

# **Political Patronage in a Small Italian Local Government: An Outcome-Based DPM Approach on Fiduciary Practices<sup>1</sup>**

**Keywords:** patronage; small municipality; outcome-based Dynamic Performance Management; human resource management.

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## **Long Abstract**

Patronage is “the giving of help or a job to someone in return for their support” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012: 526). Political appointing for fulfilling executive roles is part of changes in public management during periods of retrenchment of public expenditure (Raudla, Savi, & Randma-Liiv, 2013: 24) and it has been recently reinterpreted as a resource for good governance (Ferri & Zan, 2019). Nevertheless, in many realities, it may give birth to forms of patronage (Flinders & Matthews, 2010), such that the employment and the promotion of incompetent public officials may be due to several forms of clientelist practices (Stillman, 1977: 507).

The aim of this paper is to frame and explore the dynamic relationships connecting clientelist practices with the change in the human resource endowment of an Italian local government, by designing an outcome-based Dynamic Performance Management system able to support decision and policy-makers in setting effective strategies to curb the associated community outcomes over time. With this purpose, the case-study strategy, combined with formal modelling supported by non-standardized in-depth interviews and publicly-available quantitative data, has been adopted.

The main result is that in environments with poor levels of governance, political clientelism may give unemployed skilled people access to the bureaucratic apparatus at the beginning of its adoption. Nevertheless, this strategy unveils unsustainable in the long-run. In addition, the national reforms may have not exercised any appreciable effect on reversing the over-employment trend at local level and, contrarily, they may have limited the access to skilled people through competitive procedures. In this picture, the competence dissipation, the political will, and the local culture play a crucial role in improving the personnel’s qualitative structure of the municipality and its public performance.

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