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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36059/978-966-397-253-4-11>

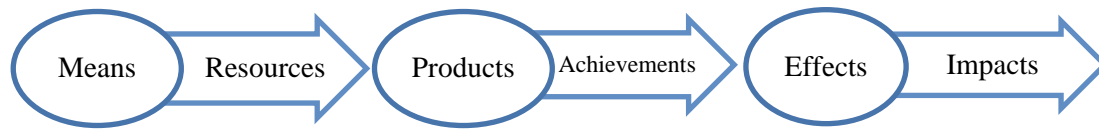
MEASURING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE ACCORDING TO THE OUTLINED DIMENSIONS

Performance measurement is an extremely complicated process, requiring time, money and knowledge. In the design of a performance measurement system, knowledge from extremely varied fields of social sciences must be applied, from public administration to sociology, from economic sciences to psychology, but also mathematics or information technology. For each organization there is a different set of performance measures, a set that must be modified over time depending on intra- and extra-organizational changes.

Establishing the performance of an organization is not an easy thing and even more so for a public organization. In principle, in the public sector there are a number of difficulties in defining the notion of performance [5, p. 42]:

- the first refers to the meaning given to the concept of performance;
- the second difficulty relates to the method of obtaining the performances;
- and the third considers the identification of criteria and performance indicators, in other words, its evaluation.

Measuring the performance of the public sector requires taking into account the distinction between the following aspects that appear in a production process, namely: the means used (input), the process (throughput), the product (output) and the result, the effect (outcome). From this perspective, we can establish a link, on the one hand, between public benefits and the means used to obtain them and, on the other hand, between the objectives achieved through these benefits.



**Figure 1. The interdependent link
between the means used to achieve performance**

Source: developed by the author

The different concerns expressed at the different decision-making levels determined the outline of several dimensions of performance (OECD, 1995). In OECD countries, performance can be assessed using several general categories of measures:

a) Measuring the economy of resources: what can be defined as obtaining resources of adequate quality, with lower costs than those forecasted. All pertinent costs must be included in this evaluation [6, p. 18]. A measure of the economy of resources can be the ratio between the purchase prices of inputs or resources and the value expected, scheduled or adopted as a goal.

b) Measurement of costs, of means: which involves measuring, in monetary terms, the consumption of resources for the provision of a certain volume of services. It may encounter difficulties when some organizations receive free services from other public organizations or where the accounting system is based only on financial accounting.

c) Efficiency measurement: considers the relationship between the result obtained and the means used to obtain it. A process is efficient if it obtains the maximum possible results with a given amount of resources or if it uses the minimum resources with a given volume of results.

Any public organization we take into discussion, the problem of the means consumed becomes more and more acute, the more the state tries to reduce its budgets as much as possible, given the difficult economic context in which it finds itself. This situation forces us to place a greater emphasis on efficiency when it comes to public sector performance. In other states, administrative law often refers to economy, efficiency, effectiveness (known as "the three E's") and compliance with the law as principles that should guide public administration in its activities and

decisions. In certain cases, the logic of efficiency may conflict with the law and administrative procedures, or may be in contradiction with certain traditional values of public services. Public managers often see legal procedures as enemies of efficiency. Some procedures may conflict with a certain economic aspect and may adversely affect the balance between the financial costs and benefits of an administrative action. This conflict generated many debates, among those of an institutional nature, being able to mention the process of transferring production activities to the private sector, the public administration being the one that designs these contracts and deals with their monitoring.

d) Effectiveness measurement: considers the ability of an activity to produce the expected result. Its quantification is given by the ratio between the result obtained and the objective foreseen at the initiation of a program. This presupposes that the objective be defined in advance, and the result obtained can be measured with the help of an indicator. Effectiveness is the most important element of value for money. The goods or services may be provided in an economical or efficient manner, but if they do not achieve the expected objective (result), we can say that the resources used will be largely wasted.

However, measuring effectiveness is a more difficult process, due to the difficulties that arise in defining the objectives. At the same time, sometimes it is difficult to clearly quantify the results obtained from some programs, since sometimes the results obtained can be influenced by other factors, which are not strictly related to the running of the respective program. One of the peculiarities of applying the concept of effectiveness in the public sector is the consideration of both "macro" and "micro" level effects, without which the conditions for success would be lost and we would fundamentally move away from the meaning of the public service action.

e) Measuring the quality of services: follows the degree in which the product or service meets the needs of consumers. In this sense, quality encompasses the effectiveness of a program. However, we generally use this term in a narrow sense, by referring to the immediate or direct needs of users, such as punctuality, accuracy, continuity and adaptability of services, the level of comfort and courtesy encountered in obtaining the service [3, p. 72].

However, quality is not sufficiently reflected by product indicators based on quantitative measurements. Therefore, quality is a vague and complex concept and represents the ability of a product to meet consumer demands. We must also distinguish between objective and subjective quality criteria on the one hand and process quality, product quality and system quality on the other.

As objective criteria for measuring quality, we can mention: the percentage of trains that respect the timetables, the average arrival time of the fire brigade or rescue in case of a fire or an accident, the percentage of canceled courses, the percentage of erroneous prescriptions, the percentage of satisfied complaints. Subjective judgments about the product or manufacturing process may provide additional information. They can be requested from the user, an external observer or staff. Besides the quality of the product and the quality of the process can be equally relevant. First of all, the quality of the products can be controlled indirectly, analyzing whether the production process meets certain requirements (adequate training of personnel, compliance with prescribed procedures, quality assurance measures). Second, certain aspects of the production process that are not directly related to the final product can also be of great importance to the user. waiting or a vacancy [1]. The production process is, in general, less related to the effects (outcomes) obtained, than to the resulting products (outputs). This quality of public service provision is an increasing concern in public sector reform programs in many countries. This awareness has two explanations: on the one hand, almost all governments have recognized the link that exists between the quality of services and economic performance, and on the other hand, the public perceives more and more the incidence that public services have on well-being and his daily life and, as a result, he becomes increasingly demanding in relation to them and more aware of his rights.

The analyzes show that there is only a weak link between spending and subjective performance. Thus, countries that spend less on public administration generally perform better than those that spend a little more. Even if there were a relationship between spending on "general public services" and subjective performance, it would not be allowed to

consider it as a cause-effect relationship, without proceeding to a much more in-depth analysis. This is because there are other factors that influence this relationship. From the analyses, however, it was observed, in general, the existence of a strong positive relationship between the subjective quality of public authorities and the trust shown towards the administration.

f) Financial performance measurement: it is followed, mainly, by public services of an economic nature.

g) Global performance measurement: takes into account the dimensions of performance, approached in a global way.

Experience has shown that there is no single facet of performance that must be achieved, although at the level of a public organization, some of its dimensions must be privileged, such as effectiveness. At the same time, certain individual dimensions may be antagonistic, while others may be complementary, the measurement of overall performance depending on a thorough knowledge of all the interactions that take place between these dimensions. It is also useful to distinguish between direct objectives, measurable through the finished product, and much deeper social objectives [2].

So, becoming aware of the need to improve their performance, all countries undertook measures to improve the performance of the public sector, of greater or lesser intensity, which aimed at reforming the public administration, which mainly aimed at limiting its growth and adapting the structures, as well as the introduction of the strategic approach within the public administration. In conclusion, we can say that governance must work in the real world; it is not a problem of hypothetical systems existing in the abstract. Improvisations in governance must, therefore, be appropriate according to existing and anticipated processes, institutions, cultures, values, resources, conditions and circumstances [4, p. 81]. Therefore, before identifying the tasks of the government and processing the required designs, we must look at the circumstances in which the government will have to focus on the analysis of the performances of the public sector.

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