



Investigating and Ranking the Public Policy Performance Measures: Implications for Adoption and Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Performance evaluation in the public organisations helps achieving multiple objectives such as transparency of costs and outcomes, improved service quality, increased employee motivation and so on. On the other hand, its improper transposition of an instrument developed for operations management, which may cause serious distortions when applied to the public organisations, is unpleasant to some organisations. In this study, we investigated the factors that affect adoption and implementation of performance measures and rank them using TOPSIS technique. We found that internal interest groups in the adoption stage and external internal groups in the implementation stage rank first in terms of importance.

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Introduction

Performance management is now clearly a well-established practice in public organisations (Goh et al. 2015). Adopting public policies usually leads to a larger audience and stimulates political interest and even after adopting a policy, and the corresponding program controversy becomes most apparent. It has been argued that utilizing knowledge is a behavioral process including two stages, adoption and implementation (Beyer et al, 1985). Adoption stage can be understood as the capacity to act. In the context of our study, adoption represents the development of measures of outputs, outcomes, and efficiency. The implementation stage, or actual use, represents knowledge converted into action (Stehr 1992). Additionally, implementation refers to the actual use of the policy for strategic planning, allocation of resources, managing, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting to officials and citizens via different types of media. Julnes & Holzer (2001) elaborate the importance of distinguishing these two by exploring the rational (technocratic) and political/cultural factors that affect the processes of public policies and their performance measures; however, the relative importance of these factors, in both adoption and implementation performance, is understudied. This research is focused on using mathematical techniques to rank these factors (as performance measures) in terms of importance. In order to accomplish this goal, we first go through the literature by discussing the importance of performance evaluation in public organisations. Then, the adoption and implementation of performance measures from with both technocratic and political/cultural approaches will be analyzed and the relevant factors that have been found to significantly affect the policies. After summarizing the factors, they are ranked in terms of importance, hoping to shed more light on the mechanisms related to public policy adoption and implementation.

Performance Evaluation in Public Organisations

Whilst it is easy to find a precise definition of performance evaluation grounded in literature, the breadth of performance evaluation and hence the difficulties in defining its scope and practices make it challenging to define this concept. Performance management is typically concerned with the management of performance throughout the organisation and as an outcome that is a multidisciplinary activity. In addition, it involves understanding and acting on performance issues at each level of organisation, from individuals, teams and managers, through to the organisation itself. In addition to involving performance measurement, processes and systems, performance management is about managing employees and the way people in an organisation operate and collaborate. Issues such as leadership, decision making, motivation, encouraging innovation, and risk taking are just as crucial to cause improvement. This definition further reflects the breadth of the subject highlighting some of the activities involved in performance management and signals the need to require a range of different set of skills and functional approaches.

Despite this multidisciplinary, performance management and evaluation has developed from diverse backgrounds. Various measures, management practices and approaches have developed separately. Financial and particularly accounting have been concerned with measuring and controlling the financial performance of an enterprise, operations have been concerned with shop floor performance often concentrated on improving throughput and efficiency whether a manufacturing or a service context, strategy have addressed developing plans to deliver future goals and human resources have been concerned with managing the performance. Recently performance management from these disparate disciplines has started to converge and recognise the need for integration into a multidisciplinary, yet holistic approach to managing performance (MacKenzie, 2000; Goltz, 2014).

Fields of strategy, accounting and operations management have informed the field of performance evaluation that is developing a momentum of its own. For instance, the most widely known approach to performance evaluation, the Balanced Scorecard is now extensively used as a strategy development and execution tool but was designed in an operational environment. Neely et al. (1995) defined performance measurement as the process of quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of action. They identify the activities required to measure performance by defining a performance measurement system as consisting of three inter-related components including Individual measures that quantify the efficiency and effectiveness of actions.

Ittner et al. (2003), Gates (1999) and Otley (1999) broaden the scope of performance evaluation to include strategy development and action taking. They argue that performance measurement includes development of strategies or objectives, and the taking of actions to improve performance based on the findings provided by the performance measures. Although some authors (Johnson & Broms, 2000) question the value of basing the managerial processes on performance measures, obviously a performance measurement system can form the information system that is key to performance management process, and combines all the relevant information from all the other performance management systems (Bititci et al. 1997).

A performance management system is meant to be interactive (Kaplan & Norton, 2000) since its main roles are to, first, facilitate the implementation of the business strategy and to question strategic assumptions. Regarding the multitude of measures, managers who use the balance scorecard, as an interactive system will be overloaded, thus they will not be able to interactively use the system. However, this argument can be weakened by the findings of Lipe & Salterio's (2002) studies who found that the use of the scorecard framework positively impacts managers' judgement and improves their focus on what on the key issues.

In this regard, the problem of how organisations should assess their performance has been challenging management scholars and practitioners for many years. By the early 1980's; however there was a growing realisation that, regarding the increased complexity of organisations and the markets in which they compete in, it was no longer valid to use financial measures as the sole criteria for assessing success. Johnson & Kaplan highlighted many of the deficiencies in the way in which management accounting information is used to manage organisations (Johnson & Kaplan, 1987) by highlighting the failure of financial performance measures to reflect changes in the competitive circumstances and business strategies. Whilst profit has always remained the overriding goal, it is considered to be an insufficient performance measure, as they should reflect what organisations have to manage in order to gain profit (Bruns, 1998). Cost-focused measurement systems provide a historical view, giving little indication of prospect performance and encouraging short-sightedness (Bruns, 1998)19. The limitations of traditional measurement systems have caused a revolution in the field of performance evaluation (Eccles, 1991). Many authors have focused on the mechanisms of how organisations can design appropriate measurement and management systems. Based on literature, consultancy experience and action research, numerous processes have been designed that organisations can follow in order to design and implement performance measurement systems (Bourne et al. 2002). Many frameworks such as Balanced Scorecards have been proposed that support these processes. The objective of

such frameworks is to guide organisations to define performance in a way that reflects their objectives and evaluates their performance appropriately and this is often done by defining performance measures that reflect these strategic objectives.

More specifically, evaluating performance in the public organisations contributes to the achievement of multiple objectives such as transparency of costs and outcomes, improved service quality, increased employee motivation and so on. On the other hand, its improper transposition of an instrument developed for operations management, which may cause serious distortions when applied to the public organisations, is unpleasant to some organisations.

Measuring performance is a tool that has been a part of a comprehensive set of modifications that include a review of the macro-structure of the state, the previous definition of results to be gained, granting flexibility to the public organisation that is committed to results in advance and recognizing the role of the public managers who have been given greater autonomy and imputed accountability for the evaluation OECD (2010) states that performance in public institutions is a broad concept that includes not only costs and effects on outcomes, but also such issues as appropriateness, due process and trustworthiness. In order to draw a more detailed elaboration of this issue, the adoption and implementation of performance measures from with both technocratic and political/cultural approaches will be discussed, as well as the relevant factors that have been found to significantly affect these policies.

Technocratic Approach

From the technocratic point of view, the adoption and implementation of performance measures are merely technical and rational issues. Therefore, organisations can be modified through applying rational planning which are based on scientific analysis to achieve the efficiency (Gouldner, 1959). Julnes & Holzer (2001) state that rational factors have implications for the utilizing performance measures and associate these factors with both adoption and implementation stages. Furthermore, they consider the political and cultural aspects of evolution and identify clear distinctions in how rational factors work at each stage of public policy utilisation process. The followings include these factors:

Resources

Public institution that have experimented with performance measurement, strongly emphasize on the importance of rational allocation of resources, employing staff devoted to effective evaluation of performance measures, and collecting quality data and information (Berry & Ikerd 1996; Holzer & Halachmi 1996).

Information

In the technocratic and rational approach, it is usually argued that having the technical knowledge of conducting and implementing performance measurement is critical to its success (Wilkins 1996). This knowledge is typically acquired through training or having access to adequate information on performance measurement. Julnes & Holzer (2001) believe that this factor to have an important impact on the two stages of utilisation.

Goal Orientation

Strategies for achieving the goals related to measuring performance of public policies are often formulated and modified because of the organisational interest in performance measurement (Bryant 1996). Additionally, it has been suggested that in order to achieve useful evaluation of the processes, consensus on program goals is crucial. Hence, if there is a goal orientation in a public institution, adoption and implementation

of performance measures is more likely to be conducted (Attkisson et al. 1978).

External Requirements

Organisational change is typically rational and consequently policy decisions will inherently elicit desired behaviors. For instance, Jackson (1996) suggests that if preparing annual performance reports are required by law, it will compel following through in spite of initial challenges. Hence, it is logical expected that an external requirement use performance measures should lead to both adoption and implementation.

Political and Cultural Approach

The significance of the technocratic factors is not dubious but it is important to note that they are not sufficient to bring about utilisation and need to be reconsidered within the context of a political framework (Fisher 1986). Howard & Schneider (1994) and Pettigrew et al. (1992) undermine the technocratic view, arguing that this approach disregards the role of context and powerful groups within organisations, leading to misconceptions about the nature of problem-solving processes in organisations. Carnall (1995) asserts that in order to understand how organisations are managed, experienced, and changed, it is necessary to understand the politics of organisations. Change in the public institutions may lead to conflict, which are usually resolved by internal political processes such as the forming interest groups and coalitions, bargaining, and side payments (Pfeffer, 1983).

Rational Factors in Political and Cultural Context

While the literature and experiences from the field suggest that resources and access to information are indeed important for utilisation to occur, the role of requirements and goal orientation have been undermined by theorists. Julnes & Holzer (2001) consider external requirements, arguing that the formal or legal authority that public organisations are subject to operating in a political context, which may weaken or bolster it in practical terms. This implies that even in cases that a policy requirement is formulated, implementation is not assured by any means (Holzer & Gabrielian 1998). Additionally, policy makers do not necessarily anticipate that policies for change be implemented. Hence, public institutions may try to satisfy a law or administrative regulation, which is an external requirement, to use performance measures by concentrating only on policy adoption (designing the measures), without effectively implementing —a phenomenon known as symbolic action.

Thus, by taking an internal policy requiring the organisation to use performance measures, we can expect that it will strongly affect adoption. Furthermore, in terms of goal orientation, Cronbach et al. (1980) argue that, unlike in the technocratic approach, goals are an integral part of political rhetoric in the political and cultural approach. It means that when a goal orientation represents mere symbolic action, this factor is expected to have a greater influence on the adoption of performance measurement and less impact on the implementation process. Political and cultural perspective does not disregard the importance of the rational perspective, but places it within a political/cultural context.

Political and Cultural Factors

Internal Interest Groups

It has been suggested that when public organisations realise that performance measurement can help them accomplish their tasks more efficiently, they become more interested in its potential (Wilkins, 1996). It could also be asserted that if evaluation results are utilised, the evaluation process must incorporate the identification and involvement of relevant decision makers and stakeholders, including individuals for

whom information is vital, who are willing to share responsibility for the assessment and utilisation, who are able to use the information, and who have important questions in this area. In other words, involving internal stakeholders in the performance-measurement initiatives can lead to a better understanding of the reasons to undertake the effort. Nevertheless, given that implementing performance-measurement information could have negative effects on employees, a stronger positive effect of this factor on adoption than on implementation can be expected.

External Interest Groups and Unions

The significance of external interest groups is as important in the utilisation process of performance measurement as internal factors. Public organisations experimenting with performance measures have asserted that the success of a performance evaluation system depends on the support of officials and continued support from the public (Weidner & Noss-Reavely 1996). Using outside experts, working with external groups and stakeholders are important means of influence. Especially, it is expected that given the external consequences of using performance measures, support from citizens and officials (external interest groups) will be essential for implementation. This support may influence in two ways: first, by allowing the organisation to allocate resources to the effort, and second, by using the information even when the results violate a political agenda. Unions are examples of an external interest group due to their affiliation with larger external organisations.

In addition, unions may feel justified in opposing change when it may bring about negative consequences to its members. For instance, the implementation of performance measures by the Oregon Department of Transportation removed one third of all management positions (favorable outcome for the agency, but not so for the employees involved). If unions intend to oppose practices that could threaten employees, it is reasonable to find the level of unionisation to be negatively related to both stages of performance measures (adoption and implementation), but this negative effect tends to be particularly strong at the implementation stage.

Factors Affecting the Use of Performance Measures

Julnes & Holzer (2001) empirical research sheds light on the factors affecting the use of performance measures. The following tables summaries their findings about adoption of measures:

Table 1. The Significant Factors Related to Adoption

Factor	T-Value	P-Value
External requirements	2.033	.0428
Internal requirement	5.804	.0001
Internal interest groups	2.577	.0104
Resources	5.390	.0001
Goal orientation	2.688	.0075
Information	2.627	.0090

The following table depicts the statistical analysis results on factors affecting implementation:

Table2 . The Significant Factors Related to Implementation

Factor	T-Value	P-Value
External Internal Groups	3.348	.0009
Municipality	2.851	.0046
Percent unionized	1.807	.0716
Adoption	9.097	.0001
Resources	4.751	.0001
Information	3.417	.0007

Julnes & Holzer (2001) findings indicate that adoption of performance measures is significantly and positively predicted by internal requirements, resources, internal interest groups,

external requirements, goal orientation and access to information. In terms of implementation, they argued that differentiating of the mechanisms responsible for each stage of the utilisation process adoption and implementation is highly needed. Later, they empirically tested their argument by empirical investigation. The results suggest that when adoption is not controlled, external interest groups have a significant and positive effect on implementation while not highly significant, unionisation have a negative effect on implementation.

Additionally, internal requirements have less positive effect on implementation than on adoption. The effect of external requirements is also significantly smaller and less significant on this dependent factor. Specifically, their findings show that the positive effect of external interest groups not only continued to be significant, but also increased in magnitude.

Furthermore, though indicated only a small increase in magnitude and significance, unionisation continued to have a negative effect on implementation and is the most direct precursor of implementation, adoption is the most influential; however, the effects of both internal and external requirements ended, indicating that these predictors do not directly affect implementation; Instead, they typically operate through their influence on adoption. Hence, adoption can be regarded as a mediator. Comparably, the effects of all technocratic factors significantly reduces when controlling for adoption.

Research Methodology

In order to gather data, a questionnaire with five-point Likert scale (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) are distributed among the research population who are 70 academic experts in the area of public policy and performance evaluation. In this process, first, 30 questionnaires distributed for pilot study. Regarding the acceptable degree of reliability in the data using Cronbach’s Alpha test (alpha = 0.76), the questionnaire are distributed among all other experts. The collected data are used to rank the adoption and implementation performance measures in terms of importance. In this regard, the TOPSIS technique will be used to rank the motivational factors in each job category for importance. The algorithm for the TOPSIS technique is as follows:

Step 1

First, we create an evaluation matrix consisting of m alternatives and n criteria, with the intersection of alternative and criteria given as x_{ij} , we therefore have a matrix $X = (x_{ij})_{m \times n}$.

The matrix $(x_{ij})_{m \times n}$ is normalised then in order to form the matrix $R = (r_{ij})_{m \times n}$, using the normalisation method

Step 2

$r_{ij} = x_{ij} / pmax(v_j), i = 1, 2, \dots, m, j = 1, 2, \dots, n$, where $pmax(v_j)$ is the maximum possible value of the indicator $v_j, j = 1, 2, \dots, n$.

Step 3

The weighted normalised decision matrix is calculated: $T = (t_{ij})_{m \times n} = (w_j r_{ij})_{m \times n}, i = 1, 2, \dots, m$

$w_j = W_j / \sum_{j=1}^n W_j, j = 1, 2, \dots, n$ so that

$\sum_{j=1}^n w_j = 1$, and W_j is the original weight given to the indicator $v_j, j = 1, 2, \dots, n$.

Step 4

The worst alternative (A_w) and the best alternative will be determined: (A_b):

$$A_w = \{ \langle \max(t_{ij} | i = 1, 2, \dots, m) | j \in J_- \rangle, \langle \min(t_{ij} | i = 1, 2, \dots, m) | j \in J_+ \rangle \} \equiv \{ t_{wj} | j = 1, 2, \dots, n \}$$

$$A_b = \{ \langle \min(t_{ij} | i = 1, 2, \dots, m) | j \in J_- \rangle, \langle \max(t_{ij} | i = 1, 2, \dots, m) | j \in J_+ \rangle \} \equiv \{ t_{bj} | j = 1, 2, \dots, n \}$$

Where,

$J_+ = \{ j = 1, 2, \dots, n | j \text{ Associated with the criteria having a positive impact, and}$

$J_- = \{ j = 1, 2, \dots, n | j \text{ Associated with the criteria having a negative impact.}$

Step 5

The L2-distance between the target alternative i and the worst condition is calculated: A_w

$$d_{iw} = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n (t_{ij} - t_{wj})^2}, i = 1, 2, \dots, m$$

and the distance between the alternative i and the best condition as well A_b

$$d_{ib} = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n (t_{ij} - t_{bj})^2}, i = 1, 2, \dots, m$$

where d_{iw} and d_{ib} are L2-norm distances from the target alternative i to the worst and best conditions.

Step 6

The similarity to the worst condition is calculated: $s_{iw} = d_{ib} / (d_{iw} + d_{ib}), 0 \leq s_{iw} \leq 1, i = 1, 2, \dots, m$
 $s_{iw} = 1$ if the alternative solution has the worst condition; and $s_{iw} = 0$ if the alternative solution has the best condition.

Step 7

According to $s_{iw} (i = 1, 2, \dots, m)$. The alternatives are ranked.

Results

The following table depicts the descriptive statistical analysis of the gathered data:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Related to Factors Related to Adoption

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
External requirements	4.28	0.87
Internal requirement	4.21	0.84
Internal interest groups	4.44	0.73
Resources	4.2	0.78
Goal orientation	3.94	0.9
Information	3.91	0.8

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Related to Factors Related to Implementation

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
External Internal Groups	4.2	0.8
Municipality	3.8	0.93
Percent unionized	3.9	0.84
Adoption	3.6	0.9
Resources	3	1.12
Information	4.1	0.93

As can be seen in the tables above, “internal interest groups” in the adoption stage has the highest average mean and “external internal groups” in the implementation has the highest average. The following tables also depict the TOPSIS results for both adoption and implementation related factors:

Table 5. Ranking of Adoption Related Factors

Factor	Ci
Internal interest groups	0.764
External requirements	0.69
Resources	0.588
Internal requirement	0.586
Goal orientation	0.553
Information	0.549

Table 6. Ranking of Implementation Related Factors

Factor	Ci
External internal groups	0.77
Information	0.643
Percent unionized	0.631
Municipality	0.627
Adoption	0.625
Resources	0.61

According to the tables above, internal interest groups in the adoption stage and external internal groups in the implementation stage rank first in terms of importance.

Discussion

Performance evaluation in the public organisations helps achieving multiple objectives such as transparency of costs and outcomes, improved service quality, increased employee motivation and so on. On the other hand, its improper transposition of an instrument developed for operations management, which may cause serious distortions when applied to the public organisations, is unpleasant to some organisations. In this study, we investigated the factors that affect adoption and implementation of performance measures (mostly based on Julnes & Holzer, 2001) and rank them using TOPSIS technique. We found that internal interest groups in the adoption stage and external internal groups in the implementation stage rank first in terms of importance. About internal interest groups, involving internal stakeholders in the performance-measurement initiatives can lead to a better understanding of the reasons to undertake the effort. Nevertheless, given that implementing performance-measurement information could have negative effects on employees, a stronger positive effect of this factor on adoption than on implementation can be expected. On the other hand, significance of external interest groups is as important in the utilisation process of performance measurement as internal factors. Public organisations experimenting with performance measures have asserted that the success of a performance evaluation system depends on the support of officials and continued support from the public sector.

Future research can overcome the limitation of this study by doing a field study. We collected data using surveying the academic experts in the area of public administration and performance management. Building on the findings of this study, researchers can develop hypotheses about the significant factors and test the hypotheses by surveying and interviewing practitioners in the public sector. Such finding can improve our understanding about the significant factors that impact both adoption and implementation of performance measures in public institutions.

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