

**Tat-Kei Ho, A., de Jong, M., Zhao, Z. (2019). Performance Budgeting Reform. Theories and International Practices. New York/Oxon: Routledge, 2019. 316 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-48329-3.<sup>1</sup>**

Many scholars have focused their research on performance budgeting, which remains a popular topic since it contains many fascinating phenomena requiring deeper analysis and further explanation. Its comparative dimension has been analysed in two books by now. Both were published in 2019 by internationally respected publishers and were devoted to the state and development of performance budgeting in different countries. The first book, entitled *Performance-Based Budgeting in the Public Sector*, was edited by Michiel S. de Vries, Juraj Nemec, and David Špaček, and was published by Palgrave Macmillan.<sup>2</sup> The second book, published by Routledge, was entitled *Performance Budgeting Reform: Theories and International Practices*. This review focuses on the latter of the two publications.

The book's three editors – Alfred Tat-Kei Ho, Maarten de Jong, and Zaozao Zhao – are well-known authorities on performance budgeting. Tat-Kei Ho is a professor of public administration at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at the University of Kansas. His research focuses on public budgeting, financial management, and e-government. In addition to his academic activities, he has professional experience in cooperation with many governmental and non-government organizations. De Jong is a research affiliate and guest lecturer at the Het Zijlstra Centre for Public Control, Governance, and Leadership at the Free University in Amsterdam. He has employed his expertise in the public sector in cooperating with various institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Zhao is an associate researcher of the National Academy of Economic Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. She has focused on issues of public budgeting and financial management, including performance management, audits, and inflation. In recent years, she has worked as a principal investigator or core researcher in several

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the Grant No. APVV-19-0108: "Innovations in Local Government Budgeting in Slovakia".

<sup>2</sup> De Vries, M. S., Nemec, J., Špaček, D. (eds.) (2019). *Performance-Based Budgeting in the Public Sector*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 248 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-02076-7.

key research projects dealing with different issues of functioning and streamlining in the Chinese public sector.

Whereas de Vries et al. primarily deal with the European context (but also Australia, South Africa, Russia, and the United States) when discussing the implementation and use of performance budgeting, the publication by Ta-Kei Ho et al. is mainly focused on non-European experiences. Indeed, the Netherlands is the only European country included in the book.

At the very beginning of the book it is mentioned that it is devoted to university students and public policy makers. The book is divided into four sections, and the content of particular chapters focuses on reforms in performance budgeting. In the first section, entitled 'Theories of Performance Budgeting', there are three chapters dealing with the meaning of performance budgeting; they offer six theoretical perspectives allowing for different perceptions on introducing performance budgeting and dynamics as well as a conceptual framework for the dynamics of budgetary reforms. Tat-Kei Ho and de Jong were the authors of the first section.

The second section, entitled 'Synthesizing Lessons from High-Income Countries', consists of four chapters. The first three focus on the implementation and development of performance budgeting in the Netherlands, South Korea, and the United States. The last chapter of this section, written by Tat-Kei Ho and de Jong, is an attempt to formulate a summary of experiences and recommendations from economically advanced countries in integrating the performance approach into budgeting.

The third section of this publication – 'Synthesizing Lessons from Low- and Middle-Income Countries' – is the most diverse in terms of content. The first ten of its eleven chapters focus on the experience of performance budgeting reforms in various less developed or lagging countries (Afghanistan, Chile, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, and Tunisia) and they feature the input of fourteen experts from different parts of the world. It is interesting that three of these ten chapters focus on the Chinese experience. The eleventh chapter, once again written by Tat-Kei Ho and de Jong, concludes the section and offers a comparative view of the diverse experiences of low- and middle-income countries; it also attempts to formulate recommendations for the appropriate design of reforms introducing performance budgeting to different administrative, political, economic, and cultural environments.

Like the first section of the publication, the entire fourth section – 'The Future of Performance Budgeting Reform' – is also written by Tat-Kei Ho and de Jong. In two chapters of the section, they try to formulate possible

directions for further research and they discuss performance budgeting tools and experiences with their application, including some examples of good practice, while also acknowledging potential barriers and reasons for failure.

To sum up, the content of this publication provides an extremely valuable look at the experiences of economically, politically, socially, and culturally different countries. The summarizing chapters may be of particular interest to undergraduates, graduates, and practitioners. They offer comprehensible overviews and make the main findings accessible to those who do not have the capacity to thoroughly study all the country cases included in the publication. Practitioners will appreciate the various recommendations contained in the summarizing chapters as well as in the fourth section. The authors follow a strong normative approach and formulate the appropriate form of some instruments. (A typical example is the list of elements that should be included in reform strategies introducing performance budgeting in Annex 20.2: A Checklist for PB Reform Strategies.) In addition, they do not neglect the needs of their main target groups and do not forget to explain some basic concepts, such as those regarding the typology of methods of measuring various performance indicators.

With this book, the editors and the authors of the individual chapters have proven their individual erudition in the relevant theoretical and practical fields. As a result, it is excellent study material for all students dealing with economics, management, public administration, or public policy. Moreover, thanks to the chapters containing normative statements and recommendations, it is also an excellent source for experts working in administrative, political, and economic fields in terms of increasing their awareness and improving their professional orientation in the topic. Nonetheless, the authors acknowledge that performance budgeting is not a panacea and that it can only bring the expected results if its implementation respects local specifics. Otherwise, it encounters misunderstanding, or even rejection, which appears, for example, in the inappropriate setting of indicators or in the insistence on the formal completion of criteria without a deeper analysis of the results that are actually achieved.

**doc. PhDr. Daniel Klimovský, PhD.**

*Faculty of Arts*

*Comenius University in Bratislava*

*e-mail: daniel.klimovsky@uniba.sk*