Public Value Management: A Three-Dimensional Performance Assessment Spectrum for Public Security Organs

Zhilei Zhao*

Public Security Administration Department, Jiangsu Police Institute, Nanjing 211800, Jiangsu, China

*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract:

The performance assessment adopted by China's public security organs has played a prominent part in various aspects ever since its implementation, e.g., boosting the efficiency of police work and the quality of public services, reducing administrative costs, improving the civilian-police relationship, etc. Going into the governance stage, however, long-overlooked problems started exposing themselves to some extent. One of the most apparent is the ratio-centered representation of assessment indicators, which has proved to be not particularly effective and accurate for systematically quantifying "governance." Looking at the bigger picture, this performance assessment issue seems related to a multi-dimensional spectrum in a network environment. Contrary to the inability of the endless arrays of new public management approaches to satisfy network governance requirements, public value management seems to be the most fitting solution. This is due to its nature as an explanatory framework, which makes it compatible with investigating the status quo of the performance assessment on public security organs and the orientation of its development on the spectrum. In light of this, the study considered both the reality as well as the perspectives offered by the Public Value Management Theory, before reflecting on the dimensions of "value orientation," "partnership," and "networking behaviors" used in existing performance assessments by public security organs. Based on this reflection, a new set of dimensions for the performance assessment spectrum targeting public security organs was proposed: "public value," "partners" and "networking competence."

1. Problem statement

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, some social functions have been transferred to the public network for operation. The rapid collaboration among various components in the network governance structure has demonstrated remarkable flexibility, adaptability, and rapid response capabilities. In the network governance structure, multiple stakeholders such as government departments, social organizations, and the public have established close social connections and jointly strive to provide public goods and services. Although the administrative inertia under the traditional bureaucratic system remains strong, in the post-pandemic era, the impact of the network governance model on grassroots society may be more direct and profound. Of course, the pandemic has also exposed many problems that have been neglected or put on hold to some extent for a long time. Among them, the most prominent issue is that the performance indicators centered on various ratios in the traditional single-dimensional performance assessment cannot systematically, accurately, and effectively measure "governance", which is related to the construction of a multi-dimensional performance assessment system for public departments in the network environment.

In the 1980s, the new public management paradigm reshaped the nature of the discipline of public administration, and the traditional administrative management paradigm was unable to cope with the major changes in the discipline. The new public management aimed to enhance the efficiency of public service provision by applying private sector management techniques. Performance assessment, as an important tool under the banner of new public management, gradually played a significant role in improving the efficiency of government departments, enhancing the quality of public services, and reducing the costs of public activities. After entering the new century, local public departments in China began to focus on outputs, quality standards, and efficiency, designing and using annual performance indicators, which effectively promoted the widespread application of performance assessment. Performance assessment provides important feedback on the goals and tasks that public departments are concerned about, and motivates civil servants to take on responsibilities actively. It has gradually become an important tool and method for improving administrative efficiency and service quality. However, some scholars believe that due to the complexity and ambiguity of administrative activities and the inappropriateness and imbalance of performance indicators, it is objectively difficult to accurately measure performance results. Despite this, the potential benefits of performance assessment still encourage public departments to adopt this method. And practice has proved that performance assessment can effectively improve decision-making quality, enhance administrative efficiency, and strengthen accountability. Therefore, based on the theory of public value management, this paper explores the reconstruction of the performance assessment dimension system of public departments in the network governance environment to achieve the modernization of the administrative governance system and governance capacity.

2. Public value management: Origin, evolution, and characteristics

2.1. The origin of public value management research

The new public management aimed to enhance the efficiency of public service provision by applying private sector management techniques, with a core focus on market and competitive efficiency. However, it confused the essential differences between the public and private sectors and ignored the "publicness" of public management. This neglect may lead to a deviation of its value from the essential attributes of public management. Despite abundant evidence indicating the inapplicability of private sector management techniques to public services, the new public management remained enthusiastic about applying outdated private sector techniques to public service provision. With the transformation of governance concepts leading to the innovation of administrative management theories, the excessive marketization and rationalization of the new public management have faced increasing criticism and doubts. Scholars hold that in an increasingly fragmented and cross-organizational environment, the contribution of the various policy propositions of New Public Management to the management and governance of the public sector and public services is limited and

one-dimensional. A more radical view is that New Public Management has failed, even if it once played a role. Competitive markets are often highly inefficient mechanisms for resource allocation in the complex supply of public services.

Entering the governance era, the diversification of governance subjects and the networking of service supply require the public sector to rely less on the "process control" and "rules and conventions" commonly used in the bureaucracy, and instead adopt negotiation, mediation, intermediary, and new conflict resolution skills consistent with governance concepts. The focus is on governing social public affairs and public service supply rather than managing them. It is necessary to manage the multiple relationships among public service organization networks, that is, to establish partnerships among government departments, social organizations, and the public, and continuously enhance the integration and responsiveness of government departments. The value of public services gradually transcends "entrepreneurship," with the network at the core, understanding and providing efficient public services through an external focus approach, formulating and implementing effective public policies under the interaction of multiple values and forces, building and maintaining cooperative governance networks based on trust, identity, and common interests, and striving to maintain and enhance the common interests of multiple actors. Scholars believe that the ideas and practices of administrative management always respond to new environmental challenges and the deficiencies of old paradigms. Traditional administrative management and New Public Management cannot meet the requirements of network governance, while Public Value Management is the most suitable administrative management model for the era of network governance. Public Value Management focuses on collective preferences, values the role of politics, promotes network governance, repositions the relationship between democracy and efficiency, and comprehensively addresses issues of efficiency, responsibility, and fairness. It is regarded as a new administrative management paradigm [1].

2.2. The evolution of public value management research

Public Value Management theory is the result of the development of administrative management. In 1995, Mark Moore first proposed the concept of public value, stating that "as strategic managers, governments should be able to discover, define, and create public value." He believed that the main feature of traditional administrative management was that leaders had clearly defined the functions and operation methods of the public sector, and the responsibility of managers was to follow these regulations, maintain and improve the operation of the organization, rather than make innovations that could change the role and values of the organization [2]. New Public Management did not transcend this inherent characteristic; it did not change the main functions of the government, nor did it change the basic organizational structure of the government, nor did it fundamentally change the nature of the government. At most, it only partially changed the operation mode of administrative management [3]. Since the beginning of the new century, the diversification of governance subjects, the blurring of responsibility boundaries, and the networking of public service supply have required government departments to become strategic managers. Their responsibility is not to ensure the continuation of the organization, but to act as creators, changing the functions and behaviors of the organization based on changes in circumstances and their understanding of public value [4]. With the development of modern democratic systems and social governance, research on Public Value Management has gradually emerged. Some scholars roughly divide the research on Public Value Management into three categories: the perspective of public value results, the perspective of public value consensus, and the perspective of public value integration [5].

Under the result-oriented public value discourse system, public value emphasizes the political coordination and expression of the collective preferences of citizens [6]. Unlike the New Public Management, which focuses almost entirely on the internal processes and management of organizations and emphasizes results and measurement, result-oriented public value management pays more attention to the creation, establishment, and maintenance of public trust, as well as responding to the collective preferences of the public [7]. It utilizes the interdependent actors in the governance network to jointly provide public goods and services. Under the

consensus-oriented public value perspective, public value is a consensus formed about rights, obligations, and norms, and is a value orientation and behavioral norm that is jointly followed by the public sector, citizens, other sectors, etc. [8]. With the advent of the governance era, in the public domain, the public sector is just one of many actors, and more actors are involved. The boundaries between the public and private domains are becoming increasingly blurred, which prompts the emergence of a new public order that transcends traditional organizational boundaries. This order aims at building public trust, pursuing normative principles, and reconciling value conflicts. In recent years, research on public value management has attempted to establish an integrated conceptual framework that combines result-oriented public value and consensus-oriented public value. The main purpose is to enhance the dialogue and exchange between public value theory and administrative management theory and to increase the explanatory power for systemic issues in administrative management practice [9]. Researchers from an integrated perspective believe that public value management, on the one hand, lies in the application of a "consensus" orientation, where the public sector, social organizations and the public jointly formulate behavioral norms or standards, promoting the formation of consensus on rights, obligations and norms; on the other hand, it attaches importance to a "result" orientation, focusing on the creation, establishment and maintenance of public trust, as well as responding to the collective preferences of the public, ensuring that each actor in the cooperative network takes responsibility for creating public value [10].

2.3. Characteristics of public value management

The characteristics of public value management can be summarized as follows: First, public value management is a dynamic process. Mark Moore believes that, as the creator of public value, the government department should change its functions and behaviors according to the changes in circumstances and different understandings of public value, constantly creating new public value. Public value management is a dynamic process. Under the premise of creating public value for society, the foundation of creation is the discovery and definition of public value; the key to creation is the distribution and enhancement of public value. From public value, from the discovery of public value to the definition of public value, from the distribution of public value to the enhancement of public value, this is a complete process. Second, public value management is the cooperative production of multiple actors. The creation of public value is a progressive process that includes four stages: discovery, definition, distribution, and enhancement of public value. It is the result of the cooperation of various actors across organizational boundaries. Public value management integrates the perspectives of multiple actors and supports a large number of multi-level mechanisms that connect the activities of various actors horizontally and vertically. The operation of this process-oriented public value management relies on the combined effects of multiple actors, different action sites, multiple spatial scales, and multiple processes. Third, public value management is a networked production system. In the governance era, the supply of public goods and services requires interaction and cooperation among government departments, social organizations, and the public. Such networked behavior breaks through the boundaries of established organizations, changes the location and mode of social production activities, and builds practice on a dialogue and communication system, demonstrating strong network characteristics. Public value management regards democracy and efficiency as partners, reconfigures production systems, focuses on production systems that span across organizations and sometimes even involve millions of dispersed individuals, and creates public value through negotiation, mediation, intermediation, and new conflict resolution techniques [4].

3. Public sector performance appraisal: Threefold reflections

Performance appraisal is a characteristic field or tool of government management. Its basic logic is to determine performance planning and target systems, develop appropriate methods for measuring the outputs and results of public behavior, and drive government departments to improve their service supply capabilities through performance appraisal. However, even when performance appraisal tools were popular in government departments, there were still voices of doubt from all sides. The main

content focused on the essential differences between the public and private domains and organizational functions, emphasizing the orientation of instrumental rationality, and the traditional performance indicators centered on various ratios could not systematically, accurately, and effectively measure "good governance." Therefore, reflecting on the "value orientation," "partnership," and "networked behavior" of public sector performance appraisal is a key link in constructing a multi-dimensional system centered on public value.

3.1. Reflection on the "Value Orientation" of public sector performance appraisal

Under the impact of scientism, value rationality declined in the new public management, while instrumental rationality overstepped its bounds, leading to an imbalance between instrumental and value rationality. Guo Xiajuan pointed out that the core value orientation of the new public management is instrumental rationality, focusing on "what is" factual issues while selectively ignoring "what should be" value issues. The performance appraisal under the banner of the new public management "adheres to the principle of efficiency first," and the pursuit of efficiency supremacy has exposed many flaws in practice [11]. In the eyes of critics, instrumental rationality is an extremely utilitarian practical value, and the public sector cannot and should not pursue instrumental rationality. Due to the differences in nature, corresponding starting points, and fundamental purposes, the goals of public management and business management cannot be the same. The private sector takes profit as its basic purpose, and profit is its value base. Performance management emphasizes a single mission and instrumental rationality, while the public sector not only needs to maintain the basic values of freedom, democracy, and equality in society but also should take into account complex and diverse values such as public interest, social justice, social equity, and social responsibility.

FFor a long time, the pursuit of efficiency supremacy and technology supremacy has exposed many flaws in practice, such as evaluation results deviating from reality and the coexistence of high performance and low citizen satisfaction [12]. In public sector performance appraisal, there is often an excessive emphasis on input and output while neglecting results and effects. Input

refers to process input. In practice, the focus is placed on input, such as the rate of resource availability and budget progress monitoring, while ignoring the reasonable matching between input and service demand. Performance appraisals that emphasize "input" often focus on the execution process of plans, which will inevitably limit the space for flexible and comprehensive arrangements based on local conditions, leading to imbalances and distortions in resource allocation. Output refers to goods, services, or other resources obtained by target groups and beneficiaries. In practice, indicators such as the number of cases solved and the number of suspects arrested are used as key indicators, confusing results with outputs. Performance appraisals are merely regarded as a form of inspection for administrative activities, ignoring changes in various environments related to administrative activities. Performance appraisals that emphasize "output" often adopt the method of pre-setting rigid indicators, but the key issue is the irrationality and unscientific nature of these rigid indicators. However, in the era of governance, many problems that have been long neglected have emerged to some extent, the most prominent of which is that performance indicators centered on various ratios in public sector performance appraisals cannot systematically, accurately, and effectively measure "governance". Therefore, in the complex network governance environment, public sector performance appraisals should focus on the integration of value rationality and instrumental rationality, and achieve the integration with instrumental rationality based on value rationality as the main body.

3.2. Reflections on "Partnership" in public sector performance appraisal

"Partnership" is a multi-dimensional continuum that encompasses a wide range of different concepts and practices, often used to describe various types of relationships formed in different environments and geographical spaces. In the era of governance, social issues have gradually transcended traditional administrative regions and organizational boundaries. Public sectors alone find it difficult to deal with "wicked problems" characterized by high complexity and high value conflicts. However, in the context of increasingly diverse actors in administrative governance networks,

public participation in performance appraisal remains challenging. Theoretically, public sector performance appraisal can be divided into two paths: top-down control and bottom-up promotion. In both paths, the participation opportunities for multiple actors are limited [11]. From the perspective of the status of performance assessment subjects, public sector performance appraisal is an internal assessment, and the opportunities for public participation in assessment are limited. In practice, it is objectively difficult for internal assessors to measure performance results impartially, which may lead to the performance appraisal system being difficult to implement. They are within the public sector system and are easily influenced by departmental interests, making the assessment lack objectivity. At the same time, out of consideration for their reputation and future, they may engage in "collusion," leading to information distortion and making performance appraisal one-sided and subjective.

The inconsistent goal characteristics among internal institutions of the public sector are a key issue faced by performance appraisal. The public sector follows an action model centered on internal institutions as "independent service units," and different institutions may have different understandings of the meaning of goals. Such different understandings may lead to misunderstandings, dysfunctional collaborative behaviors, and conflicts and competition among different institutions. Moreover, government reforms have expanded the functional scope and management authority of institutions, but the functional boundaries between institutions are still distinct. Once these boundaries are crossed, conflicts and power struggles between institutions remain inevitable [13]. Inter-organizational competition may have a "double-edged sword" effect on performance. To a certain extent, competition may negatively impact organizational performance. Therefore, administrative activities embedded in the complex interactions of multiple actors should adopt new forms of partnerships, and public sector performance appraisal should focus more on organizational complexity, organizational collaboration, inter-departmental relationships within the organization, and relationships with multiple actors.

3.3. Reflections on "Networked Behavior" in public sector performance appraisal

The governance network is a relatively stable social relationship pattern formed by interdependent government departments, social organizations, and the public. Networked behavior refers to the interactive behavior between government departments and other interdependent actors. In the era of governance, networks formed by a large number of interdependent organizations are increasingly involved in administrative activities, which places higher demands on the management capabilities of public sectors in networked environments. Administrative performance depends on the management capabilities within the network. However, in the dynamic and changing network environment formed by multiple actors, public sectors still follow the circular logic of performance planning and implementation, and habitually use control or administrative means in the performance management process, substituting power influence for networked management. Encouragement and promotion of cooperation still rely on communication channels and rules established in traditional hierarchical organizations, and implement performance appraisal in a single dimension, especially the technical dimension. A large number of studies have shown that the fragmentation of administrative management associated with New Public Management has led to the decline of traditional hierarchical coordination methods. In the performance management system of the complex network governance environment, the public sector should assume multiple roles such as the "leader" in performance planning, goal system determination, and management authorization, the "supporter" of resource supply for multiple administrative entities, and the "coordinator" among organizations and individuals within the network. Therefore, the public sector should focus on the complex interactive processes formed by the networks with other organizations, establish inter-organizational partnerships based on extensive consultation, continuously enhance network capabilities, and reduce the negative impact of restrictive conditions on administrative performance, thereby improving the level of administrative performance.

4. Public sector performance appraisal: Three-dimensional construction

With the diversification of social governance subjects, the blurring of responsibility boundaries, and the networking of public service supply, government departments are no longer the sole actors in the field of public management. The marketization and socialization of social governance and public services have become a trend. In the network governance environment, starting from the characteristics and requirements of the new era, the transformation from single-dimensional performance appraisal to multi-dimensional performance appraisal should be made, and a three-dimensional performance appraisal system for public sectors should be constructed, namely "public value," "partnership," and "networking capability."

4.1. The "Public Value" dimension of public sector performance appraisal

Public interests, public responsibilities, and public services constitute the basic characteristics of government departments and put forward special requirements for performance appraisal. On the one hand, the value construction of public sector performance appraisal in the new era. The process, form, and content of the value construction of public sector performance appraisal vary from country to country. The value orientation of China's public sector performance appraisal must be consistent with the Party's lines, principles, and policies, and the value choices of government behavior. The public sector performance appraisal system should be designed based on the new starting point and requirements of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the scientific connotation of the new era should be reflected in the value of performance appraisal, as well as the basic connotations of a law-based government, a service-oriented government, a responsible government, and an efficient government.

On the other hand, public sector performance appraisal needs to highlight public value. The instrumental rationality guided by efficiency leads people to focus on means rather than ends. Although in the period dominated by efficiency and technology, public sector performance appraisal relies on technical paths, the awareness and experience of improving responsibility and serviceability shaped by performance appraisal still contribute to the construction of a public sector performance governance model in the complex network governance environment. This requires repositioning the relationship between efficiency and fairness, instrumental rationality and value rationality, and confirming the performance value based on public value at the levels of consciousness, culture, and system, systematically and comprehensively designing the performance appraisal index system, integrating performance appraisal and management tools, and continuously enhancing the public nature, systematicness, and effectiveness of performance appraisal.

4.2. The "Partnership" dimension of public sector performance appraisal

Governance emphasizes the formation of organizational networks by the government, market, and society, with a large number of interdependent actors jointly committed to the management of social public affairs. Public sector performance appraisal can only better adapt to the network environment and stimulate network functions by enhancing the "partnership" with multiple actors, such as social organizations, private organizations, and the public, and promoting cross-departmental cooperation on a larger scale. On the one hand, in terms of subject composition, it is necessary to follow the transformation from "internal dominance" to "external participation," that is, to build an "outward-oriented" public sector performance appraisal model. Many network governance systems are still dominated by the hierarchical system, and performance appraisal mainly plays the role of upper-level inspection and supervision of lower-level departments, and the institutional and substantive effects of public participation are not ideal. Therefore, in the acceptance and implementation stages of performance assessment, it is necessary to involve more actors. Based on identifying key actors, the structure of each actor in the partnership should be clarified to promote the scientific, democratic, and standardized performance assessment in the public sector. On the other hand, the establishment of interdepartmental partnerships is becoming increasingly important. Different types of administrative activities are interconnected, and public security operational departments pay more attention to organizational complexity, organizational collaboration, and interdepartmental relationships. The logic norms

brought by the bureaucracy to government departments are specialization and professionalization. However, in the era of network governance, social problems have transcended traditional administrative regions and organizational boundaries. It is difficult for public departments to deal with "wicked problems" characterized by high complexity and high value conflicts by relying solely on their strength. Therefore, the operation of interdepartmental partnerships is an important prerequisite for the acceptance and implementation of performance assessment. By integrating complementary resources from different departments and operating in a new partnership form that is more suitable than traditional methods, the administrative performance level can be continuously improved.

4.3. The dimension of "Networked Capacity" in public sector performance evaluation

Network theory advocates the transformation of zero-sum games into win-win situations for the management of public affairs. In complex governance networks composed of interdependent actors, numerous interactions require government departments to enhance their networked capacity and continuously strengthen cooperative advantages and trust. A large number of studies have shown that networked capacity has a positive impact on the performance of government departments. Under a high level of networked capacity, each unit of resource growth in the organization can generate greater returns. Networked capacity constitutes a form of organizational social capital, which is in line with social governance. Networked capacity plays a key role in public sector performance evaluation based on public value management. It includes three parts: internal management of organizational networks, obtaining support from external network actors, and establishing trust among different organizations. By promoting inter-organizational connections and reducing the negative impact of restrictive conditions on administrative performance. In the network environment, the influence of public sector power is showing a weakening trend, and administrative performance increasingly requires interaction and cooperation with network actors. By forming and dissolving connections with network actors, it protects the core business from external environmental influences, and continuously enhancing networked capacity is the key to improving administrative performance.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] He Y, 2009, Public Value Management: A New Paradigm of Public Administration. Political Science Studies, 2009(6): 62–68.

[2] Osborne D, Gaebler T, 1996, Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector. Shanghai Translation Publishing House, Shanghai.

[3] Bao G, Morgan D, 2015, Government Performance Management: Theory and Method of Government Performance Governance Based on Public Value. Higher Education Press, Beijing.

[4] Wang X, Cao K, 2019, Public Value Leadership as a New Trend in Public Leadership: A Literature Review. Public

Administration Review, 2019(4): 161–179.

[5] Stokes G, 2006, Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance? The American Review of Public Administration, 2006(1): 41–57.

[6] O'Flynn J, 2007, From New Public Management to Public Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications. Australian Journal of Public Administration, 2007(3): 353–366.

[7] Wang X, Zhang H, 2013, Research Approaches and Frontier Issues of Public Value. Journal of Public Administration, 2013(2): 126–136.

[8] Witesman E, 2016, From Public Values to Public Value and Back Again. The Public Values Workshop, The Center for Organization Research and Design at Arizona State University.

[9] Wallis J, Gregory R, 2009, Leadership, Accountability and Public Value: Resolving a Problem in "New Governance"? International Journal of Public Administration, 2009(3–4): 250–273.

[10] Bao G, Zhou Y, 2013, Research on the Construction of the Value Carrier Model of Government Performance Evaluation. Journal of Public Administration, 2013(2): 101–111.

[11] Bao G, Wang X, 2012, Government Performance Governance Based on Public Value: Origin, Framework and Research Issues. Chinese Journal of Public Administration, 2012(4): 89–98.

[12] Zhao Z, 2019, Theoretical Exploration and Analysis of Influencing Factors on the Construction of Internal Collaboration Capacity in Public Departments. Journal of Hunan Police College, 2019(5): 101–112.

[13] Xu L, Lu J, Peng B, 2015, The Impact of Inter-organizational Competitive Distance on Organizational Performance Differences: A Perspective of Organizational Ecology. Enterprise Economy, 2015(11): 161–168.