
Editorial

Robert Fouchet* and Marcel Guenoun

Institut de Management Public et de Gouvernance Territoriale,
Université Paul-Cezanne, Aix-Marseille III,
21 rue Gaston de Saporta,
Aix-en-Provence 13100, France
E-mail: robert.fouchet@univ-cezanne.fr
E-mail: marcel.guenoun@univ-cezanne.fr
*Corresponding author

Biographical notes: Robert Fouchet is a Professor in Public Management in Paul Cezanne University (Institut de Management Public et de Gouvernance Territoriale). He created the CESMAP (Research Center in Public Management) and developed many researches, focused on public organisations performance, measure of public policy and management in public sector. He organised many international seminars and actually hosts the annual conference of EFMD in Public Sector Management Development. He is an active Member of other international research groups like EGPA, EIASM, EUA and Guest Editor for a Special Issue of *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management*, Inderscience Publishers.

Marcel Guenoun is an Assistant Professor at the Public Management Institute in Aix-en-Provence, Paul Cezanne University, Aix-Marseille III, France. His teaching and research initiatives focus on the areas of performance management in local governments and marketing approach of local public services. He has taken part in various collective books (*Administration, gouvernance et décision publique*, L'Harmattan, 2004; *Partenariat public-privé et gouvernance future*, L'Harmattan, 2005) and academic conferences. He is a Member of the Public Management Research Network (RECEMAP).

1 Introduction

During the last 20 years public management reforms has been led by one theory: public service does not change by itself, therefore we have to put the pressure on to obtain better performance.

This pressure is due to the scarcity of resources concerning states as well as enterprises, since the amount deducted from the client (or the user) has become more and more difficult. However, the stock holder (or the deputy) has gone in the direction of the employees in order to maintain his dividends. Therefore, the organisation, the way one works, have become the variable for adjustment that has helped to resolve the contradiction which is apparently insoluble between the necessity to offer more and better always, for much less.

To face a changing environment, internal processes such as strategic planning or results-based budgeting or market-like mechanisms such as benchmarking or vouchers, have been introduced to public administrations which, applied in a

superficial manner, give public services the conception of private performance. Is there another way?

We need, today, to redefine these objectives in the context of the public sector. The failure of the New Public Management in the 1990s leads us to wonder again how to create really efficient management in organisations. Performance is not proclaimed, it is managed, acted upon according to political goals in the global context of public action. Thus, thinking about the performance implies thinking about the organisation first.

There are signs of a revival of interest in this important problem, both within government and academically so it is timely that this issue of *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management (IJPSPM)* is addressing the issue of the renewal public performance management theory.

This present issue of the journal contains five insightful contributions to very different parts of the public performance management domain.

2 Performance management as intraorganisational issue

Firstly, the cultural context of the development of the reforms has often been over- or under-estimated. On the one hand, universal prescriptions of the right methods of management have been developed. Favourised by great international institutions and great Consulting companies (Saint-Martin, 2000), these approaches have sometimes led to important defeats. Reacting to the limits of means of international comparison, many studies have merely shown the performance or counter-performance of public management in a national context.

One objective of this Special Issue is to put in light comparative studies which, emphasising the importance of the context, do not abandon the quest for theoretical explanations and generalisations and that develop theories that are context sensitive (Pollitt, 2005). Two contributions focus on this point. In his paper, Claude Rochet explains that crisis are an opportunity to change management in both private and public sector but under specific conditions: the 'how' is not essential to conduct change but the 'what' is. It means that any tool can be implemented successfully only if the organisation started earlier to reason strategically what will allow the crisis to be endogenised by organisation and lead to organisational learning.

In their paper, Tiberghien and Guenoun try to look after the performance framework held by public-private partnership in a post-New Public Management era. They present the different use of PPP in a space and hierarchic scale.

3 Performance management as interface

As a second objective, we wish to promote an approach of public performance in a way, which is both embedded and englobing. Embedded because to understand how performance is managed we have to invest the processes and techniques from the inside. But this technical comprehension must be a device to link it to another concept than itself. In other words, understanding the social mechanisms of insertion in practices and public institutions, yet it is also about understanding the mechanisms and discussions allowing its diffusion.

Two papers offer different views on this linkage:

In his contribution, Carlos Pestana Barros, analysing the technical and allocative efficiency of tax offices in central and greater Lisbon, tries to link technical approach with organisational governance. This issue is discussed in detail offering valuable insights for effective management. One of his suggestions is to include contextual factors beyond managerial control in inspection procedures to improve organisational efficiency.

In their contribution, Robert Fouchet and Marcel Guenoun, pursue the elusive linkage between performance management and institutional setting in local administration. These authors take the position that suggests decentralisation reforms lead to pluralist performance management. Since there is no coercive pressure to adopt performance management, normative pressures act. Additionally, they propose a lagged effect: performance informations are used in a functional and technical perspective and have a stronger impact on the policy process than the transversal performance management process.

4 Performance management as social matter

In the public systems, we can notice an insertion of the management way of thinking: it is habitual to link performance to public service and to management towards results.

Public and private managements are not opposed, they communicate and better themselves together. If public management is influenced by private management, it nevertheless cannot be defined strictly through public organisations. Association, NGOs ... are also involved in this evolution. Yet, companies seeking for legitimacy, social responsibilities, influence and lobbying are more and more interested in managing their 'publicness'.

This gathering is enlightened in Olivier Keramidas and Lugdivine Bout-Colonna's paper, which gives an overview of the organisational history of the PPP in the health area/services.

The last paper of this issue is written by Olivier Keramidas and Robert Fouchet. The authors claim that the management of equity in cultural organisations is not a matter of normative decision making, yet it is a matter of a series processes generating an empirical trajectory of equity. The trajectory perspective aims to identify the micromechanisms producing a gap between an organisation's goals and its effective actions. In this case, they show that even if the decision makers' will is a question of equal treatment of individuals in the cultural offer, culture is offered for all but it is not managed by wills of social redistributions.

Nowadays, a global awareness amongst many states that the just stabilisation of the public system is the necessary condition, yet not the only condition, of the coming of democracy.

Further, the stabilisation of the economic activity and of its dynamisation is a result of the politic stabilisation to which participates the administrative stabilisation. The administrative performance can lead to the economic performance.

In that sense, we wish to promote a societal approach of public performance: as shown by recent works, public performance cannot be restrained to a mere thought about costs and procedures of public organisations. What Bouckaert (2005) names

the 'grand canyons of public performance' – its contribution to the satisfaction of the users and to their trust in the administrative and politic system – needs to be jumped over.

References

- Bouckaert, G. (2005) 'Un Nouvel Examen, de la Mesure de la Performance dans le Secteur Public', *Télescope*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Automne.
- Pollitt, C. (2005) *The Essential Public Manager*, Mac Graw-Hill, Open University Press.
- Saint-Martin, D. (2000) *Building the New Managerialist State*, New York: Oxford University Press.