

Educating Public Officials and Managers: A University Experience

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As issues of government performance measurement receive more attention, the meaningful practice of performance measurement emphasizes active citizen participation in order to build accountable, responsive government. For the last decade, many experiments in empowering citizens via public performance measurement have demonstrated that active interaction with citizens is not only the core of a healthy democracy but an effective way for government to identify and respond to their clearly expressed priorities. It is therefore important to train elected officials and public managers on the possibilities for performance improvement inherent in citizen-influenced performance measurement.

Working professionals typically have limited opportunities to gain a basic understanding and mastery of authentic practices of citizen-influenced performance measurement. Shaping such training is a critical aspect to developing effective means of communication between citizens and their governments, and in particular to understanding the many questions inherent in this process.

To integrate the twin threads of performance measurement and citizen participation, what knowledge, skills, and abilities do public officials need if they are to build capacity for citizen-influenced performance measurement? This article examines current training and education practices in this area, discusses problems that should be confronted, and outlines recommendations pertaining to ongoing training requirements on the topic of citizen-influenced performance measurement.

Capacity Building: Citizen-Influenced Performance Measurement Efforts

Performance measurement as a management tool is made more important when citizens participate in

developing measures and reporting data. Adding citizens' priorities to the performance measurement process adds substantial value to the delivery of effective services. That is, government must know how to cultivate a citizen-oriented culture in the performance measurement process in terms of trust, accountability, responsiveness, openness, diversity, and clarity.

Trust

Formal separation between citizens and their governments has often engendered distrust. If citizens have clearer, more detailed information about a wide range of government functions and performance, then they will more likely have a favorable attitude toward government. By the same token, public officials' confidence in citizens' abilities to evaluate government performance may contribute to refining goals and strategies. This opportunity for performance-oriented dialogue with citizens can generate a more trusting relationship from both perspectives.

Accountability

Government should be committed to performance-based accountability, and involving citizens in the processes of government performance measurement contributes to fostering such accountability. Such efforts to be more accountable have led to adoption and implementation of performance measurement practices. Typically, by sharing performance data with citizens governments can gain greater citizen support for their decisions.

Responsiveness

Direct citizen participation in government is fundamental to establishing a responsive democracy. Citizen participation efforts facilitate citizens' input into the process of reaching decisions, increasing the likelihood that the quality of government service provision will be more responsive to their needs.

Openness

The commitment to sharing performance information with citizens and allowing citizen participation throughout the process of performance measurement places a priority on government openness. By having access to all data, citizens are able to participate more effectively in performance measurement processes.

Diversity

Citizen-influenced performance measurement empowers a wider variety of group participation in decision-making processes, enhancing the representation of each group's needs. To effectively diversify the participation of citizen groups, the public sector has to develop tools (such as citizen surveys) and mechanisms (open public meetings, hearings, citizen advisory committees) for identifying citizens' interests, as well as integrating citizen input meaningfully into performance measurement decisions.

Clarity

The advantages of performance measurement are more likely to be evident to the extent that performance information has been reported to citizens in a clear, timely manner. Without an understanding of government performance data, authentic and meaningful citizen participation is limited. To realistically empower citizens' abilities and engage them, governments have to supply accurate, pertinent performance information cogently and readably.

Current Training and Education Efforts to Strengthen These Capacities

Citizen-influenced performance measurement initiatives such as the Performance Assessment of Municipal Governments program funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (<http://www.sloan.org>) are taking root in the public sector. As the possibilities and advantages of the "movement" become more apparent, up-to-date training and education opportunities in citizen participation and performance management are necessary to help public officials take advantage of this new capacity.

With a focus on citizen-influenced performance measurement, or citizen-driven government performance, public service organizations and academic institutes now offer certificates and degree or non-degree programs. Those programs have begun to offer the latest tools and skills integrating performance measurement and citizen participation. Practitioners who take advantage of those opportunities are able to enhance their knowledge base and ability to respond to citizen demands.

Degree Programs

Hundreds of academic institutions offer degree programs for public administrators, typically the master of public administration (MPA). Yet despite increased demands to improve government performance and facilitate citizen participation, the connection between performance measurement and citizen participation has not been emphasized in these programs. Curricula on the topic of citizen-influenced performance measurement should be introduced in those areas of academic studies, extending beyond the MPA to the master of public policy (MPP), the master of social work (MSW), and even the master of business administration (MBA), as holders of those degrees are increasingly employed in the public sector. A model curriculum in citizen-influenced performance measurement might consist of these courses or modules (other models may be found at <http://www.ncpp.us>):

- Performance Measurement: Adding Value Through Citizens. The important dimensions of performance measurement and citizen participation; the value of involving citizens in measurement of state and local government performance
- Strategic Planning, Budgeting, and Citizen Involvement. Principles of the planning process, concepts, and tools of strategic planning; successful implementation of performance-based budgeting; concepts of citizen involvement in budget processes
- Accountability and Citizen Participation. Citizen participation and community empowerment as

strategies to improve government accountability; how governments rely on the voices of citizens

- Open Information and E-governance. Concepts and mechanisms of open information, such as open public records and open meeting laws, open government policies; e-governance policies
- Presenting and Reporting Performance Data. Methodological tools for developing citizen surveys and data collection strategies; presenting data effectively
- Performance Measurement Systems. Information management and information technology in which performance measurement systems are dedicated to the effective flow of performance-related data within organizations

Nondegree and Certificate Programs

Nondegree or certificate programs can help in updating the skills and techniques of elected officials and managers who may never have studied this subject in their professional or other degree programs. For example, the Public Performance Measurement (PPM) Certificate program offered by the National Center for Public Performance (NCPP) at Rutgers-Newark (<http://www.ncpp.us>) is designed to offer valuable tools to public administrators at the municipal, state, and federal levels, as well as the nonprofit sector, in both practice and theory of engaging citizens in measuring what matters most to them. The certificate includes contemporary management tools in performance management, with innovative strategies, management techniques, and case studies that highlight the value of citizen participation in performance measurement processes. The emphasis on citizen-driven government improvement is specialized and geared to infuse traditional managerial methods and tools with mechanisms and strategies to bring citizens into the fabric of government. The program offers essential information in five separate areas:

1. Citizen-driven government performance improvement, exploring theoretical underpinnings of measuring and improving performance mea-

surement through emphasis on the values of citizen involvement

2. Strategic planning and performance-based budgeting, offering an introductory look at strategic planning and budgeting, and illustrating integrated implementation of operational strategies and budgeting with citizen engagement
3. Citizen engagement in government, dealing with the issues of how to initiate and maintain meaningful citizen participation through collaboration between citizens and government
4. Citizen surveys and data presentation, addressing the importance of citizen surveys and how public officials can design and implement citizen surveys effectively
5. Governmental transparency and e-governance, focusing on the concepts of governmental transparency and e-governance practices to identify some of the limitations of information management

Onsite and Online

There are two typical approaches for delivering training and education: traditional onsite education and online education. Onsite training and education can be highly focused on an organization's specific training needs through face-to-face interaction. With the growing demand for online teaching and learning, most educational institutions are now using online education to accommodate students' busy lifestyles and offer convenient course accessibility from anywhere, anytime. Online training allows practitioners to tailor learning to their specific professional needs at their convenience. However, potential drawbacks are the lack of face-to-face interaction among participants and the failure of some participants to contribute regular and timely e-mailed comments. Some courses attempt a hybrid approach, convening an initial face-to-face meeting of registrants that is then often followed by enhanced online interactions.

Course Design

To meet experienced professionals' need for tailored course requirements and short-length courses,

“reasonable” training structures are necessary. That is, appropriate numbers of required training sessions and a manageable level of required class preparation must be offered. The PPM certificate hosted by the NCPP offers five Web-based classes on a rolling basis throughout the year to accommodate working professionals, thereby maximizing their opportunities to complete the program. Each class is designed to be five weeks in length; preparation requires an average of four hours per week for completing weekly readings, discussions, and assignments. Readings are organized by topics and are directly downloaded from a Blackboard online platform. No purchase of materials is required. Assignments include reaction papers, critiques, and projects. Class discussion questions are posted at the beginning of classes, and students are encouraged to post responses on at least three occasions.

Managerial Skills and Techniques

The integrated field of performance measurement and citizen participation requires government to know how well it is doing, how to achieve specific results, and how to coordinate citizens’ input into performance measurement processes. The task of measuring performance is complicated and including citizen participation at all stages may initially seem overwhelming. The process of implementing performance measurement systems requires extensive knowledge about government’s tasks and technical skills to improve current systems. For example, key performance indicators need to be formulated and appropriate targets should be identified to guide achievement efforts with citizens. Midcareer administrators have to continuously improve their capacities in this area through training and learning processes.

Capstone Project

A capstone project is intended to assist practitioners in preparing an implementation plan of action that includes citizens in the measurement processes of their service areas. In completing an action plan, public managers move through the project stages by

identifying problems, dilemmas, and implementation issues associated with citizen-influenced performance measurement. Using best practices and case studies, they are able to simulate how the models, skills, and techniques can be applied or adapted in real circumstances. This capstone project encourages them to think critically about their work and how to use the lessons learned in the training experience.

Limitations of Current Training and Education Practices

Although the issue of citizen-influenced performance measurement is arguably the most important addition to the public management curriculum in the last decade, training and education on these capacities has been challenged by a dearth of curricular components, limited selection of courses, limited participation in and completion of courses, and low level technical skills necessary for effective participation in online courses.

Lack of Participation and Completion

One issue of concern is a low level of commitment to preparing course work and participating in classes. Although the amount of time required to complete a degree or nondegree program is critical, practitioners are likely to spend little time on preparation of course work, especially in online certificate programs. The low participation mostly results from practitioners’ constrained schedules, heavy workloads, lack of interest in some topics that they consider too “theoretical,” and ineffective instructional techniques. For full-time employees, heavy readings and assignments may conflict with their job responsibilities. Consequently, training assignments that are too burdensome hinder their consistent participation as well as completion of the module, course, or certificate. Another obstacle to participation and completion is related to “uninteresting” materials. Lively, well-written materials are, however, becoming more accessible via the Internet, at virtually no cost. For example, hundreds of articles, manuals, and cases are available at no charge through the Sloan-funded

Public Performance Measurement and Reporting Network (<http://www.ppmrn.net>). This Web-based resource site was launched to promote the use of valid, reliable data as a key element in performance measurement for citizens and public officials. The Website intends to strengthen connections among citizens, public administrators, nonprofit managers, academics, and other groups that focus on measuring and improving government performance.

Lack of Core Curriculum

The best training programs can expose public officials and managers to the challenges of managing and leading citizen-influenced performance measurement efforts. A comprehensive curriculum that incorporates the topics of citizen participation and performance measurement will communicate the values and utility of these practices. Emphasizing the performance measurement side, however, has been a more popular training trend than combining both themes, in part because of fewer core curricular components and content related to citizen participation. There are, then, few models from which to borrow. Curriculum development must be accomplished primarily within the academic community, but partnering with practitioner communities and public service institutes is also necessary for incorporation of their experience and professional needs.

Low Level of Technical Skills

As information and communication technologies (ICTs) have rapidly advanced, the public sector has introduced a variety of new technologies into organizational structures and functions. Government has begun to develop an accessible and affordable technical infrastructure, and those ICTs can facilitate more direct interaction between citizens and government. However, many public officials and managers may be insufficiently comfortable with newer technologies, such as integration of databases, new software programs, data processing, network management, video conferencing, remote participation, and online instruction. This lack of technical skills reduces public employees' effective participation in

online training and education. For example, without minimum computer skills and knowledge, trainees will have a hard time managing technical issues during online training. Because of the nature of such training, participants must be able to navigate the Internet, download reading materials, submit course assignments, and post their ideas via a course platform. Sometimes technical glitches occur during download of materials when sending assignments. Those technical problems are often caused by low-speed Internet connections, minimal computer skills, and insufficient knowledge of hardware and software. Participants must also be able to save documents and open files formatted in a certain type (Word, PDF, PowerPoint, Excel). To reduce these technical glitches, competencies in computer literacy should be overcome before or during an online training. In addition, using a course management platform (such as Blackboard or WebCT) may be unfamiliar to midcareer practitioners. Because of those difficulties in using a course system, participants are sometimes discouraged. A platform should be easy to use and should provide full technological support.

Reshaping Training and Education Opportunities

How can we enhance professional education and development regarding citizen-influenced performance measurement? Several dimensions should be addressed in these efforts.

Outreach Efforts

The visibility of training and education opportunities is important in attracting the interest of individuals and organizations and sustaining delivery of training sessions. A multipronged marketing approach generates more inquiries and registrants. Advertising should be placed in professional newspapers and newsletters of associations working in the field of performance measurement and citizen participation, such as the National Civic League, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA),

and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). Certifying classes for continuing education units (CEUs), whereby public employees earn ongoing professional credentials through appropriate training and education, also promotes registration. Employees may then choose to enroll in classes for professional credit and reimbursement. In a related initiative, NCPP hosted several workshops to promote its PPM certificate to a broader audience; at a recent national conference of the ASPA, more than a hundred faculty, students, and practitioners learned about curricular resources and online certificate offerings; similar forums were convened at the Academy of Management Conference, at a National Teaching Public Administration Conference, at a National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration Conference, and at the annual meeting of the Conference of Minority Public Administrators. NCPP also developed a New Jersey Municipal Performance Measurement Consortium to facilitate use of performance measurement in municipal governments, and participating municipalities are encouraged to enroll their staff members in the citizen-oriented PPM certificate program.

Developing partnerships with other training organizations and professional associations is another outreach effort that may build awareness of training and program offerings on the topic of citizen-influenced performance measurement. The National Center, for example, has partnered with the Federal Graduate School (USDA) to offer a Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program to federal employees. The CPM program focuses on navigating a results-oriented government with demands for high-level performance, and the dimension of citizen involvement, based on the PPM certificate, was incorporated into the curriculum.

Motivating and Monitoring Working Professionals

Exposure to cutting-edge research and techniques helps equip practitioners with knowledge of the core principles, current trends, and practices of performance measurement and related innovative ap-

proaches to citizen participation. At the same time, in order to tailor learning to an audience, courses must provide for feedback from enrolled practitioners regarding the appropriateness of such training materials, workloads, and satisfaction with training contexts. Such materials should typically be interesting and applicable to an individual's workplace. Motivation to gain additional tools for involving citizens in performance processes will be encouraged if trainees can apply lessons learned to their work. Assignments must be seen as relevant. Manageable training workloads are particularly important for working professionals. If the workload interferes with their professional work, participation in training will fall off. Full-time employees are able to allot only limited time to prepare and complete assignments. It is therefore important to pay attention to their feedback. At the most basic level, a tracking system is necessary for monitoring trainees' course activities and performance throughout a program.

Streamlining the Curriculum

Developing a timely, relevant curriculum should be a primary objective in terms of meeting the demands of working professionals, moving them along more effective pathways. Appropriate curriculum construction requires examining many variables that relate to the structure of training programs and targeted audiences. The principle of parsimony should apply, efficiently covering all major components of citizen-influenced performance measurement from strategies to planned citizen participation to data analysis and performance reporting techniques. Each training topic should be articulated with other topics in the curriculum. Curricular components on the topic of citizen-influenced performance measurement should be understandable as well as manageable for implementation of these requirements. The "situational curriculum model" approach developed by Skillbeck (1984) helps develop a citizen-influenced performance measurement curriculum by analyzing a situation, defining objectives, designing a teaching-learning program, interpreting and implementing the program, and assessing and evaluating the results.

An outline for a curriculum on citizen-influenced performance measurement should cover systematic examination of citizens' roles in measurement of government performance, challenges associated with implementing citizen input in a performance measurement system, and development of appropriate participation techniques for sustaining citizen involvement in performance measurement. The curriculum should offer techniques for developing a performance measurement system, understanding performance-based budgeting, conducting citizen surveys and data collection strategies, interpreting and presenting performance information, designing innovative strategies to engage and collaborate with citizens, and evaluating governmental transparency policies and e-government practices.

Offering a Self-Paced Track Approach and Individualized Instructional Services

With respect to course design for distance learning formats, the choice of a self-paced track and individualized instructional support will afford a better training and education approach. A self-paced track allows students to begin a program at any time and complete courses at their own pace. They can elect to take classes on an as-needed basis when their schedule and professional development require such learning. In terms of individualized instructional services regarding course planning, advising, feedback, and networking, students typically receive personalized attention from an experienced faculty member by phone, e-mail, fax, or computer conferencing. For the purpose of completing a program, curriculum specialists and faculty consult and guide an individual's schedule to achieve a best fit. The self-paced and collaborative nature of the class structure still incorporates peer interaction and group networking opportunities through electronic mail and Web discussion forums.

Searching for Innovative Teaching Techniques: Including Practitioners in Pedagogy

Quality teaching can expand one's learning processes by broadening the range of experiences to

new concepts and perceptions. The effects of training can be strengthened with the addition of practitioners on staff. Including practitioners so as to ground the teaching may result in greater credibility by bringing application of citizen-influenced performance measurement principles and case studies directly into an experienced public official's realm. A practitioner might typically have greater flexibility and experience to address "real issues," such as designing effective citizen surveys and dealing with reticent public managers in addressing prioritization of government performance on the basis of citizen input. Bringing in professional practitioners as guest lectures may also deepen the pool of teaching staff.

Learning Through Best Practices: Lessons from Successful Cases

Case studies add a compelling dimension to citizen-influenced performance measurement training and education. Cases, long or short, furnish context and hands-on illustration of the benefits of including citizens in assessing and measuring government performance. Practitioners may recognize the issues and dilemmas of their professional environment as reflected in exemplary cases. Significant practitioner engagement may be enabled through incorporation of case studies. Students with less professional experience may use these examples as sources for their professional projects. From the best practice studies, both experienced and new public employees are able to consider benefits and identify barriers of citizen-influenced performance measurement and improvement. For example, NCPP faculty and staff prepared "Citizen-Driven Government Performance," a report containing ten case studies that capture the dimensions of Sloan-funded initiatives of the Foundation's Performance Assessment of Municipal Governments program: citizen-driven government performance for Montclair, New Jersey; quality of life indicators for Dayton, Ohio; community benchmarks program for Syracuse, New York; state and local government performance reporting of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board; citizen-initiated performance assessment in Iowa; Straphangers Campaign

for transit in New York City; street smoothness project of the Fund for the City of New York; City Scan project in Hartford, Connecticut; partnerships as key to achieving results in Worcester, Massachusetts; and Inside Schools in New York City.

Sloan grantees were contacted constantly for updated information and resources for postings on the site. For example, the Straphangers Campaign project, which measures the effectiveness of New York City's transit service, was able to improve the Transit Authority's accountability with well-informed transportation data to citizens, and to encourage communication between citizens and transit officials for purposes of including citizen opinions in measuring their performance. Reports of the Worcester Regional Research Bureau and the GASB also offer useful illustrations for citizen input, meaningful performance indicators, and criteria for results reporting. Integrating these Sloan-funded project reports into a training and education curriculum highlights best practices in citizen participation and performance measurement.

Using Web-Based Teaching Resources

Applying a range of innovative teaching resources attracts practitioners' interests on the topic. An online learning center will make available a variety of additional resources to support learning and enhance skill development. For example, the online *Teaching Resources Guide for Public Affairs and Administration*, edited by Marc Holzer (<http://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/research/html>), includes resources for enlivening training, with syllabi, cases, simulations, and other instructional materials.

Effective, Resource-Efficient Training and Education

Educating public managers and officials is an important element in establishing authentic practices of citizen-influenced performance measurement. Initiating citizen participation in performance measurement processes still faces many obstacles from time and cost constraints. To minimize the impact of

“noise” from outside public organizations and to maximize effective use of citizen participation in performance measurement processes, more effective training and education must be offered to public administrators.

Practitioners will appreciate effective training when the issues of time, resources, and flexibility are coordinated with their needs. In designing appropriate curricula on citizen-influenced performance measurement, each part of the educational effort should be consistent with all other aspects in order to present a seamless program. Integrating citizen participation with more traditional measurement and public administration concerns has great potential to influence and change the practice and performance of government.

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