GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on Performance Measurement and Information Technology in Public Administration

Rebecca L. Orelli, Department of Management, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Emanuele Padovani, Department of Management, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Carlotta del Sordo, Department of Management, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Over the past several years, many organizations have attempted to measure public administration performance. With the development of Information Technology (IT), public administration IT applications are rapidly increasing, thereby transforming government-government and citizen-government interactions in a manner not observed before.

Given these realities, it is very important to find a means to leverage IT tools in government and the tools' suitability for various government-level performance measurement applications, to strengthen the government-citizen relationship and to improve policy and public management processes for intra- and inter-government use. For this to happen with effective outcomes, government organizations need to align their performance measurement strategies with their IT strategic goals.

The special issue on Performance Measurement and Information Technology in Public Administration has had the ambitious objective of discussing the emerging interest in IT applications for public administration performance measurement and the political, policy and managerial implications; the special issue also discusses how governments can best leverage IT applications for effective performance measurement in both developed and developing countries.

This special issue, through the compilation of 5 papers, covers a wide spectrum of research on this topic. In particular, these 5 papers comprise a complex mosaic that adds original contributions to the managerial literature and to the empirical studies on the topic, thus providing a broad and comprehensive theme for this special issue.

The research paper "Systems Thinking to Improve E-Government Evaluation", by José-Rodrigo Córdoba-Pachón, is based on the increasing interest in both academic and government sectors in evaluating the different impacts of electronic government (e-government) systems. A number of predictive, cause-effect, linearly and functionally oriented evaluation models have been proposed and applied. The focus of these models is to identify and quantify costs and benefits derived from successful e-government systems implementation and adoption . However, the inclusion of different stakeholders in an e-government evaluation remains marginal; the inclusion is limited to input information for the above models. This paper criticizes existing evaluation models in two particular aspects: 1) the uncritical identification and quantification of different evaluation elements (aspects, costs, benefits or impacts, people involved in the evaluation); and 2) the lack of reflection regarding how evaluation information is used in managerial decision making. Criticisms regarding these aspects are drawn with the help of systems thinking— a body of knowledge that includes theories, ideas and methodologies for complex problem solving. In addition, the use of systems thinking could enable the surfacing and consideration of evaluation stakeholders' concerns regarding e-government. Strategies to make e-government evaluation practices more inclusive and critical of stakeholders' concerns are proposed and discussed.

The study titled, "Advancing Performance Measurement of Smart City: Compare China and the United States", by Jian-Chuan Zhang and Yu-Che Chen, focuses on the smart city initiatives that are thriving around the world. Measuring the performance of a smart city becomes a critical challenge partially due to the lack of agreement on the concept and on the components that define a city as being "smart." The primary purpose of this study is to propose a performance measurement scheme for a smart city, based on our understanding of a smart city as an ICT-enabled complex governance system in an urban context. The measurement scheme is composed of five factors: institution, actors, interactions among the actors, ICT enactment, and outcomes. Each factor is further developed into a series of indicators. As a tentative effort, this study further utilizes the proposed scheme to make a brief comparison between two existing performance measurement frameworks in the United States and China. The comparison demonstrates the power of the set of measures in gauging and guiding the practice. In addition, we recognize that the scheme is heuristics instead of a road map, because a smart city remains an emergent phenomenon.

The research article, "e-Government's role in shifting the paradigm of performance in the public sector", by Lidia Noto, through the presentation of a case study of the municipality, Palermo, attempts to discuss the renewed need for assessing e-government services' performance in a local government and to disclose the main critical issues in accomplishing this evaluation. In Palermo, a second generation e-government project is being implemented via a web portal. A framework conceptualization to assess digital services' performance appears crucial to improving the system and avoiding the first project's errors. This work relies on a citizens' survey and semi-structured interviews of managers in charge of the project's development. System Dynamics, a dynamic simulation, is used to provide the necessary feedback structure for identifying the portal's determinants of success.

Nigussie Meshesha Mitike developed a study titled, "Information Management and Strategic Communication for Institutional Change in Ethiopia". There is a growing need for institutional effectiveness and efficiency in meeting institutionally established objectives; meeting these objectives cannot be observed independent of information management and strategic communication. Consequently, information management and strategic communication practices have become quite useful for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions. To determine the information management and strategic communication situation in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and

People's Regional state (SNNPRs) in Ethiopia, primary data were collected from nine zonal bureaus, Sidama, Gedeo and Hadiya; among the 13 total zones in the regional state, these are the three most populated zones. The study of the information management and strategic communication activities in the three zones was believed to indicate the overall performance of regional public administration practices in which the three zones alone comprised approximately 40% of the regional state, or 15 million people. The study discovered that the information management and strategic communication practice was less effective because of its intuitional placement; the section was provided no or minimal importance in the administration. In addition, the study discovered that most challenges and problems related to the state's Business Processing and Reengineering (BPR) implementation for institutional change were related to the marginalization of information management and communication practices; in addition, problems were related to the inadequacy of finance and office equipment and poor office situations.

Finally, the research study, "Governing the public sector e-performance: the accounting practices in the digital age", by Rebecca Levy Orelli, Emanuele Padovani e Carlotta del Sordo highlights how, over the past several decades, the demand for accountability in the field of public administration has grown exponentially in Europe. The particular emphasis for this theme was the stimulus for the significant adoption and use of information technology systems in the public sector. Thus, the main focus of European countries has been e-government that provides process reform of the manner in which governments work, share information, and deliver services to external and internal clients. Therefore, accountability has become more critical for improving the economic, financial and organizational management of public matters. The need for accountability has pushed the Italian legislature to produce a sequence of legislative and regulatory interventions towards increased transparency in public administrations. This paper presents an account of the likely consequences that performance monitoring systems have, through e-government technology, on public service transparency and accountability. The research utilizes a study on the Brunetta reform (from the Ministry of Public Administration) to foster public sector productivity; that study's key principles are efficiency, meritocracy, accountability, and transparency.

These papers cover different topics but all note that multiple strategies are needed to encourage e-government development in the future.

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Rebecca L. Orelli
Emanuele Padovani
Carlotta del Sordo
Guest Editors
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