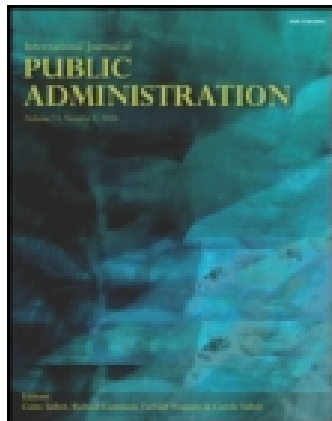


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Introduction to a Symposium on Broadening the Application of Performance Management

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SYMPOSIUM ARTICLES

Introduction to a Symposium on Broadening the Application of Performance Management

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The Italian Academy of Management (Accademia Italiana di Economia Aziendale (AIDEA)), which was founded in Bologna during July 1813, is one of the oldest academic societies in the world. On the occasion of celebrating its bicentenary, the AIDEA held a conference in Lecce, Italy, during September 2013 for AIDEA members and international scholars to present their research within six major areas: Economia Aziendale, Ragioneria ed Economia Aziendale in Italia, Accounting, Management & Organization, Public Management, and Banking & Finance. The theme of the conference—The Firm's Role in the Economy: Does a Growth-Oriented Business Model Exist?—was in response to the global crisis that has raised new questions and challenges that scholars are trying to resolve, including how academic and professional studies can provide strategies on helping firms and markets contribute to economic growth. In order to support the conference theme, the performance management track focused in part on how organizational and interinstitutional performance management within the context of public administration can support sustainable economic and community growth.

Performance management is still an evolving topic in both research and practice. The current issues related to the design and implementation of formal performance management

systems are measuring organizational results, producing information for more informed decision-making, and promoting process improvement (Kelly & Rivenbark, 2011). The ambiguity of performance management in the public sector, however, is still a disputed topic, especially when the management tool is placed within a broader context, responding to the relationship between outcome and community (Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008). The traditional domain of performance management is focused on an organizational sphere, implying that achieved results are primarily assessed in relation to the effects produced by decision-makers within their own institutions. This phenomenon has been seen as a major cause of myopia in measuring and managing performance, overlooking the possibilities of using measures to advance the sustainability of community. This perspective implies that performance is assessed within the organization and within the broader context of community to monitor how public sector organizations can support the design and implementation of strategic policies on the broader aspects of sustainable growth.

This symposium, which contains eight articles presented at the conference, represents a modest attempt to begin the dialogue on broadening the application of performance management to provide organizational and community stakeholders with more robust performance information for long-term decision-making. We begin our symposium with three framing articles on transparency, performance management, and evolution. Maria Cucciniello and Greta Nasi make the case that transparency has the potential to help governments

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enhance their relationships with constituents and to improve their capacity for meeting objectives. However, studies often show that transparency remains limited within public organizations and specific strategies are needed to advance a more open informational environment. This push will become even more important as performance management systems are used within the context of community. Rick Borst, Christiaan Lako, and Michiel de Vries acknowledge that performance management in the public sector remains a controversial issue and question the validity of using measures to capture the complexities of public services. Based on a comparative study among Dutch officials, the authors found that attitudes are more positive toward performance management when viewed from a theoretical lens that recognizes the complex nature of public service. The authors conclude that theoretical frameworks that support performance management need to be reassessed, which is critical as the application of the management tool continues to expand. The final framing article, written by Daniel Williams, examines the origin and development of the logic model, which is used in the evaluation literature to graphically depict the flow of performance data. This research provides critical information on the heritage of scientific management as scholars continue to address the theory and practice of performance in the public sector.

We then include three articles in this symposium that specifically address the application of performance management in the public sector, including a local government located in the United States, a university located in Italy, and the country of Malaysia. Carmine Bianchi and William C. Rivenbark demonstrate how system dynamics can be used to enrich performance management in local government, focusing on how dynamic models can foster a shared view of the relevant system among all stakeholders to overcome the factors that limit data use. A major finding from this research is that a local government cannot overlook the importance of citizenship outcomes when attempting to make a major change in service delivery. Federico Cosenz examines the application of system dynamics to advance performance management in a university setting, which is becoming more important as legislatures are demanding more accountability from institutions of higher education. The research identified a number of performance drivers that decision-makers can use in their effort to pursue sustainable performance improvement among university systems. John Antony Xavier then provides research on how Malaysia used an institutional approach to broaden and place performance

management within the context of public policy, interagency collaboration, and service delivery improvement to advance national strategic goals. In other words, the author focuses specifically on broadening the application of performance management in the public sector.

We conclude our symposium with two articles on health care. Emanuele Vendramini, Francesca Lecci, and Cristina Filannino investigate how health-care organizations design and implement their performance management systems to accommodate the demands from an interinstitutional perspective and from an intraorganizational perspective. While the authors found a strong commitment to performance management across the 29 public hospital trusts of the Lombardy Region (Italy), they also found that the collection and reporting of data did not necessarily create trust among internal and external stakeholders. Elisabetta Marafioti, Laura Mariani, and Mattia Martini, on the other hand, explore the impact of patient transfer on hospital performance and financial management, using longitudinal data from 2004 to 2008. The authors present their findings within the context of network structure and governance of interorganizational communities, which includes the propensity of organizations to work together when faced with internal and external uncertainty.

As symposium editors, we feel that the collection of articles presented herein adds value to the literature in two fundamental ways. First, as mentioned previously, it represents a modest attempt to begin the dialogue on broadening the application of performance management in the public sector. Second, it contains excellent examples of organizational and community challenges when trying to push performance management to the next level, responding to the reality that issues of transparency, higher education, and health care are inherently complex. Therefore, we must continue to confront these issues from a theoretical and practical perspective in order to continue the evolution of performance management within the context of sustainable economic and community growth.

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