approach reflects a growing consensus in the literature: technical tools alone are not enough; success depends on continuous learning, leadership commitment, and systems thinking (Naidoo, 2020; LGSETA, 2023; DPME, 2014).

2. INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE

Reviewed case studies illustrate applications in nations like Ghana, Rwanda, India, and Brazil, demonstrating KM-governance-VUCA integration for service transformation in constrained environments.

2.1. Reform in Action

Governments have introduced reforms such as Service Delivery Improvement Plans to strengthen accountability, but poor coordination often limits their success (Naidoo, 2020; Reddy, 2016). The literature suggests that aligning these reforms with national goals and embedding performance-based management and stakeholder participation improves outcomes (Bryson, 2018). For example, Rwanda's land administration reforms between 2008 and 2012 used digital mapping and titling to secure property rights, reducing land disputes and boosting agricultural productivity (Aliyu et al., 2021). Similarly, India's e-governance initiatives streamlined administrative processes, reduced corruption, and expanded access to services for millions (Barbier & Tengeh, 2023).

2.2. Responsiveness in Action

To strengthen responsiveness, the literature highlights the role of KM in enabling evidence-based decisions and the use of citizen feedback platforms to improve service delivery (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019; LGSETA, 2023). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana introduced online service delivery and community monitoring, which provided visible benefits such as free utilities and subsidised essential goods, improving welfare during lockdowns (Naidoo, 2020). Similarly, participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities like Porto Alegre allowed citizens to influence spending priorities, leading to better-targeted investments in infrastructure and social services, thereby enhancing community welfare (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2023).

2.3. Resilience in Action

Developing nations often face resource constraints and socio-political tensions that undermine service delivery (DPME, 2014). The resilience pillar of the 3R Framework emphasises scenario planning and flexible project management approaches, such as PMBOK and PRINCE2, to build adaptive capacity (Naidoo, 2020). Evidence from Ghana shows that using drone technology for medical deliveries during the pandemic enabled rapid response and improved healthcare access in rural areas, demonstrating the value of innovation for resilience (Covarrubias, 2025). Similarly, Rwanda's strict anti-corruption reforms reduced corruption and strengthened public trust, aligning with the principle of continuous improvement to navigate uncertainty (Naidoo, 2020). These examples illustrate how resilience strategies can translate into visible outcomes and reinforce governance stability.

By applying the 3R Framework, governments in developing nations can transform their Public Administration into a cohesive, responsive, and resilient system that delivers impact-driven outcomes, offering a model for contexts facing similar governance challenges worldwide.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To address these research questions and examine the hypothesis, this study employs a qualitative synthesis of literature spanning 2000–2025. Figures 1 and 2 represent the author's original conceptual synthesis based on the reviewed literature. Indicators include service delivery efficiency, citizen trust, institutional resilience, and political legitimacy, drawn from governance performance reports,

academic studies, and policy documents. Risk maps incorporate scenario planning matrices and stress-test protocols adapted from VUCA-readiness frameworks. These elements provide a foundation for empirical validation in future research. The author's specific contribution lies in designing the 3R Framework and visualising the compliance-to-impact transition through multi-tier planning architecture, positioning directorates as delivery units and Quarterly Performance Reviews as alignment mechanisms.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The research involved collecting relevant English-language sources (50 academic articles, 15 policy reports, 10 practitioner insights) from databases like Google Scholar and Scopus. The selection focused on materials addressing KM, Good governance, and VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), particularly in contexts like South Africa and Rwanda. Thematic synthesis was employed: sources were reviewed, and key ideas were grouped into themes (e.g., KM challenges, governance gaps). Spreadsheets and mind maps were used to identify patterns and gaps, such as the lack of integration between KM and VUCA in existing models (Covarrubias, 2025). These insights led to the development of the 3R Framework. The process was reliant on the author's expertise. Of the approximately 75 sources, only the 25 most central and repeatedly cited works are included in the reference list at the end of this article. The remaining materials served as background for contextual understanding, verification of patterns, and identification of gaps, but are not directly quoted or cited in the text. A full bibliography of all consulted works is available from the corresponding author upon request.

3.2. Addressing Research Gaps and Limitations

Gap Identification: Existing studies often look at KM, governance, or VUCA separately, rarely offering a practical, integrated model for resource-constrained settings (Covarrubias, 2025). For example, Rwanda's reforms focus on performance but lack clear links between KM and crisis preparation. The 3R Framework addresses this by combining KM, Good governance, and VUCA into a practical, cost-effective model for developing nations, with a focus on delivering visible, impact-driven changes.

3.3. Limitations of the Synthesis

This review has three main limitations. First, it relies on secondary sources, existing research and reports, so while it provides interpretive insights, it lacks primary data such as interviews or surveys (Bryson, 2018). Second, the 3R Framework is still conceptual and untested, requiring empirical studies to confirm its effectiveness in practice (Barbier, 2025). Third, its focus on developing nations introduces context bias, which may limit broader applicability; future research should test the framework across diverse settings to validate its relevance (Barbier & Tenengeh, 2023).

4. DISCUSSION OF SYNTHESISED LITERATURE

The 3R Framework advances Public Administration theory by integrating KM, governance principles, and VUCA preparedness into a single model. This addresses the common problem of fragmented, isolated reforms in developing countries. Unlike traditional, resource-intensive models (e.g., Rwanda's approach), the 3R Framework is tailored for the volatile, resource-constrained environments of developing nations, focusing on building adaptive capacity using local systems (Covarrubias, 2025). While other reforms (like Ghana's results-driven governance) offer valuable lessons, they often lack the explicit KM-VUCA integration that the 3R Framework uses to enhance learning and responsiveness. By making KM the engine of responsiveness and tools like scenario planning the

enablers of resilience, the framework ensures reforms are sustainable and focused on visible citizen benefits. Although still conceptual, the framework provides a robust foundation for future empirical testing.

The 3R Framework fundamentally transforms Public Administration by delivering a high-impact, integrated model that drives rapid system overhaul and operational toughness against the dynamic VUCA environment (Barbier, 2025). This paper's multi-tier planning architecture resolves the chronic gap between policy intent and operational reality by hard-wiring learning loops (KM–RBME–OKRs) into each tier and by designating the Directorate as the business unit that converts strategy into citizen-facing value. The DQPR becomes the pivotal governance artefact that integrates evidence, alignment, citizen feedback, and resilience posture into quarterly decisions and course corrections (LGSETA, 2023; Bryson, 2018). By integrating scenario planning, risk heatmaps, and stress-test drills into the same cadence as performance reporting, the architecture normalises VUCA-readiness and makes resilience measurable through indicators such as scenario response time and team agility assessments. This shifts Public Administration from episodic reform to a continuous, adaptive, and citizen-centred system (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2023; DPME, 2014). The findings support the hypothesis that fragmented adoption of KM and VUCA tools contributes to reform failure, and that a unified framework can enable adaptive governance.

4.1. How the 3R Framework Delivers Impact in Public Administration

The 3R Framework modernises Public Administration by integrating specific tools and principles to drive measurable, citizen-centric change and enhance institutional capacity in resource-constrained settings, ensuring visible external impacts (Barbier, 2025).

Table 1. The Impact-Driven 3R Framework for Government Transformation

3R Pillar	Impact Focus (The Goal)	Key Outcomes & Operational Tools (How to achieve it)
Reform	Achieving Agile Governance: Moving away from rigid structures to prioritise service outcomes that directly benefit citizens.	Outcomes: Clear, accountable delivery targets with visible benefits. Tools: Aligning Service Improvement Plans (SDIPs) with collaborative management models (NPG) and using OKRs and RBME to track delivery.
Responsiveness	Driving Evidence-Based Outcomes: Using feedback loops to ensure policy changes can happen in real-time.	Outcomes: Better policy decisions, reduced failure rates, optimised resource use, and tangible citizen improvements. Tools: Embedding KM systems to translate real-time data into adaptive policy adjustments.
Resilience	Securing Operational Continuity: Building institutional capacity to withstand and quickly recover from major shocks and uncertainty.	Outcomes: Maintained service delivery and stability during crises (e.g., economic or natural disasters), with visible enhancements in citizen welfare. Tools: Promoting VUCA-readiness through scenario planning, ethical leadership, and flexible ('agile') project management.

Source: Author, 2025

This seamless integration of KM, RBME, and OKRs creates a continuous delivery feedback loop (Wolf, 2005). This moves Public Administration from a reactive model focused on following rules to a proactive, impact-oriented system, maximising accountability and service adaptability while ensuring citizens experience visible changes (Barbier, 2025). Table 2 below contrasts impact-led and compliance-led approaches to governance. This comparison highlights why the 3R Framework prioritises impact-driven strategies over rule-based compliance, ensuring reforms translate into tangible benefits for citizens.

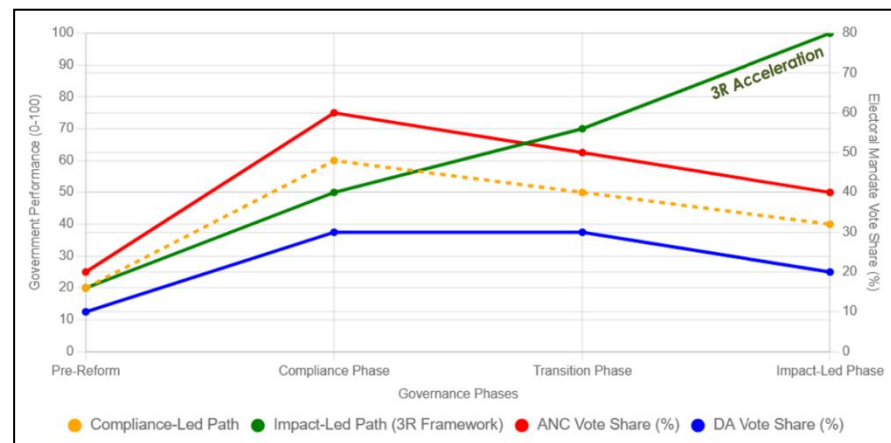
Table 2. Comparison of Impact-Led vs Compliance-Led Approaches

Dimension	Impact-Led Approach	Compliance-Led Approach
Primary Goal	Deliver visible, citizen-centric outcomes	Meet rules, regulations, and reporting requirements
Orientation	Proactive - anticipates change, adapts quickly, focuses on results	Reactive - responds to audits, checklists, and mandates
Measurement	Outcomes & Impact (e.g., health access, economic opportunities)	Inputs & Activities (e.g., number of reports submitted)
Tools Emphasised	OKRs, RBME (linked to KM), scenario planning, agile methods	Static plans, rigid KPIs, compliance audits
Culture	Learning & Adaptation - continuous improvement, citizen feedback loops	Rule-Following - adherence to procedures, minimal innovation
Role of KM	Central driver for evidence-based decisions and responsiveness	Often absent or siloed, used for record-keeping only
VUCA Readiness	Embedded through scenario planning and resilience strategies	Rarely considered, plans assume stability
SDIPs & RBME	Re-engineered as strategic instruments linked to impact	Treated as a checklist document for compliance

*Source: Author's synthesis based on governance literature and the 3R Framework.
For a graphical representation of these governance paths, see Figure 1.*

4.2. Visualising the Compliance-to-Impact Transition in Public Administration

To illustrate the critical distinction between compliance-led and impact-led governance, Figure 1 presents a conceptual graph, based on literature, comparing government performance across reform stages. The X-axis represents the progression of reform stages: Pre-Reform, Compliance Phase, Transition Phase, and Impact-Led Phase. The Y-axis measures government performance, encompassing service delivery efficiency, citizen trust, institutional resilience, and political legitimacy (reflected in public and political support for governance outcomes). The Compliance-Led Path (orange dashed line) shows initial growth as governments implement rules, audits, and Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs) as compliance tools, achieving gains in stability and accountability (Naidoo, 2020). However, performance plateaus or declines in the Transition Phase due to the "Compliance Trap," where rigid adherence to procedures without strategic adaptation fails to address VUCA challenges or deliver citizen-centric outcomes (DPME, 2014). This stagnation limits improvements in service delivery, erodes citizen trust, and undermines political legitimacy, as public support wanes when reforms fail to produce visible benefits (Sikhosana, 2025). In contrast, the Impact-Led Path (green solid line), enabled by the 3R Framework, shows sustained and accelerated growth, as illustrated by the '3R Acceleration' in Figure 1.

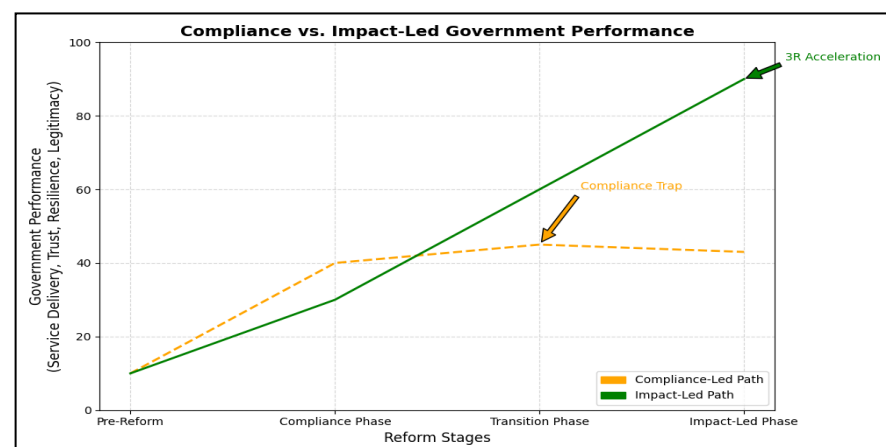


The Y-axis represents a composite of service delivery efficiency, citizen trust, institutional resilience, and political legitimacy. This figure illustrates South Africa's governance challenges, showing how rule-bound compliance leads to performance stagnation. The impact-led path, enabled by the 3R Framework, demonstrates how Reform, Responsiveness, and Resilience tools drive sustained performance gains. "3R acceleration" marks the transition from compliance to citizen-visible impact.

Figure 1. Governance Paths, Impact Performance & the Compliance Trap in South Africa

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on the 3R Framework and governance literature (Naidoo, 2020; DPME, 2014; Sikhosana, 2025; Barbier, 2025).

By integrating KM, OKRs, and RBME, the framework ensures reforms evolve beyond compliance to prioritise measurable, citizen-focused outcomes (Barbier, 2025). The "3R Acceleration" in the Impact-Led Phase, exemplified by Rwanda's anti-corruption reforms (enhancing public trust) and Ghana's drone deliveries (improving healthcare access), demonstrates how tools like scenario planning and agile governance drive resilience, responsiveness, and legitimacy, leading to tangible improvements such as enhanced healthcare access, economic opportunities, and strengthened public support for governance. This visualisation underscores the 3R Framework's role in bridging the gap between compliance and impact, offering a scalable model for developing nations to achieve agile, resilient, and citizen-centric governance that enhances political legitimacy through visible, impactful outcomes. Figure 2 highlights the 'Compliance Trap' that hinders compliance-led approaches, reinforcing the need for the 3R Framework's impact-driven strategy.



This generic figure contrasts two governance trajectories applicable across developing nations. The Y-axis reflects a composite of service efficiency, trust, resilience, and legitimacy. The compliance-led path shows early gains followed by stagnation due to procedural rigidity. The impact-led path, driven by the 3R Framework, achieves sustained growth through integrated KM, OKRs, and RBME. "3R acceleration" highlights the shift to adaptive, citizen-focused governance.

Figure 2. Compliance vs. Impact-Led Government Performance

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on the 3R Framework and governance literature (Naidoo, 2020; DPME, 2014; Sikhosana, 2025; Barbier, 2025).

The author's specific contribution to the 3R Framework and its visualisation in Figures 1 and 2 lies in synthesising disparate literature on KM, RBME, OKRs, and VUCA preparedness into an original, integrated conceptual model tailored for resource-constrained Public Administration. This includes the novel depiction of the "Compliance Trap" versus "3R Acceleration" trajectories, which operationalises the multi-tier planning architecture by designating directorates as delivery hubs and Quarterly Performance Reviews as adaptive mechanisms, elements absent in prior fragmented models (e.g., Naidoo, 2020; LGSETA, 2023).

Figures 1 and 2 are conceptual illustrations designed to contrast the theoretical trajectories of compliance-led versus impact-led governance. For future empirical testing and replication of the model, the author proposes that the composite Y-axis performance metric could be operationalised through a simple equally weighted index (25 % each, normalised 0–100) using four publicly available South African indicators: (1) Service Delivery Efficiency (e.g., average turnaround times from DPSA reports), (2) Citizen Trust (e.g., PSC Batho Pele satisfaction scores), (3) Institutional Resilience (e.g., recovery indicators from DPME's GWMES and NDP Outcome 12), and (4) Political Legitimacy (e.g., unqualified audit rates from AGSA reports). Researchers wishing to test the 3R Framework longitudinally are encouraged to construct and validate such an index.

Risk maps and scenario matrices underpinning the figures' VUCA elements (e.g., dashed orange line for compliance stagnation) are adapted from DPME's scenario planning templates (DPME, 2014) and stress-test protocols in the GWMES framework. Example data sources for replication include PSC Batho Pele audits (for trust metrics), AGSA annual audit outcomes (for legitimacy), and DPME's 14 Outcome Delivery Agreements (for resilience indices, e.g., % of targets met post-shock). Future studies can proxy these via longitudinal panel data from Stats SA's General Household Survey or DPME dashboards, enabling regression analysis of 3R adoption on performance trajectories.

4.3. Closing the Critical Gap in Holistic Models

The 3R Framework addresses the gaps left by fragmented reforms by creating an integrated approach that avoids duplication and wasted effort (Barbier, 2025). It combines KM, governance principles, and VUCA preparedness into a single roadmap, linking institutional learning directly to crisis planning and long-term performance (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019; Covarrubias, 2025). Unlike models that depend on large budgets or political stability, the framework is designed for volatile, resource-limited environments and focuses on improving existing mechanisms to make them practical and scalable (Naidoo, 2020; Bryson, 2018). Most importantly, it bridges the gap between policy and action by promoting change management and building capacity through targeted training in knowledge systems and resilience planning (Farazmand, 2023; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2023).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen planning and delivery, the government should adopt the 3R-based multi-tier approach as a standard across all levels, from policy and strategy to operations and performance agreements, supported by clear templates and defined roles. Quarterly performance reports should become the main tool for tracking progress, combining goals (OKRs), monitoring results (RBME), knowledge-sharing, citizen feedback, and resilience indicators. Data systems must link these elements into one evidence loop, with regular briefs showing what changed and why. Citizen engagement should be built into planning and review processes, while resilience is reinforced through scenario exercises and stress tests. Existing plans should be merged into a single annual business plan focused on results and learning. Leadership capacity needs investment through accredited training in adaptive and ethical practices. Finally, a public-sector dashboard should aggregate key indicators, alignment scores, citizen satisfaction, and resilience metrics to enable oversight and shared learning.

Furthermore, to achieve the research objective of providing a practical roadmap for adaptive governance, practitioners should operationalise the 3R Framework as follows:

- Adopt the 3R-based multi-tier planning architecture across all levels—from policy and strategy to operations and performance agreements—supported by clear templates and defined roles.
- Institutionalise Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) as the primary mechanism for alignment and learning, integrating OKRs, RBME, KM systems, citizen feedback, and resilience indicators.
- Link data systems into a single evidence loop to ensure real-time insights, with dashboards showing progress, alignment scores, and citizen satisfaction.
- Embed VUCA-readiness through scenario planning, stress tests, and risk heatmaps to strengthen resilience.
- Merge fragmented plans into a unified annual business plan focused on measurable results and continuous learning.
- Invest in leadership capacity through accredited training in adaptive and ethical practices to sustain reform momentum.

These steps translate the conceptual 3R Framework into actionable measures, enabling governments to move from compliance-driven processes to adaptive, impact-focused service delivery.

CONCLUSION

This paper synthesises literature across KM, Good governance, and VUCA-readiness to propose a unified framework that addresses the fragmentation of public sector reforms. In doing so, it offers a scalable and adaptive model tailored for resource-constrained environments, yet applicable across diverse governance contexts globally. At its core, the framework reimagines government as a learning organisation—responsive to citizen feedback and resilient in the face of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. KM serves as the engine of responsiveness, enabling real-time feedback loops that translate strategic intent into tangible service improvements. Strategic foresight, embedded through scenario planning and stress-testing, ensures resilience by preparing institutions to withstand and recover from systemic shocks such as pandemics, economic disruptions, or climate-related crises.

The framework moves decisively beyond the limitations of Traditional Public Administration (TPA), which often prioritises rule adherence over results. Instead, it aligns with the principles of New Public Governance (NPG), emphasising collaboration, transparency, and citizen-centric service delivery. This shift is operationalised through the integration of KM with Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) and OKRs, forming a continuous learning cycle that drives proactive, evidence-based improvement. Institutional architecture plays a pivotal role in this transformation. The Directorate is designated as the central delivery unit, responsible for executing reform through embedded KM–RBME–OKR loops. Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) are institutionalised as instruments for strategic alignment, organisational learning, and resilience-building. These reviews normalise adaptive governance practices, ensuring that performance management is not merely retrospective but forward-looking and impact-driven.

The framework's strength lies in its ability to bridge the knowing–doing gap, turning policy into practice through structured, iterative processes. It fosters ethical leadership, continuous improvement, and a culture of accountability, ensuring that governance is not only efficient but also equitable and responsive to the lived realities of citizens. In summary, this reform architecture contributes to both academic discourse and practical policy innovation. It offers a theoretically robust and operationally

viable model for transforming Public Administration from episodic reform to a continuous, adaptive system. By embedding responsiveness, resilience, and learning at its core, the framework lays the foundation for governments that are agile, future-ready, and genuinely committed to improving the lives of their citizens.

This study set out to answer two interrelated questions: (1) why administrative reforms in resource-constrained developing countries repeatedly fail to produce visible citizen outcomes, and (2) how Knowledge Management, performance tools (RBME and OKRs), and VUCA-preparedness can be integrated to close the policy–implementation gap. The working hypothesis, that fragmented adoption of these elements within compliance-driven bureaucracies is the primary cause of failure, and that a unified, multi-tier framework anchored in directorates and Quarterly Performance Reviews can enable adaptive, impact-driven governance, has been supported by the thematic synthesis of the literature. The resulting 3R Framework (Reform, Responsiveness, Resilience) and its associated multi-tier planning architecture therefore fulfil the stated research objective by offering both a theoretically grounded explanation of persistent reform failure and a practical, scalable roadmap for transforming Public Administration into a learning, citizen-centric, and resilient system. Empirical validation of the framework remains the critical next step.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Literature calls for empirical validation via pilots, KM-VUCA dynamics, leadership roles, digital enablers, and comparative analyses.

DECLARATION OF AI ASSISTANCE

Basic tools for grammar, spelling, and language refinement were used. All content, research, analysis, and conclusions are based on the reviewed sources.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

The author listed has made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Adaptovate. (2023). *How OKRs help governments become more agile and citizen-focused*. Retrieved September 15, 2025, from <https://adaptovate.com>.
- Al Ahababi, S. A., Singh, S. K., Balasubramanian, S., & Gaur, S. S. (2019). Knowledge management processes and public sector performance measure. *PsycTESTS*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t74959-000>.
- Aliyu, A. O., Singaravelloo, K., & Mansor, N. (2021). A review of administrative reforms in developing countries: Why the limited success? *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 11(2), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v11i2.18390>.
- Barbier, L. (2025). Trust, Impact, and Resilience: An Integrated Framework for High-Performance Government. *Zenodo*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17606581>. [Preprint].
- Barbier, L., & Tengeh, R. K. (2022a). Enhancing public service delivery in a VUCA environment in South Africa: A literature review. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*, 9(4), 418–437. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-4-418-437>.
- Barbier, L., & Tengeh, R. K. (2022b). Factors influencing the implementation of knowledge management in the South African government. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(7), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i7.2035>.
- Barbier, L., & Tengeh, R. K. (2023). Literature review of public administration and good governance from 1890 to 2023. *Jurnal Transformativ*, 9(1), 43–65. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.transformativ.2023.009.01.3>.

- Bovaird, T., & Loeffler, E. (2023). *Public management and governance* (4th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003282839>.
- Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Business Chief. (2023). *Why Fortune 500 companies use OKRs to drive performance*. Retrieved September 15, 2025, from <https://businesschief.com>.
- Covarrubias, M. (2025). Public administration in a VUCA world: Vulnerability as a starting point. *PA Times Online*. <https://patimes.org/public-administration-in-a-vuca-world-vulnerability-as-a-starting-point/>.
- Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). (2014). *Twenty year review: South Africa 1994–2014*. The Presidency.
- EvalCommunity. (2023). *What is results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBME)?* Retrieved September 15, 2025, from <https://evalcommunity.com>.
- Farazmand, A. (Ed.). (2023). *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance* (2nd ed.). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66252-3>.
- Krogh, A. H., & Triantafillou, P. (2024). Developing new public governance as a public management reform model. *Public Management Review*, 26(10), 3040–3056. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2024.2313539>.
- Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA). (2023). *Knowledge management in local government: A diagnostic study*. LGSETA.
- Mintrom, M., & O'Connor, R. (2025). Policy coordination and development in a VUCA world. *Global Policy Journal*. <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/articles/global-governance/policy-coordination-and-development-vuca-world>.
- Naidoo, G. (2020). Public sector reform in South Africa: A governance perspective. *Journal of Public Administration*, 55(1), 1–20.
- Naidoo, V. (2020). Public sector reform in South Africa: A critical review of progress and challenges. *Journal of Public Administration*, 55(3), 345–362.
- Olsson, J. (2020). Institutionalism and public administration. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1458>.
- Peters, B. G. (2018). *The politics of bureaucracy: An introduction to comparative public administration* (7th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813653>.
- Reddy, P. S. (2016). The politics of service delivery in South Africa: The local government sphere in context. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 9(2), 13–25.
- Sikhosana, S. (2025). Populism and institutional breakdown: Analysing Operation Dudula within South Africa's governance landscape. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 6(7), 5142–5148. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0725.2641>.
- Wolf, J. F. (2005). Public administration's multiple institutionalized frameworks. *Public Organization Review*, 5(3), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-005-3494-3>.