

Critical review of Performance Indicators for Government Efficiency, Governance and Service Improvement



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Introduction

In November 2016 an international conference took place on the university of Ottawa campus under the theme of: **The Drivers of Public Sector Implementation: Bridging Canadian and International Experiences.**

As a follow-up, a comparative research is currently being developed on indicators that are used to compare public sector performance across countries.

The main question is : **What are the differences and similarities between the indicators that are used in transnational benchmarks on public sector efficiency; governance and service delivery?**

Answering this question will be particularly useful in supporting public sector organizations to choose comparable indicators across countries when developing performance measurement strategies.

Methodology

The methodology used is a literature review of government performance measurement indicators provided by transnational data providers: World Bank; OECD; etc.

It started with an identification of the correct keywords to research potential benchmarking and performance comparison texts, books and academic articles that can provide us with that necessary knowledge. With the help of Mish Boutet, uOttawa's Government Information librarian, we have been able to put together the correct formula of these keywords:

all((govern* OR "public sector*" OR "public service") AND ((performance OR corruption OR efficiency OR service OR accountability) NEAR/3 (benchmark* OR indicator* OR index)))

all((govern* OR "public sector*" OR "public service") AND ((performance OR corruption OR efficiency OR service OR accountability) NEAR/3 (benchmark* OR indicator* OR index))) AND (international OR transnational OR global)

The main database that I used for this literature research :

ProQuest Politics Collection

<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/ProQuest-Politics-Collection.html>

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Literature Review

"Public sector organizations use a form of benchmarking that aims at uncovering ideas through which performance improvements can be attained. In practice, however, many public sector benchmarking exercises use a form of benchmarking that focuses on indicators rather than ideas" (Ammons et al., 2001, p. 101)

In this early stage of this research, the identification of the valid literature is ongoing and will contribute in building the image of what performance is. It is known that performance is a key word permeating all discussion about "new public management" (OECD, 1993, p. 7) [Kouzmin et al., 1999], however, defining it exactly is a complicated process. Through the review of the texts mentioned in the bibliography, we can conclude that performance as a concept is very versatile and can be interpreted depending on the factors or indicators used. For example performance could be defined and measured based on life expectancy, quality of judiciary, the size of the shadow of economy, secondary school enrolment and the OECD educational attainment indicators and so on (Afonso et al., 2005, p.324).

On the other hand, it is common practice in public sector performance management literature to talk about the three Es of: economy; efficiency; and effectiveness (Boland et al., 2000). Considering that the literature found originated in different countries, defining performance would also require an understanding and definition of the country's culture and social system.

Next Steps

Based on the literature review, various benchmarks and indicators used to assess government performance will be critically assessed and will be organized under a typology framework (public sector efficiency; governance and service delivery). In the second stage of this applied-research project, it is anticipated to organize a series of seminars to critically assess these indicators for their relevance and practicality in different contexts (developed; emerging; developing countries).

A contribution with the research's international collaborators will also be an asset in the next steps of this ambitious project.

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