Title:

Use of Performance Information in Government: a Routine Decision Making Perspective
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Abstract:
The use of performance information has been an important issue in performance measurement. However, little attention has been paid to the decision making perspective. This article defines the use of performance information as a routine decision making behavior in the government. Through the case of best practice, the article explores the reasons of why some government organizations are doing well in the use of performance information. The results show that the routine decision making behavior is influenced by joint forces, such as institutions, innovations, leadership, and organizational culture. Some implications from the case study are summarized. This findings show that routine decision making behavior might be simple in surface, but there must be reasons behind it. The shortcoming of the case study is discussed at the end.

Keywords: use of performance information; routine decision making behavior; performance measurement

The use of performance information becomes the biggest issue in the performance management (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010, p849). As the President Obama’s Chief Performance Officer states that, “the ultimate test of our performance management efforts is whether or not the information is used” (Zients, 2009, cited from Moynihan, 2010). The use of performance information will challenge our assumption in performance management and public administration. The Government performance management has been taken as an approach of new public management (NPM) school (Hood, 1991). If the decision makers do not use or use little performance information, why do governments still put the efforts on it? To the public administration, the use of performance information will challenge some basic assumptions of New Public Management. Therefore, the study on performance information use will have profound meaning.

In order to find out the reasons that influencing the use of performance information, a case study is carried out in Chinese local government. After selecting from more than 400 local government departments, a best practice of performance measurement occurred. We explore the factors that influencing the use of performance information in this article. Meanwhile, this research might have some implications for the government routines. The structure of this article is organized as...
following: first, I would define the use of performance information; based on the definition, I would explore the characteristics of routine decision making behavior in the government and give out the framework of how to selecting the independent variables; the third part is methodology; the fourth part is results and analysis; the final part is discussion and conclusion.

1 Define the use of performance information

One reason for the complexity of the research in performance information use is related with the definition. Many scholars notice that the term “use” is a multi-dimensional concept instead of a catch-all word (Burke and Costello, 2005; de Bruijn, 2004; de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001; Solberg, Mosser and McDonald, 1997; Weiss, 1998). On one hand, the use of performance information refers to the specific utilization of the performance information. For example, van Dooren (2010) gives out a list of 44 uses of performance information. Some scholars discuss the use of performance information in the specific field, such as resource distribution, educational policy, and so on (Poister and Streib, 1999; Johnsen, 2008). These researches focus on the specific issues related with the performance information. On the other hand, some scholars attempt to study the use of performance information from the macro level. They omitted the details of different uses and try to find out general reasons related with the use of performance information. For example, Moynihan (2010b, 2011) has done some research about the public service motivation and the use of performance information, even the globalization and influence to the performance measurement. In these researches, a common question is that the definition of the use of performance information is missing or taken for granted as a given common sense.

One latent problem is the definition. The authors always jump between the different focus without clear notification. The audiences will be confused when they are facing these articles. Another problem is that the different definition would always lead to different conclusion. When the use of performance is taken as a specific use or in a specific field, they would have accurate conclusion or suggestions. However, when the use of performance information is defined in a general manner, the conclusion would be vague or related with a set of factors.

In fact, no matter the use of performance information is defined as specific manner or general manner, one thing is the same. The use of performance information is a decision making behavior. The specific use and the general use are both the procedure to turn the performance information
into implementation. The common link is the decision making behavior. Whatever the use of performance in a specific manner or a general manner, it would be a decision making behavior in the government. Therefore, the new definition will combine the former researches on this issue.

What are the characteristics of the use of performance information in government? One character is that it is a repeated action. To be exactly, it is a routine decision making behavior in the government. Some scholars define routines as recurrent action patterns (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Winter, 1990), which happened everyday or in a regular period. Another characteristic of the use of performance information is that it will be influenced by institutions greatly. That is one feature of modern public administration. Rationality and law replace the role of man in daily decision making of the government.

Now we find the position of the use of performance information in government affairs. It also shows the research scope of our study. I will treat the use of performance information as a common repeated behavior in the government. It would give more insights for the other government routines. The Pareto principle (80/20 principle) tells us that most of the office time is spending on the routine works. If we could find a solution to improve the efficiency of the routine decision making, it would have profound meaning for the government management.

2. Routine Decision Making Behavior in Government

According to Weber’s design, the nature of social and economic life in the West represents the heights of professionalism and routine activity (Orum, 1989, p57). The well designed institutions, including the decision making pattern, make the government organizations running in order. Most of the government daily works or recurrent jobs are done under the guidance of predesigned institutions. In this sense, the government affairs can be divided into routine works and non-routine works. The routine works account for majority of the workload. Therefore, for the study of bureaucratic decision-making, it is theoretically and practically useful to focus on repetitive and routinized decision making (Inbar, 1979, p15).

There is no general accepted definition about routine. Sometimes it is used to denote an abstract pattern of relationships—often termed ‘rules’—and sometimes a concrete pattern of action (Becker, 2005). As Becker summarized, one of the very few points of unanimous agreement in the literature is that nothing can be a routine without occurring repeatedly (ibid). The other
characteristics about routine might be predictable and patterned\(^1\). The routine decisions allow us to forecast what will happen in terms of a reasonably reliable model (Gore and Dyson, 1964; Rainey, 2009). The patterned model refers to the legally prescribed procedures\(^2\).

Another reason to connect performance information use and the routine decision making is based on the political context of China. In China, the government decision making is always classified into important decisions and general decisions. It is the same like routine and non-routine dichotomy of the government affairs. The importance is the basic criteria in classification. The criteria to judge the importance of decision are: wholeness (influencing the whole society/local area), citizen related, irreversible, and high cost (Liu Ping, 2009). According to the criteria, the decision about performance information use might be put into the list of unimportant decisions. The reasons are like the following: first, it always happens inside the government department, not implemented in other sector of the society. Second, it concerns mainly on the government employees and their performance, the results might be related with the citizens, but there are a lot of works between the performance information and citizens, such as citizen participation, political communication and other sectors. Third, compared with the important government decisions, performance information uses are not irreversible. When the leaders find that they have made a wrong decision, they will have chance to reclaim it and control the influence in a small area. Fourth, compared with the important government decisions, the cost of performance information use is not so high, because it is mainly related with government employees’ performance. The social influences might be high, but the economic loss might not be so high. Based on these reasons, I would put the use of performance information into the list of unimportant decisions in the government, which is just part of the daily work.

Decision making has been seen as the black-box in political science (Gore and Dyson, 1964). The

\[^1\] Cohen and Bacdayan (1994) give out a pattern of behavior with four features characteristic of field-observed routines. They are reliability, speed, repeated action sequence and occasional suboptimality respectively. Among them, speed and repeated action sequences can be seen as characteristics of routines, the other two might be put forward because of case selection. He explains that routinized behavior is expected to be faster than behavior being generated as deliberate decision making in unfamiliar circumstance (ibid, p538). However, there is still no empirical evidence to support this explanation.

\[^2\] The further analysis on routines will connect it with institutions. What is the patterned process? Royer and Langley claim that patterned processes in the treatment of organizational issues are regardless whether these patterns derive from explicit policies and procedures or from implicit values and norms. People might equal routines and institutions, as the New Institutionalism has done (see the definition of sociological institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996)). I will not discuss the difference between routines and institutions in this dissertation. The institutions will be limited in its narrow definition and be observed with documentary method. Here, routines are not only the prescribed procedures, but also include the individual judgment before making a decision. That is one reason I would define the use of performance information as organizational routines.
complexity lies in two aspects: first, it is difficult to observe the process of mental behavior or the inner world of human being; second, the decision making behavior is influenced by internal, external, and organizational factors, which are always intertwined together. It is difficult to distinguish them in a scientific manner. However, the decision making theory will give us some insights on understanding it in the organizations.

Basically, the decision making theories can be summarized into three categories: the rational decision making theory, incremental decision making theory, and the mixed-scanning decision-making theory. Each theory has merits and demerits. The rational model tends to posit a high degree of control over decision making situation on part of decision makers (Etzioni, 1967), while in the bureaucratic situation, such ability is limited (See Newton and Deth, 2010; Tarter and Hoy, 1998; Etzioni, 1967). The incremental model notices the dynamic context and limitation of decision makers, but it reduces the alternatives. The mixed-scanning is more realistic than the other two decision making models, which combines the merits of rational model and the incremental model. Etzioni (1986) has pointed out that “rationalist approaches were held to be Utopian because actors cannot command the resources and capabilities required by rationalist decision making; incrementalism was shown to overlook opportunities for significant innovations and to ignore the empirical fact that incremental decisions are often made within the context of fundamental decisions”. He puts forward the mixed scanning model. The term scanning is used to refer to search, collection, processing, and evaluation of information as well as to drawing of conclusions, all elements in the service of decision making (ibid, p8). What might be the most important characteristic of mixed scanning model is that it is more realistic. It meets the reality of performance information use we learned from the literature review. That is the reason I would employ the mixed scanning decision making model in this article. Of course, I noticed the demerits mixed-scanning model. It is similar to the shortcomings of system theory in political science. I will attempt to limit the shortcomings in a controllable scope in empirical research.

There are other classifications. For example, Tarter and Hoy (1998) classify six contemporary decision making models: the classical model; the administrative model; the incremental model; the mixed scanning model; the garbage-can model and the political model. He also puts forward a contingency theory of decision making. In this dissertation, I would show the rough sketch of decision making theory. The three models mentioned above show the mainstream textbook opinion in dealing with decision making theory (see also Newton and Van Deth, 2010; Hague and Harrop, 2007).
3 Independent Variables

Organizational theory gives us some insights on how to deal with the decision making behavior in an organization. The former researches on the use of performance information always focus on the performance measurement procedure. It is difficult for us to get a holistic view about the independent variables on this issue. In this article, we will combine the organizational theory and the researches in the use of performance information together to find out the factors that influence this decision making behavior.

From organizational theory perspective, the individual behavior is influenced the internal factors and the external factors. According to the model given by Lewin (1951), the behavior will be influenced by person and environment.

\[ B = f(P, E) \]

where: 
- \( B \) = Behavior
- \( P \) = Person (innate) and
- \( E \) = Environment

This is a general model in analyzing the individual behavior. The individual is the basic unit in behavior analysis. This model shows us the factors influencing individual behavior: the innate factors and environmental factors. Mondak (2010) claims that holistic theory of political behavior must recognize the impact of three broad sets of variables: environmental factors, innate biological or biologically influenced factors, and interactions between environmental and innate forces.

From the macro perspective, organizational theory analyzes the human behavior from three levels: the individual level, group level and organizational level. The individual is the core unit in analyzing the human behavior in organization. The individual’s decision making behavior will be influenced by internal factors, external factors and their interactions. The group level analysis pays more attention to the dynamic characteristic of group, especially the group’s influence on individual behavior. The organizational level analysis will stand on a higher position and focus on the organizational objectives.

After the literature review, the characteristics of different level analysis are summarized below (see table 1).
Table 1 the characteristics of different level analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Focus on innate factors and the external factors</th>
<th>Individual-centered</th>
<th>Static</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual level</td>
<td>Focus on member interaction, learning process, communication</td>
<td>Group level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group development, social exchange</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>Management-oriented: how to improve the organizational performance? what is the best method to get organizational commitment? How to realize the organizational goals effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to give a comprehensive analysis about the routine decision making behavior in the organization, I integrate the findings from organizational theory and the performance measurement. The independent variables are selected based on this framework. In the individual level, the innate factors include ability and motivation; the external factors include the performance measurement regulations, other related institutions, income, and working experience. In group level, peer pressure and the members’ relationship are added as independent variables to test the group influence. In organizational level, leadership and organizational culture are added. These are the independent variables in this paper.

4. Methodology

The case study method is employed in this research. As Yin (2009, p4) claims that the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Although we know the factors influencing the use of performance information from the literature review of performance measurement and organizational theory, we still do not have a holistic view about what happened in practice. Therefore, we need a case to tell us the truth.

4.1 Case Selection

The performance measurement is result-orientated (Callahan, 2007; Reid and Adibe, 1979). Result is the only criteria to distinguish the best practice and bad practice. The Government Performance and Result Act (GPRA) of 1993 can be seen as an official announcement of the result-orientated performance management. The act required agencies to focus on program results, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Radin, 1998). Although the result-orientated performance measurement gets many critiques by the scholars (Callahan, 2007; Radin, 1998), it is still a criterion to evaluate
the effectiveness of performance management.

The general accepted indicators to evaluate the result of performance are 3Es (effectiveness, efficiency, and economy). These indicators can be transferred into the concrete figure as a result, such as the ratio of input to output or outcome. We use the figure to compare the result of performance measurement. Customers’ satisfaction can also be evaluated with this method. The result is also the criteria for the case selection.

The case selection is carried out in 400 local government departments of Shaanxi Province. Government Affairs Service Center of Xi’an Municipal People’s Government (we call it Service Center in the following sections) emerged as the best practice. Compared with the performance before the establishment of Service Center, the average processing time of each approval procedure reduced 30%. The performance has been improved more dramatically in those administrative approvals need to be done in different government departments. For example, the approval time for the construction program is reduced from 3 years to 45 working days now.

During the last three years the satisfaction evaluation system has sampled 33270 customers, the satisfaction rate is 100%. They have received 965 praising flags and 5242 praising letters. Their achievements in performance measurement was reported by People’s Daily, Xinhua news agency, Internal Selected References (Nei Can Xuan Bian), Liao Wang Weekly, Guang Ming Daily, and other 29 mainstream media.

4.2 Instrument

In this case study, four methods are employed. They are intensive interview, documentary research, direct observation, and questionnaire survey respectively. The four methods construct a triangulation to cross verifying the validity of each method. It is also helpful to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method.

The former researches show that the decision making about the use of performance information mainly happened in the top managers of the department (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010). Based on the pre-interview and expert interview, an open structured outline of interview is formulated. The intensive interview is done among the director and 3 middle managers who are related with performance measurement in Service Center.

Meanwhile, the documentary research attempts to search for the performance measurement regulations and other written documents related with the use of performance information, the
media report, third party evaluation, official website, performance report, and so on. Direct observation is another channel to understand the use of performance information in an organization. From the symbolism perspective, everything in the organization (government) can be showed in symbols (Jones, 1996). The symbols are the most apparent and observable aspects of one organization. In the case study, we attempt to find out the reasons influencing the use of performance information. The organizational culture or the value and beliefs, these invisible elements of the organization can be deducted from symbols through direct observation or participatory observation. Jones claims that if you believe culture is complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society, we could observe the culture through its manifestations, such as art, habits, and customs (Jones, 1996, p11). The syllabus of observation can be found in the appendix.

Based on the interview, specific questionnaire were designed and were sent to 273 employees in the Service Center. The valid questionnaires received at the end are 73 (the response rate is 27%). The response rate is a bit lower than my expectation. Political issues are still sensitive topics in China (Chow, 1993b). It would increase the difficulties for empirical research. Meanwhile, many people are apathy to the empirical research in the government. But the other methods mentioned above could make up the shortcomings of low response rate.

5 Results and Analysis

The result of the case study shows that the use of performance information is a routine decision making behavior. The performance information is used for the daily performance evaluation report, the monthly performance ranking and the annual performance star selection. Another finding is that the routine decision making behavior is influenced by the joint forces in the organization. In this case, the routine decision making about performance information use is simple in surface, which is based on the performance measurement regulation. It shows that institution plays an important role in the use of performance information. But the institution is not enough to explain why the Service Center is doing well than other organizations. Integrating the findings from interview, questionnaire, and direct observation, I find that the routine decision making behavior is influenced by many factors, such as innovations, leadership, organizational culture, and so on. The
performance measurement regulations only represent the result of organizational learning (Crossan and Lane and White, 1999). The further reasons are explained in the following sections.

5.1 The simpler the better: institutions and the routine decision making

It is true that the institutions will guide and restrain the use of performance information in government. Regarding to the case of Service of Center, a distinguished characteristic is that the decision making process is simplified. It is showed in three aspects: the performance measurement indicator system; the objective of performance measurement, and the decision making procedure in performance information use.

In the performance indicator system of Service Center, all the items can be measured through the quantitative indicators. How to transfer the complex organizational behavior into the quantitative indicators shows the philosophical thinking about performance and indicator. For example, we always think that morality is difficult to measure. In the government performance measurement, it is an important part. In fact, the question is not because of complexity, but how to simplify the complex issue in practice. The following conversation is about how to measure the morality.

Interviewer: for example, the standard performance measurement of civil servants includes 5 parts (in China): virtue, ability, attendance, achievements, incorruption. Virtue is an indicator which is difficult to use quantitative indicator. How do you deal with it?

Interviewee: Virtue is a big issue. But in government organization, we can only measure the colleagues' virtue in the work. We could not send many people to investigate the colleagues' virtue performance in social life and in family. We can evaluate his performance in the work. For example, the working attitude, loving the people will be showed in the work. Some employees are patient and make accurate service to the customer while others are impassive, all these could show the virtue to the job. To those who are patient to the customer and those who would extent the working in the off-duty time, we would add the performance score. On the contrary, those who get complaint, we will deduct their performance score. For example, normally the office will be closed at 5pm. But some customers come here at 4:50pm. How to deal with this problem, the person with bad morality will say, we are off-duty, please come here tomorrow. The employee with good virtue will extend the working time until all the work is finished. We will add the performance score according to the extended time. It will also have a good influence in the employees. Through this method, we could realize the quantitative measurement on the issue of virtue.

In Service Center, the quantitative indicators cover from working effectiveness to employees’ daily behavior, even dressing and language. In fact, the internal world has a connection with the outside. The internal world will be showed more or less in some observable things, such as attitude or action. In this sense, the performance indicator design in Service Center is result
orientated. All the indicators should be measured by the visible results.

Another aspect is showed in the aim of performance measurement. As we have seen in the literature review, the contradiction between the aims of the different stakeholders is one reason influencing the use of performance information (Askim, 2007). In Service Center, the aim of performance measurement is simple. That is to improve the efficiency of the administrative approval in the government. All the measures are around this aim. People may ask how about the other aims. In Service Center, we can find that the other aims in performance measurement, such as effectiveness, quality, and economy, are realized simultaneously. Without the additional input, the efficiency is improved greatly. Citizens and politicians are satisfied with the achievements. That means it is possible to coordinate different aims in the performance measurement procedure.

The simplification of indicator system has many benefits. It is easier to implement than the complex one. The interviewee told me that the employees could calculate the performance score himself/herself at the end of each month. It is also easier for the performance management department to collect the performance information. Another benefit is transparency. When everyone knows the method, it is not the patent of professional performance managers. It would increase the transparency of performance measurement and its result. The transparency would also increase the supervision on the fake information. People could supervise each other under this performance indicator system. When the individual performance score is connected with the organizational performance score, the endogenentic motivation occurs. Good performance becomes the common choice of the group. Therefore, we see the upward-spiral in Service Center.

Compared with the complex indicator system, the simple indicator system is easy to be accepted by the employees. 83.5% feedbacks of the questionnaire are satisfied with the performance measurement procedure. (see table 2). Only 1.4% feedbacks are dissatisfied with the procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not at all satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slightly satisfied</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderately satisfied</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremely satisfied</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Satisfaction about performance measurement procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>not at all satisfied</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremely satisfied</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From decision making perspective, the simplified performance indicator system would improve the decision making efficiency. The routine decision making theories tell us that the decision is complex. It might be mixed scanning. That is based on the complex social reality. In Service Center, we find it is not the case. The performance measurement regulation has clearly announced that the daily performance information is the only criteria of monthly and annual performance evaluation (see Article 3 in the performance measurement regulation). Therefore, we can see that institutions simplified the decision making process and increased the transparency in decision making.

5.2 Innovation and organizational performance

Another finding from the case study is organizational innovation. The innovations are showed in four dimensions: organizational structure innovation, the innovations in administrative approval procedure, the innovations in technology, and the innovation in management.

Before the innovation, the administrative approve procedure in local government is scattered around different locations of the related departments. The communication and information transmission are always problematic, not to say the waste of resource and the citizens’ time. For example, a Construction Approval Program needs to take 3 years to get approval before the innovation. This situation changed after a proposal was approved by the municipal parliament. I summarize this point as the thought of intensive management. Under this proposal, a new department was established to improving effectiveness and efficiency. 31 functional departments related with the administration approval were put under the charge of this new department. The organizational structure of Service Center can be divided into two big units: accredited departments (31 functional departments with 232 employees) and the internal service departments.
(including performance management department, supervision department, secretary department, IT department, accredited office of municipal supervision department, simultaneously processing administration and service office, round-table conference office, the internal service departments, with 40 employees). The accredited departments combine 31 municipal functional departments with 232 employees. The internal service departments are mainly responsible for performance management and serving the accredited departments. The employees of accredited departments work in Service Center, but their salary and personnel relationship are still kept in the original affiliated departments. The task of Service Center is to promote the cooperation and efficiency of these departments.

Figure 2. Organizational structure of Service Center

The innovations are also showed in the standardization of administrative approval procedure. After the experiments and half year practices, the scientific administrative approval procedure of each functional department was established. All the approvals must be done with the requirements of the standard procedure. Each sector of the procedure has a deadline with specific responsible person. All the approval procedure can be realized on the computer system. Therefore, each sector of the approval procedure can be traced by customers and the supervisors. The alert will be given when the deadline is approaching.

These innovations are accompanied by the technology innovations. Many modern technologies are
applied in the Service Center. For example, the administrative approval software system, each step can be realized on computer and be traced by supervisors and customers; the digital customer satisfaction rating machine, which could record the customers’ evaluation objectively. The video camera could record the whole approval procedure and prevent incursions to some extents.

The innovations in management are mainly showed in the performance-oriented management. Compared with the loose management, the new management pays more attention to performance. All the methods are around improving the organizational performance. Beside the strict regulations in work and employees’ behavior, the performance-oriented is prevailing in the Service Center. For example, innovation is encouraged in Service Center. In the regulation of performance measurement, innovation is one condition of adding points to the performance score.

This point can be found in Article 8 of the performance measurement regulation of Service Center:

The Service Center encourages everyone to take measures to reduce the approval time, simplifying the application documents (the comparison with former procedure should be attached). Once such innovation is verified by the Service Center, the performance score should be added according to following criteria:

A. If the approval time is reduced 50% more than current approval time, one item adds 4 points. Between 20%-50%, one item adds 2 points.

B. If the application documents are simplified 50% more than current number of documents, one item adds 2 points. Between 20%-50%, one item adds 1 point; below 20%, one item adds 0.5 point (cited from Article 8).

5.3 Leadership and Empowerment: the Guarantee of Successful Implementation

Regarding to the research question, I am interested in the reason of why do they use the performance information and how to ensure the uses. De Lancer Julnes (2006) divide the use of performance information into two stages: adoption and implementation. In fact, implementation exists not only in the use of performance information, but also at the beginning of the performance measurement. Once the performance measurement regulation is set up, how to implement the regulation becomes a vital issue. In the case study, one finding is that leadership and empowerment are the guarantees of successful implementation. Leadership is the ability of individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and the success of the organization of which they are members (House, et al. 2004). Empowerment means an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community (organization), involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources; or a process by
which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community, and a critical understanding of their environment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Why some departments do not use the performance information? The interview shows that the reason might be very simple. They do not have the power. During the interview, some interviewees told me that they just implement the task arranged by the upper level supervisor. That is a surprise for me. Because in my eye, they are the chief leader of the department and they could determine the daily affairs such as the use of performance information. After the intensive interview, I find that the reason lies in the hierarchical structure of government. In local government, the department leader is a relative position. In the institutional settings, they should be responsible for the upper level leaders. If they don’t have the power to determine the use of performance information, they would certainly have no reason to use it. Therefore, the empowerment is an important premise in performance measurement. In the case of Service Center, they get permission from the municipal government that they could have their own performance measurement regulation and the freedom to use it. That is a condition to ensure they have the motivation to use the information or take any measures to improve the performance. In Service Center, a performance management department was set up for the daily performance management. The director of the department could inspect anyone’s performance (except himself). Such empowerment is written in the regulation. In the daily performance report, they have a special section about the performance of chief leaders.

However, in the empowerment theory, empowerment is not a simple process. It includes the elements, such as active participation, critical reflection, awareness and understanding, and most difficult but important of all, access to and control over important decisions and resources (Perkins, 2009). More details are found from the case of Service Center.

Leadership here means not only the skills of leadership, but also the ethical leadership. The leader should have the basic skills, such as administrative ability, the skills of managing the interpersonal conflicts, and the skills of strategic planning or creating visions (Northouse, 2009). Meanwhile, the leaders should be ethical model in the organization. Especially in performance management, the ethical model could get trustworthiness and respect from the subordinates. They would keep fairness and transparency in the performance management procedure. Like the interviewee said, “the leader should be a model for the subordinates. If they could not do it, never ask the
subordinates to do. The performance measurement regulation is not only for the subordinates, but also for the leaders. And the leaders should obey the regulations more strictly than the subordinates.” To some extents, they combined the influences of leadership and empowerment to improve the organizational performance. Leader is a model in performance measurement; meanwhile, the empowerment could make sure that everyone could be treated equally in the performance measurement and the use of performance information. With the help from regulation, an active participation and trust are built between the subordinates and leaders on the issue of performance measurement.

From the organizational learning theory perspective, these measures construct a learning atmosphere in the organization. The employees would adjust their behavior according what they learned from the leaders. They would participate in the management actively. Meanwhile, the strict performance measurement regulations get awareness and supports from the employees. Then, pursuing best performance becomes a common sense by the organizational member or we could say that the performance orientated culture is established.

5.4 Chinese Traditional Culture: the Missing Dimension

Normally, the traditional culture will be taken as a premise in public administration research. If we look at the top journal in public administration, we could find that almost no scholar discusses the influence of traditional culture. It is taken as premise or the context of political affairs. However, Compared with the western culture, the Chinese traditional culture is different. In political field, China is taken as authoritarian regime. The communist ruling is not the only reason. The authoritarian regime has a deep root in the traditional culture (Liu Xuanhui, 2012). Even under the background of globalization, we can still find many attributes of traditional culture in public administration. The first one is strict hierarchical social order. No matter in the government or the other organization, supervisor and subordinates, old and young, the boundary is very clear. Especially in the government, obeying the order and respecting the leader are even more important than the work achievements. As chow (1993a, p41) observed that centralization is a strictly enforced principle so that policies adopted by leadership would be faithfully implemented through the country; many cadres respect centralization faithfully and never question the logic or plausibility of order from above. To some extents, the use of performance information is restricted by the authoritarian culture. That is another reason why empowerment is important in the use of
Another influence of traditional culture is on the decision making procedure in government and other organizations (including families). The official announced government decision making procedure is the principle of democratic-centralization. The concept is derived from Lenin’s work (Lenin, 1990), which is a core tenet of Lenin’s version of Marxism. Its complete definition can be found from 1938 CCP document. It was given by Wang Ming, a senior leader of early CCP:

The minority obey the majority; party members have complete freedom to discuss and criticize before any issue is decided; after it is decided, everyone must implement the decision of the organization no matter what their view; the subordinate must implement the resolutions and directives of the superior; if they have different views about the resolutions and directives of the superior, they may present their views to the superior, but they must still implement these resolutions and directives before they are changed by the superior. (quoted in Angle, 2005, pp.525.)

This principle is always cited as the feature of dictatorship. But we have to think about the reason why could it survive in China. I think the traditional culture plays an important role. The decision making process also influenced the performance measurement. When I interview the people from other organizations, most of the interviewees claim that the final decision about how to use the performance information is charged by the leaders. They showed low interests to participate the decision making process, which is definitely influenced the use of performance information.

Furthermore, reciprocity is another characteristic derived from the traditional culture. Chow (1993b) concludes in his article that reciprocity was well observed by all cadres in performance evaluation. That is a mean in the use of performance information where the use of performance information is not an objective behavior but based on benefits. In China, reciprocity is called Guanxi. During the long history of agriculture society, the intensive social network among people was built. All the people are connect by the different relationship (Guanxi). Gaunxi is a reciprocal model in the group behavior. I give you good appraisal on performance this time. As a return, you will give me a good evaluation next time even my real performance is not so good. Therefore, we can find that if we take no measures to curb the negative influence of traditional culture, we will loose the justice of performance measurement.

Every coin has two sides. Concerning on the virtue is another characteristic of traditional culture. The virtue or morality is put on the first place to evaluate the people who work in government. From ancient time to contemporary politics, virtue has been seen as a remedy to cure the
bureaucratic disease from traditional culture. Virtue is even more important than life. Today, in all the public organization or state-owned companies, virtue is still the first criteria of performance evaluation. The importance of virtue derived from Confucian theory. Confucius remarked, “He who rules the people, depending upon the moral sentiment, is like the Pole-star, which keeps its place while all the other stars revolve round it.” (Analects, 2:1). In fact, Virtue has a broad meaning in Confucian theory. Confucian ethics is basically humanistic, obligation-based, and collectivistic in nature (Chan, 1963; Ip, 1996, 2004). A good governor should be “inner sageliness-outer kingliness” (Angle, 2009). Therefore, the requirements of virtue to a governor are not only inner morality, but also some social responsibilities, which include at least three aspects: his regulations must be based on virtue (legalization); he should govern the people with virtues (humanness); he should educate the people virtues (cultivation). We can find that Confucius constructed a comprehensive theory on governance from setting up the institutions, ruling methods to public education. In performance measurement, it is difficult to evaluate the virtue of the government member. But it gives the citizen possibility to supervise the governor’s performance. The government employee who is found with problem in morality will mean the end of his political life.

In the case of Service Center, we could not omit the influence of traditional culture. Many scholars have claimed that the Confucian culture or neo-Confucian culture positively related with the economic success in East Asia. The Confucian principles of perseverance, working hard and learning new skills have been instrumental in helping shape and drive the economic progress (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). In fact, it is also the impetus of performance orientation in the government. For example, in the questionnaire, we find that 50.7% think that the performance measurement regulation is too strict. But they still cooperate with the performance measurement department. Cultural analysis would help us to understand this contradiction. Obedience and perseverance are two principles in Confucian culture. To some extent, the Confucian culture is similar as the Protestant ethic which influences people’s behavior and inner world (Javidan, 2004). Regarding to the use of performance information in the government, the traditional Chinese culture works on the leaders and employees through different ways. As we have seen the negative influence of traditional culture, the key is how to absorb the positive aspects and get rid of the negative influence from the organizational learning process.
To some extent, Organizational culture shows the traditional culture in organizational level. In the case of Service Center, organizational culture plays a vital role in improving the organizational performance. The director told me that organizational culture is the highest level of management in his mind. They have a slogan of organizational culture: love the people, love the colleagues and love the Service Center. It is obvious this is a thought combined the traditional Chinese culture and the management theory. This slogan shows us the objectives of building a harmonious environment in the organization. It is a strategy to deal with the contingent conflicts and a compensation for the disadvantages of legal-rational mechanism. The organizational culture is combined with the transformational leadership, administrative ethics, and performance management together. It is also the energy to motivate innovation and performance orientated behavior. It sounds like utopia. However, it does work in the Service Center. According to the theory of changing organizational culture, the strategy in Service Center completely meet the three strategies: changing habit, touching heart and winning mind (Osborne and Plastrik, 1997). Thought the strict regulations and human organizational culture, they have changed the disadvantages of bureaucratic culture into performance oriented and harmonious organizational culture.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The new definition about the use of performance information offers us a new perspective to observe the use of performance information in government. We explore the reasons that influencing the decision making behavior in the best practice. We noticed the complexity of decision making in the organization. This paper also shows the efforts to uncover the reasons. The routine decision making behavior is not as simple as it looks in surface. It is the results of joint forces or the mixed-scanning. The article shows that institutions, administrative ethics, leadership, innovation, and organizational culture, would influence the individual, group, and organizational decision making behavior. The details of the black-box still remain unclearly. That is one reason that many political scientists are hesitate to analyze the decision making behavior (Eulau, 1968). The analyses of the best practice show the interaction of different factors and how they transfer and influence the use of performance information. The best practice shows the cooperation of these factors.
An implication from the case study is that we should simplify the institutions about routine decision making on performance measurement. However, under the background of multi-culture and globalization, the pluralist occupied more and more attention in performance management (Moynihan, 2011). More and more value or objectives are added into performance measurement, such as equality, quality, customer orientated, and so on. Scholars often argue the possibility of co-existing and realization of these objectives simultaneously. In the case of Service Center, it seems possible. The simple indicator system does not mean reducing the objectives. The other objectives can also be realized as we have showed in this case. We could realize other aims through management innovation, organizational culture, ethical leadership, and so on. Meanwhile, the benefits of the simple indicator system are obvious. In the performance measurement history of UK, we can find a trend of reducing the performance indicators (Carter, 1991). Therefore, why do we make the simple thing complex?

Some scholars might argue that the Chinese political context influences the decision making behavior, where citizen participation are driven out from the government decision making procedure. The Chinese researchers also claim that the performance measurement in China mainly focus on control (Zhou, 2009). In fact, control or supervision is one objective of performance measurement no matter democratic regimes or authoritarian regimes. In reality, the citizen participation in routine decision making would be lower than some big affairs. Therefore, we can omit the influence of citizen participation in this sense. Meanwhile, we do see the positive influences of Chinese traditional culture on the routine decision making behavior, such as administrative ethics and leadership. The influence of traditional culture is arguable under the background of globalization. But we have seen the efforts of Chinese authority to rebuild the advantages of traditional culture (Jiang, 2000). It adds the uncertainty of future trend of traditional culture. The more efforts we put in the performance-orientated organizational culture, the more positive influences will be shown in organizational performance.

The shortcoming of single case study is obvious. It might be difficult to apply its experiences in other organization. However, the characteristics summarized from the case study would give us some insights on how to make effective performance measurement and use of performance information in China or other Confucian culture influenced regions.
References:


Appendix 1 Questionnaire

1 Use of Performance information

I regularly make decisions on the use of performance information.

Internal Factors:

2. Your satisfaction about current job (1=not at all; 5=fully ):
3. Your work pressure (1=no pressure; 5=extremely):
4. The relationship between your work pressure and the performance management (1=not at all; 5=extremely):
5. Are you satisfied with the performance management regulations (1=not at all; 5=fully satisfied )?
6. Are you satisfied with the performance measurement procedure (1=not at all; 5=fully satisfied )?
7. What do you think about the quality of performance information (1=very bad; 5=very good):
8. Please indicate the extent to which you pay attention to the performance information (1=not at all; 5=fully):
9. Public service motivation (PSM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The moral criteria is as important as the ability to the civil servants</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interest of the public is more important than loyalty to leaders.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government should play an important role in promoting the social justice</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employees have more social duties than other organizations</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am always moved by the disadvantaged groups.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving the public would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**External Factors**
10. rewards expectation.
   The rewards of performance measurement attract me very much (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree):
   11. Are you satisfied with your income (1=not at all; 5=extremely satisfied)?
   12. Organizational Culture
   My department is a harmonious place. People are friendly. Our cooperation is very good. We are striving for the organizational objectives. I know the performance measurement would be good for all of us (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).
   13. How often do you visit the website of your department (1=seldom; 5=very often)?
   14. Are you satisfied with the cooperation between different departments (1=not at all; 5=extremely satisfied)?
   15. Group influence
   I would consider the relationship when I make the performance evaluation (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).
   16. Experiences
   There is no difference in the performance measurement each year/regular time (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).
   17. Please indicate the extent to which your experience on performance measurement influenced your decisions about the performance information use (1=not at all; 5=fully).
   18. What is the importance of leaders in performance measurement? (1=not at all; 5=very important)
   19. ICTs
The ICTs could meet the requirement for work and performance measurement (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree)

Control variables: Gender; Age; Education; incumbency.