FOREWORD

Performance and Democracy in the Public Sector: Exploring Some Missing Links in the Study of Administration and Society (Part B—Administrative Performance, Citizens’ Participation, and Community Involvement)

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PART B—ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE, CITIZENS’ PARTICIPATION, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Following Part A of the symposium “Bridging Performance and Democratic Values in the Public Sector,” Part B is oriented more towards the examination of the relationship between administrative performance and other active interactions with the public such as citizens’ participation and community involvement. The papers included here are those of M. Andrews, M. S. Andrews, and Eran Vigoda.

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De Vries and A. H. Van der Hooft-van der Zijl, T. Bovaird E. Loeffler, and J. Martin, and finally, R. Dibie. Some of these papers were first introduced in the EGPA meetings both in Vaasa (2001) and Potsdam (2002) yet others are original contributions made especially for this symposium. While again conducted in different settings and cultures (South Africa, the Netherlands, the UK, and Nigeria), all of these studies have several elements in common. First, all of the papers deal implicitly or explicitly with actual participatory behavior by citizens or with community involvement in various ways. Second, the papers again highlight the contradictory nature of performance-seeking bureaucracy and democratic values, this time in terms of actual citizenry behavior. Third, all of the papers criticize the contemporary structure of performance evaluation and orientations, suggesting that some major changes need to be made in order to strike a better balance between business approaches and social responsibilities in modern public administration. However, as demonstrated below, the papers also substantially differ in their level of analysis and understanding of the meaning of performance in relation to democratic values. Nonetheless, both points of similarity and dissimilarity are useful for a better exploration of the hidden links between performance and the democratic nature of our societies. Taken together, the studies serve as fine guides for “bridging” the gap between these spheres and drawing strong connections between managerial reforms and their societal meanings.

Part B begins with Andrews’ paper on “New Public Management and Democratic Participation: Complementary or Competing Reforms? A South African Study.” This paper uses the South African arena as a test case for the analysis of one core research question: Can administrative reforms and democratic reforms work together or are they mutually exclusive? Based on an econometric analysis of survey data, the author shows that South African municipalities adopt new public management reforms more readily when influenced by top-down intergovernmental relationships, but adopt participatory reforms more readily when faced with bottom-up civic influences. Andrew thus concludes that administrative and participatory reforms may not complement each other and by so doing provides support to the idea that the bridge between performance and democratic values in the public sector is narrow and unstable, if it even exists at all. However, he finally suggests that before drawing the conclusion that reform types are mutually exclusive, one should consider the role of “administrative culture.” It appears that, while there are different relational influences that could easily create tension between different reform types, these pressures can be tempered by experimental and change-minded administrators in local governments. Experimental and performance oriented administrative cultures provide a “bridge” in this sense, between administrative reforms motivated by performance and participatory reforms grounded in democratic values. Such a bridge allows one to see that administrative
reforms can also be participatory and participatory reforms can also be
democratic.

From the Netherlands, an enlightening case study by De Vries and Van
der Hoofs-Van der Zijl examines “the implications of community policing for
police–citizen relationship.” This article deals with the quality of the Dutch
police and its relationship with the authority of the police. The authors argue
that in recent decades, several internal and external initiatives have been
developed to increase the quality of the Dutch police. On the one hand,
internal processes and procedures were improved, and clearer measures were
created in order to guarantee the quality of police work. There was also an
internal change from “quantity-oriented thinking” to “quality-oriented think-
ing.” On the other hand, it became clear that the concept of police quality is
closely connected with the opinions of citizens concerning the police. The
paper introduces the concept of “community policing” and a theoretical model
that better explains its feasibility and environment. Following this, the paper
demonstrates how the idea of police quality may improve the relationship
between the police and the citizens by making the police an integrated part of
society. However, based on the Dutch experience, the paper notes that
community policing did not fully reach its goals. Despite the fact that
community policing may have contributed to the actual safety in neighbor-
hoods, citizens remain dissatisfied with the most important fundamental of
police authority: the effectiveness of the police. A consequence may be that an
objective increase in police effectiveness, in other words, lower crime rates,
does not influence the perceptions of citizens about police effectiveness. Thus,
the paper provides a rather pessimistic view of our effort to bridge the gap
between public sector performance and democratic values as reflected in
citizens’ trust in the state authorities.

The next study is the Bovaird, Loeffler, and Martin’s paper, “From
Corporate Governance to Local Governance: Stakeholder-Driven Community
Score-Cards for UK Local Agencies.” This paper challenges the Audit
Commission’s methodology for measuring performance in government with
the “community scorecard” approach that has been used in the United States
for a number of years. It suggests that the Audit Commission approach should
be altered to incorporate some of the more imaginative aspects of the
community scorecard, particularly with regard to the inclusion of quality of
life measures, even where a local authority and other local public agencies
have no direct control over the variables which impact upon many aspects of
the quality of life that local people regard as important. The paper also
examines the scope of local governance processes in the UK to be included in
the assessment. By so doing, the paper serves as a good example of how to
integrate some community-based criteria into the older conservative methods
of performance measurements. The paper suggests that the performance
measurement drive in central government has missed some important government dimensions. This argument is particularly evident in its new approach to Comprehensive Performance Assessment in local government and to “star ratings” in the health service. The paper is a conceptual exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of current government initiatives. It builds on lessons from the literature that has been developed over the past thirty years on how to find aggregate measures of the success of public agencies. The paper discusses whether these lessons are still applicable to the field of central–local relations in the UK today and whether recent government initiatives to transcend these past lessons are likely to be successful. The empirical basis for these contrasts derives from a series of research studies conducted over the past four years, working with local authorities who have been piloting the government’s Best Value initiative, implementing the new regimes under the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government Act 2001, and piloting new approaches such as Local Public Service Agreements. The authors then conclude that aggregating techniques in public service performance measurement, such as the CPA and “star ratings” approaches, should be more sensitive to and appropriate for the multi-stakeholder environments in which they are used. More specifically they recommend that the findings (1) report separately the views of all key stakeholders (360 degree assessments), (2) report separately on service performance and the quality of governance, (3) report separately on an appropriate range of aspirations and achievements including a balanced portfolio of indicators, (4) report on the quality of life outcomes experienced by key stakeholders, and (5) report on the quality of life outcomes in geographical communities, in order to highlight the interacting roles of community-based public services and public agency-based public services in improving well-being in specific localities. These characteristics are built into the Community Scorecard approach. Through such an approach, efforts to measure performance in public services could be redirected away from “blame-dumping” and towards “solution-finding.” In addition, performance measurement processes could incorporate the key governance principles of multi-stakeholder co-operation and transparency of decision-making, rather than inventing more “black box mechanisms” whose results are neither understood nor accepted by the key stakeholders who will be responsible for implementing the consequent performance improvement initiatives.

Finally, the paper by Dibie is a unique attempt to relate the individual performance of public sector employees in local governance to the idea of political participation in Nigeria. The paper, entitled “Local Governance Servants’ Performance and Citizens’ Participation in Governance in Nigeria” traces the development of local governments in Nigeria from 1945 to date. It then argues that the shift in the critical decision-making powers and functions
of local government requires its public administrators to be better-trained professionals. However, without citizens’ participation in governance, public servants’ accountability remains low. The study focuses on two major questions: (1) how can performance be related to accountability in the local governments, and (2) what is the relationship between performance and citizenship participation in the local governments’ development process? Using a survey method, the study analyzed 1350 responses from public personnel in three regions in Nigeria. The study also made use of additional data from public servants, citizens, and a documentary analysis of the 1999 election results in local governments. The findings show that local governments in Nigeria do not train their public administrators and that there is no ongoing personnel development. In some local governments where training of staff has taken place, there is no evidence that training and development programs have received increased resources or attention. In addition, an analysis of Nigerian 1999 election results reveals that after more than 35 years of military dictatorship, citizen participation in national and local government elections has fallen below 40%. Nearly 70% of the local government citizens of voting age did not vote in the 1999 presidential election and between 75% and 90% did not vote in any of the state and local government elections held that year. Thus, perhaps 5% of Nigerians are politically active in all of the usual forms of political activity (i.e., taking part in campaign activities, discussing politics, contributing money, going to political meetings etc.). The level of participation in these activities is also related to education, registration laws, age, gender, economic status, and other variables. In addition to the registration requirement, there are socio-economic factors that affect turnout in local government elections. Generally, the 1999 election result reveals that the socially and economically disadvantaged in Nigeria are less likely to participate in the political process. Hence, these groups are less likely to make their voice heard in the local government public affairs arena. In light of these data the author tries to suggest some changes in the human resource policies and in other strategies of the local governments, based on the need to increase collaboration among political and social institutions and to urge extensive improvement of the training and personal qualifications of the state officials.