

Use of performance information in Italian municipalities: some empirical evidences

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Abstract: *Recent history in public administration has been characterized by the introduction of performance measurement and evaluation systems, so that some authors talk of Performance State. Instruments of Performance Management and their related applicability to the public administration context have been object of many studies, in particular quantitative ones. By means of a qualitative survey, this study is aimed to analyse some Italian municipalities and verify if and with what goals the internal actors do really utilize performance information in decision-making processes. The final aim is to detect key factors which have influenced the use (or the non-use) of performance information and to draw lessons learned from the analysed experiences.*

Keywords: *performance measurement, performance information, municipalities, the italian case.*

JEL: *H83; J38; J58.*

Introduction

One of the basic assumption of the New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Kettle, 1997) is that the adoption of managerial tools allows a more effective and efficient management of municipalities. Performance Measurement and Management (PMM) systems are played as one of the main instruments through which performance levels in Public Administration (PA) are improved. This default setting, underlying in many jobs, runs the risk to become a mere speculative exercise (Monteduro, 2009) and to fall in political-managerial rhetoric (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2002). On an international level, it is actually noticed a lack of studies analysing the effective benefits of PMM systems (Thomas, 2007), most of all those carried on through empirical analysis. This deficiency is partially due to the difficulty in detecting the impact of such systems (Pollitt, 2000). Hatry (1999) has observed that the best indicator of PMM utility is the level of use of the Performance Information (PI) in decision-making processes. Besides, Van Dooren and Van de Walle (2008) assert how the research on successes and failures of PMM systems gets through the PI adoption. Enhancing the consciousness of how

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PI are used helps to better understand the effects of Performance Management - PM (Askim, 2008). The effective use of PI is yet one of the most important issues, and still little examined in PM literature (Pollitt, 2007; Talbot, 2005), and so-called «the big question of performance management» (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010).

Starting from such assumption, this research is aimed to analyse if and how PI is used in public managers' decision-making processes in three Italian municipalities, and which factors have encouraged or precluded their application.

1. Literature review

The studies issued in the last years have argued the candid and oversimplified approach that identifies production with PI usage, most of all those which tent to highlight the elements successfully or adversely associated with such application. De Lancer, Julnes and Holzer (2001) recognize 'rational/technocratic' factors (resources, information, goal orientation, External Requirement) and political/cultural factors (internal interest group, external group and unions, risk taking and attitudes). The aforementioned elements have different effects and affect both adoption and implementation. Moynihan and Ingrahm (2004) dwell on the positive influence of leadership related to the PI usage in decision-making processes. Actually, it has been noticed how the lack of leadership negatively affects the notion of PMM systems' benefit among the employees (Burke and Costello, 2005). Dull (2008) evaluates commitment as a central illuminating element in PI application, as it supplies reliability to reforms. Ho and Coates (2004) put their attention on the role played by the citizens involved, elected officials, and city staff. They propose a model of Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) in which citizens, elected officials, and city staff jointly develop performance measures incorporating citizens' perspective and then integrate these measures into the government's decision-making process. This involvement promotes implementation and developing of PMM systems, successfully affecting the production and application of PI. Melkers and Willoughby (2005) categorized factors in terms of community characteristics, organizational culture and performance measurement system (PMe) characteristics. Ammons e Rivenbark (2008) detect three key factors which may impact PI practice: 1) collection of and reliance on higher-order measures, in particular efficiency measures; 2) benchmarking with other governments or service producers; 3) the incorporation of PM into management systems. Hatry (2008) points out the five PMe technical requirements which encourage PI appliance: (a) effectiveness of performance indicators; (b) quality of data; (c) promptness of collected data; (d) appropriate data analysis; (e) presentation of information. Moynihan (2011) underlines PI are not comprehensive, but they are ambiguous and subjective. «Performance data don't tell us why performance did or did not occur (...). PI does not necessarily provide a definitive account of performance» (Moynihan: 30). The use of PI depends on the motivations of potential users and the utility of PI (interactive-dialogue model). Moynihan and Pandey (2010) define

PI usage as an organizational behaviour, thus it results from multiple factors: a) individual beliefs, Public Service Motivation (Perry and Hondeghen, 2008); b) job attributes such as organizational role, specialistic and generalist roles and task-specific experience; c) organizational factors in terms of organizational culture and flexibility; d) external factors such as citizens and external stakeholders' support. Starting from the analysis of Hofstede's five dimensions (2005) of organizational culture, Van Dooren et al. (2010), identify those ones associated to PI application: a PMM system based on incentivizing methods produces strong elements of competitiveness within the organization and marks a "masculinity" culture. On the contrary, debate on performances requires meditative and empathetic attitudes, typical of a "feminine" culture. Organizational culture is a focus factor also in Taylor's model (2011), which categorizes possible factors affecting the PI use in terms of (1) individual influences, in the form of individual perceptions on the impact of PMe in the agency; (2) structural and technical influences, in the form of the agency's PMe; (3) cultural influences, in the form of organizational culture and stakeholder support for the agency's PM; and (4) external influences, in the form of the external political environment. Besides, Moynihan and Pandey (2010), believe that culture of development, since flexible, adaptable and growth oriented, can be successfully associated with PI use. An innovation rewarding climate drives managers to deal with PI, arguing the current arrangements. Although different, both studies underline that when organizational culture goes along with PMe routine and reporting activities are perceived as adequate organizational behaviours, there is a greater chance that managers really do adopt PI. Kroll's research (2011) distinguishes systematic ("data that is measured against ex-ante indicators, regularly collected and formally reported") and unsystematic PI ("information can be verbal and it can be ad-hoc. Usually, it is not measured against formalized ex-ante indicators") and concludes that unsystematic PI is used more frequently by public managers. Besides, managers' inclination to use more information sources is positively linked to a flexible and constantly developing organizational culture. Moynihan and Hawes (2012) evaluate the application of PI in a specious perspective. The authors argue that PI use represents a true measure of accountability, a significant interim measure of the progress of performance reforms. So they point out on elements determining actors' reaction, in terms of behaviour, to the intrinsic value of the same reformation process. Thus, they analyse the reactivity of PA to reforms, taking PI as indicator of such reactivity. Extreme attention must be put on how to stimulate managers, and employees in general, to use PI. Moynihan and Lavertu (2012) analyse the relationship between results-based reforms and managerial use of performance data. Employees' behaviour is influenced by organizational routines. Employees look at the "logic of pertinence" to drive their actions. Managerial reformations are considered as metaroutines, targeted to modify the existing routines. Consequently, the question of lacking application of PI is linked to the absence of such kind of routines. In many PMM systems, even if in presence of good organizational routines for data collecting, PMe are complicated and completely lacking in procedures for the use

of such data. In this sense it is necessary to work on structured procedures or routines which facilitate learning and organizational change in terms of use of the same PI.

2. Methodology: multiple case study

The majority of the studies related to use of PI have mainly used quantitative tools (Kroll and Proeller 2013). In this research, according with an inductive approach, has been used the *multiple case study* (Yin, 1994). Cases study is the favourite tool when aimed to inspect details and relationships among different variables, when the researcher has little control on the events and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 1994). Cases study facilitates the connection between theory and empiric evidence and answers the “hows” and “whys”. Aim of this research is to enhance the direction shaped by statistical studies, «putting flesh on the bones» (Kroll and Proeller, 2013), i.e. integrating the existing interpretations (Ragin, 1989) to increase the knowledge of concepts rather than of people (Yin, 1994). Thus, the purpose is to describe exhaustively cases data and analyse them, so to produce credible ideas in order to improve the elaboration of hypotheses and, in general, for contributing to the process of knowledge of the object of the study.

The research, through the analysis of three Italian Municipalities, means to answer the following questions:

1. Do public managers make use of PI?
2. Which are the encouraging/discouraging factors in use of PI in public managers' decision-making processes?

The Analysis Unit is represented by relationships between PI and public managers' decision-making processes. It is to analyse if PI is effectively and efficaciously applied.

Choice of Cases is based on the principle of “literal replication” (Yin, 1994). From our former studies there have been taken three municipalities with the following features: non-immature PMe⁴, performance papers with high compliance level compared with what expected by decree No. 150/2009⁵, by directions of Independent Commission for Evaluation, Transparency and Integrity of public administration - CIVIT (deliberations no. 89/2010, no. 104/2010, no.112/2010, no. 114/2010) and by guidelines of Italian Municipalities National Association - ANCI

⁴ Kroll and Proeller specify «However, the complexity of a measurement system is something that cannot be fully assessed ex-ante. In most instances, we only know at the end of a case study how complex a performance measurement system actually is». Nevertheless, when a case study is selected it is first analyzed its measurement and evaluation system on the strength of its legitimacy, functionality and validity dimensions, as on the framework suggested by Bouckaert (1993) in Bouckaert G., “Measurement and Meaningful Management”, *Public Productivity & Management Review*, 1993, 17(1) pp. 31-43.

⁵ The decree No. 150/09 introduces in Italy performance management cycle.

(2011) and with a maximum of 50.000 inhabitants each. In table 1 are summarized some general data.

Table 1. General data

<i>(updated Dec. 31th, 2012)</i>	municipality A	municipality B	municipality C
Mayor	second term	first term	first term
Inhabitants	54.847	48.114	47.695
Public Managers	4	6	5
Employees	195	354	285

Quality Criteria of the study are summarized in table 2:

Table 2. Quality criteria adopted

Quality dimension	Description
Construct validity	Triangulation of the sources (Patton, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1987) and validation of interviews. Primary and secondary sources have been used. Among the first, there have been semi-structured interviews (Stake, 1995; Cipolla, 1998) to the key informants (Tremblay, 1957; Del Zotto 1998; Palumbo and Gambarino; 2006), specifically to the three public managers and the secretaries of the local authorities, aimed to analyse the starting conditions, the process, the steps which have brought to the introduction of reasonings and PMe instruments and to understand the use of PI in decision-making processes. As to secondary sources, it has been carried on a documentary analysis related to performance management cycle, budgeting cycle and management control cycle. In the end, the ones interviewed have validated the version of each case.
Internal validity	Technique of “description of the case” (Yin, 1994).
External validity	Literal replication: each case has been selected so to provide for similar results.
Reliability	Case study protocol (Eisenhardt 1987), in which have been listed all the steps to follow and has been built a cases database (analysed papers, transcript of interviews, drafts and various notes).

3. Discussion

Analysis of described cases leads to a cross-sectional consideration about the facts emerged. The use of PI is a cultural matter (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010) of organizational learning, and such way it has to be analysed. The research on use of PI in public decision-making processes requires a significant change of perspective. Public Administrations are complicated organizations, ruled by unwritten procedures, codes and routines which deeply affect public managers behaviours (Minelli et al. 2008).

Cases analysis has allowed the detection of four possible macro factors successfully linked to use of PI in public managers' decision-making processes: (1) personal features; (2) PMe structural features; (3) cultural peculiarities; (4) external influences.

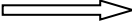
MACRO FACTORS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THREE MUNICIPALITIES

A) PUBLIC MANAGERS' PERSONAL FEATURES

Degree type and age seem not significant. With regard to the first factor, in all three municipalities is recorded a symmetry with the management role performed (table 3), while there is a lack of evident connection with use of PI. Thus, subjects with the same degree have a different approach to the practice. As to the second factor, the age, it does not seem significant in the analysed cases (de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001; Dull, 2008): in all three municipalities there have been cases of public managers aged over 50 who have shown real enthusiasm towards performance measurement tools, considering them innovative and challenging instruments.

From the interviews emerges how much personal perceptions (Melkers e Willoughby, 2005; Liguori et al., 2012), such as ideas, impressions and knowings do affect the use of PI. Public management's expertises and knowings have played a positive role, encouraging an open approach to principles, logics and performance instruments. Almost all interviewed knew about performance and its measurement tools because they had taken part to masters and/or specialized training courses. Public managers who had followed such specializing path have actually shown more attention to the implementation and launching processes of PMe.

Table 3. Qualitative features of the interviewed respondents



PUBLIC MANAGERS INTERVIEWED	MUNICIPALITIES								
	A			B			C		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
SEX	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AGE	55	52	46	55	60	58	53	47	39
DEGREE TYPE	Architecture	Law	Law	Architecture	Literature	Political Science	Architecture	Philosophy	Law

Almost all public managers have declared to be fully aware of the benefits coming from PMe, except for, in some cases, to have difficulties in describing specific benefits. In other cases instead, even without a direct question, they have reported effective examples of concrete improvements thanks to the introduction of the systems and the application of related outputs. For instance, interviewed B of case B reports that performance data related to events budgeted for the former year have allowed a re-arrangement so to budget a different theatrical performance, much closer to citizens' likes; interviewed B of case C underlines how the reading of PI related to events already budgeted has allowed a cultural programme re-arrangement, meeting an hidden need; interviewed C of case C highlights the road accident study data have allowed to point out this aspect, through the introduction and monitoring of actions targeted to control those data.

Clear perception of benefits is significant to finalize the use of PI, how stated by Taylor (2011), as long as it is interiorised and becomes integral part of modus operandi and of the whole managerial cycle. Strictly connected it's the public managers' perception of cost/benefits analysis. It's interesting to notice how not always this analysis is considered acceptable. In particular, during the PMe planning and implementing phases the instruments have been perceived as far from everyday activity. Six interviewed have stated that the analysis has become acceptable only in the following steps, after the first phases. It is, actually, not only an operative working load connected to the concrete definition of targets and indicators, but also a conceptual one, of rethinking the whole activities, the expected results and the ways to provide services. Major criticalities emerged in the PMe introduction steps are that performance tools «seem to dialogue autonomously» and it is difficult to make them become «a working attitude»⁶. Also those who still consider as negative the costs/benefits analysis declare it's

⁶ Interviewed A of municipality C

necessary to proceed along the path undertaken and deem this imbalance as endemic. Thus, it is essential PM becomes integral part of the whole managerial activity (Ammons e Rivenbark, 2008). From the interviews it comes out this process is slow, non automatic, needs continuous refinement, and leads to collide with resistance and hostility to transformation; it is an imposed transition to be overcome for an aware introduction of a PMM system.

B) PECULIARITIES OF PME

Efficacy level of PMe has been analysed on the framework suggested by Bouckaert (1993), so as described by Padovani et al. (2010). In the following table are synthetically reported the sub-dimensions applied to analyse validity, legitimacy and functionality⁷ of the systems.

In the cases analysed the system legitimacy is not always high. It is required, thus, to separate the system planning phases from the implementation and launching ones. From the interviews comes out that in the very first phases public managers' involvement has not always been complete, being actually a kind of silence procedure. The involvement of the whole structure, or of all the public managers only, has not always been a positive element in the planning phase, because sometimes there have been hostile and conservative reactions. Some experiences (cases A and B) show that the system processing made by small working teams, composed by subjects who have a more constructive attitude towards such logics and instruments, is more efficient since targeted to overcome the inevitable resistance to change. Secretary of Municipality C, for instance, underlines how, in such earlier phases, even the contribution of non-managerial positions has been strategic for both material and conceptual inputs, because of their positive attitudes towards new challenges connected to measurement and evaluation. Case C actually provides new reasoning inputs, as it is diametrically opposite with its high legitimacy level of the system even from the earlier phases. The whole system is the result of a process of growing and systematic constructive exchange among public managers. This procedure has led to a noticeable level of PMe legitimation and has become highly interiorised with an effective use of the results, targeted to implement correcting processes and constant improvement. PMe processing made by a small group has been successful in municipality C, which stands out for its strong organizational cohesion. Public managers have been working for years in an administrative context where managerial culture and human resources management oriented to human enhancement and to a better organizational welfare are prevalent. Consequently, such evidences allow to assert that a prevailing "pioneering strategy" (case A and C) or "participated strategy" (case B) in the planning stage strictly depend on the cultural features of the municipalities, particularly of the public managers. Thus, it is necessary to prefer an incidental approach so to respect the peculiarities of each organizational structure.

⁷ Each sub-dimension has been given a value ranging from 1 to 5.

Further participation of public managers in the implementing and start of the system has been extremely significant in all three cases, as stated by Vakkuri and Meklin (2006). It is actually essential that public managers give legitimacy to the operating PME (Bouckaert, 1993). This circumstance facilitates a real approval of the measures, a concrete and adequate achievement of measurement and evaluation process and, more, the improvement of the use of PI in decision-making processes.

Participation of employees and external stakeholders (citizens-customers) has been almost absent in all three cases, and subordinate to an ex-post sharing of the system and of performance management cycle papers.

The three PME on the whole are considerable in terms of the logic structure which connects vision, mission, strategical and operating goals; in terms of plain and achievable targets, linked to useful and substantial indicators; and in terms of verifying, reviewing and improving processes, in terms of reduced difficulties in data collecting and data testing, of measures representative of reality, prompt and reliable; finally, in terms of systematic processes of monitoring and reporting of the level of targets achievement.

Dimension of PME validity plays an extremely significant role in the cases considered (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010; Taylor, 2011). In its absence, is even hard to imagine public managers could use PI. In this sense it's important to underline the double dimension of validity: effective validity and perceived one. It's actually needed not only the system is effectively working but also it is equally perceived by public managers and by the political-administrative vertex itself. Actors must be aware of both validity and utility of the system, of targets and indicators it includes.

It's important that targets, if not directly described by the manager, are considered plain, (Rainey and Steibeur 1999; Wright 2001), achievable and associated to useful and significant indicators. In such cases there are more chances to use the PI, because it's much easier for the decisor to perform some "causal inferences". Radin (2006) actually underlines how often the difficulty in defining relevant measures and obtain substantial, prompt and reliable results, bring decisors to the non use of PI.

From the interviews in fact appears the importance PME do really represent the external reality in terms of quality and quantity (Ammons and Rivenbark 2008). Validity level of the PME analysed is differentiated and, among other things, connected to "chronological age" of the system.

Older systems are also those with a higher validity level, as a result of a process of review and constant improvement. There are no perfect PME, but just systems which are put into practice, reviewed and improved. Only the activity of monitoring and systematic testing allows an effective operating system, promoting the integration of management control system (Poister e Streib, 1999). As to dimension of functionality, all the interviewed acknowledge that the introduction of PME has brought improvements within the administration.

It is a shared opinion that the system allows the improvement of everyday activity, supporting the enhancement of services to citizenship. It is a very wide result, that includes the capability of having fixed plain targets, the measurement of inputs and outputs, in some cases of outcomes, too; the possibility to test the determiners which facilitate the achievement of municipalities final targets and the redefinition of each own path (Rubenstein et al., 2003). The nature of adopted measures play a specific role. As a matter of fact, the prevailing presence of measures about quality of services, about efficiency and efficacy and not simply about inputs (as mostly happened before), lead public managers, and sometimes also their collaborators, to a rethinking of the strategy itself as well as of the procedure of services supplying (Ammons and Rivenbark 2008). Instead, difficulty in determining outcome targets and indicators still remains: they are yet the Holy Grail of the systems themselves (Radin, 2006).

C) ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture plays a determining role for the use of PI (Vakkuri e Meklin, 2006). From the research comes up that including procedures and measurement activities as well as actions of reporting and evaluating the adequate organizational behaviours promotes institutionalization of the system itself (Moynihan e Lavertu, 2012). Use of PI is influenced by social context and formal system in which public managers operate. A first interesting dimension is the political and administrative commitment (Moynihan and Ingraham, 2004; Melkers and Willoughby, 2005). In all three cases the administrative commitment, primarily composed by the administrative vertex, has been very elevated. This last one has actually started the PMe implementation process. This has promoted the spreading of measurement culture, of evaluation and constant improvement logic, as well as the clearing of reluctances and hostility to change, sometimes conveyed by the public managers themselves. An high level of commitment has encouraged the identification in performance values. Besides, cases B and C show the importance played by political commitment. A political vertex that is actually capable in overcoming the narrow vision related to the political term and is oriented to shape the administration and its culture towards continuity, does successfully influence organizational behaviours in terms of information practice. Besides, political vertex will and capacity to determine, make explicit and communicate strategy and priorities so to make them become strategical schedules, with the administrative vertex necessary support, promotes the implementation of a PMe and the use of PI in decision-making process (Ammons and Rivenbark, 2008). The interviews show how public managers declaring a larger use of PI are those who perceive an high (political-administrative) commitment, pragmatically certain of performance measurement and evaluation activity benefits. Commitment generates a positive internal pressure on public managers for the use of PI.

Another aspect considered relates to the type of management decision-making processes. They usually are participated processes, in which public managers evaluate and listen to collaborators' opinion, subject to their own

responsibility in the final choice. This participated decision-making process drives collaborators also to use PI. As a matter of fact, some interviewed underline how in their decision-making process many PI very often brought to their attention by collaborators working in their department/unit merge together⁸. Consequently, cases analysis suggest that a participated decision-making process drives also other collaborators to use PI.

The three organizational cultures are considered by the interviewed as dynamic, resourceful and inclined to risk in terms of attitude to take the consequence of the change. Among the cases analysed, the development culture that characterizes Municipality C seems to be the one mainly connected to PI (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010). This Municipality stands out for its organizational culture: flexible, adaptable and ready to face challenges coming from political-administrative vertex as well as from external context, and for its capability to overcome its own criticalities in a logic of constant improvement. Informal/interpersonal/group relationships are ambiguous, as they can promote and frustrate the PMe at the same time. It's undeniable that, in the municipalities examined, they influence the everyday activities, not always in a positive sense. In particular, relationships can have a double meaning: a) at a vertex level, public managers feel informal relationships imply intrusion in their own activities, most of all from political actors; b) at lower levels, the same do often simplify the work among public managers and employees, supporting organizational welfare and group cohesiveness.

D) EXTERNAL FACTORS

An important external aspect is the role played by Decree no. 150/09, which, in Italy, has made PMe mandatory by law. Halachmi (2005) underlines the PMM limits imposed by law, but, at the same time, its important input (Preite, 2011), most of all in Italian PA, where the bureaucratic logic is prevailing. Cases A and B prove the introduction of PMe has begun with Decree no. 150/09. As a matter of fact, performance management cycle instruments introduced by the aforementioned Decree have broken the existing balance (de Lancer Julnes and Holzer 2001), leading the administrations to an innovation path which impact the operating procedures and the organization itself. In case C, instead, the law has meant the right chance to systematize already partially existing tools. It is thus confirmed the Italian inclination to suggest change and innovation by law (Anselmi, 1995). Decree no. 150/09 has represented an *opportunity window* (Pollitt, 2006), playing a proactive role for the introduction of the systems themselves. The ways Decree no. 150/09 has been welcomed differ depending on the institutional and political specific conditions. Law cannot reform anything by itself, as it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the innovation. From the

⁸ For instance, interviewed B of municipality C schedules weekly meetings with directors and department collaborators to discuss/debate the activities performed or to be achieved within the week. During such meetings collaborators have pointed out to the manager significant performance information that has influenced the further decision-making process.

cases analysis stands out a different role played by Decree no. 150/09 on PMe implementation system and on use of PI produced by the system. In particular, a major criticality is observed for the second aspect: the law isn't actually able to impact public managers' behaviours: it is necessary, thus, that administrations convert PMM instruments, principles and techniques in organizational routines.

4. Results

Cross-sectional analysis has allowed a study on the possible factors influencing the use of PI. Table 5 summarizes those elements which seem to be successfully associated to PI application in public managers' decision-making processes.

Table 4. Factors of influence

Individual features	Expertise, knowledge Benefits perception Acceptable analysis costs/benefits
PMe characteristics	Legitimity Validity Functionality
Organizational culture	Development culture
External factors	-

The cases analysis highlights the use of PI is different depending on each organisation (Moynihan and Lavertu, 2012):

1. some public managers choose a passive approach (Moynihan, 2009), carrying out formally what expected from the PMe, without effectively practising the information produced by the system itself⁹;
2. some public managers behave opportunistically so to successfully impact the indicators, as they consider the PMe as mainly targeted to evaluate their own abilities, and definitely they don't achieve any goal. This is known as *cream skimming* or *goal displacement* (Barnow and Heinrich, 2010);
3. some public managers make a political use of PI to support their legitimacy needs and get political consensus (Hood, 2006). What Moynihan (2009) calls *advocacy*;
4. some public managers substantially use PI, improving services supplying (in terms of inputs and/or outputs and outcomes and/or quality).

Besides, cases analysis points out how poor use of PI is partially connected to structural aspect of the reform itself, proving some limits underlined by literature and procedure. First of all, it's required the evaluation of what could be eventually

⁹ PM's systems are often adopted statutory and the compensation result distributed is linked to formal respect of system prescription. Thus, public managers do their best to comply prescriptions in order to avoid being penalized.

called “fear of performances”. Sometimes public managers tend to delegitimize PME because they consider it an aspect of their labour agreement more than a managerial means. Thus, they prefer PME does not get plain, true and “objective” measurements and evaluations, afraid that results compensation could be reduced from that 100% virtually achievable. This comes from a cultural inversion of the relationship between means and purpose related to results compensation, not seen as a motivational tool within the PME to push towards the performance achievement, but as PME goal itself (Barbieri and Valotti, 2010). Such difficulty is caused by a restricted culture of results. Thus, it is necessary to start adequate training paths. Therefore, the introduction of a PME substantially connected to money incentives has brought a significant change, generating resistances and fears. This is probably one of the major criticalities came to light in the very first phase of the application of Decree no° 150/09 and it has been pointed out from the same technicians who have taken part to the process of law creation (Hinna et al., 2010).

It's needed to move the attention from a logic of control to a logic of accompaniment. History of Italian PA is full of models oriented to judge public managers, and this has brought them to elusive behaviours in order to minimize the risk of negative evaluations (Barbieri and Valotti, 2010). It's necessary, so, to overcome a control focussed only on procedures and compliance and implement a PMM system centred on results.

Interviewed have also pointed out the need to start procedures of external benchmark (Ammons and Rivenbark, 2008). Those who have declared to use PI have also underlined that the definition of common measures in different bodies would support their heuristic value and promote their utilization, particularly in circumstances of competition among organizations and to get the always more insufficient resources.

This occurrence makes evident the unclear behaviour of PA workers, stuck between attitudes resistant to change and sometimes unaware pressure towards innovation and significant use of managerial instruments.

From case C emerges the importance of scheduled meetings between the Secretary and the public manager. In this municipality such meetings have allowed both PME building and testing since the first introduction, as well as the comparison of the results achieved and continuous and shared growth. These are what, in other words, Moynihan (2005) calls “learning forums”, i.e. rooms, not necessarily material ones, where main actors discuss to find solutions, examine information together, decide which relevance they have and which actions to be undertaken. Interaction among informed people can generate innovative solutions which would be difficult to find by analysis carried on individually. When interviewed have stated a minor use of PI (A e B) have also denounced a smaller internal debate. Thus, it comes out the learning forums positive role for the introduction of PMM system. Such aspect calls attention on the need to work on both structural and cultural dimensions. Organizational routines are a relevant starting point, but the actors decide to create and take part to such routines only if

they deem them adequate to their organization. Interviewed do use PI in making-decision processes if they consider analysis and interpretation routines as an adequate organizational behaviour. It's undeniable that such attitude is necessarily influenced by their culture and experience.

Ultimately, the three cases studied reveal that PI are applied, although not by all public managers and not systematically, even if an important development towards this use is recorded. Interviewed have complained that PI production and analysis is a relevant burden of extra work, not sustainable in such lack of resources and adequate informative system. Notwithstanding this, they have reported several examples of immature use of PI.

Facts drive to two interpretations, a pessimistic and an optimistic one. It can be stated that PMe introduction process is still very slow and brings back again to discrepancy between what expected by law and what occurred in practice. Resistances and hostilities against PMe implementation, disapproval of a consequent more substantial burden of work and, most of all, PI restricted use make think of a delay in interiorizing PMM principles and logic.

Nevertheless, it emerges a broadening system of new values, of innovative techniques and instruments, always more oriented to results, which lead to a contextual systematization of principles and logics that haven't worked in the past. It is still a processing procedure. It is complex, but in the PA considered has allowed to get the first outcomes in terms of PMe adoption and use of information outputs, even if with different durations and manners. Big reforms, most of all the cultural ones, don't even significantly effect in the short period, but need time, understanding moments, reviewing systems and constant improvement. Innovation paths and results achieved are different depending on the starting conditions. Municipality C, for instance, had already started the management innovation procedures, proactively approaching formerly managerial reforms and internal operating requirements.

Thanks to the cross-sectional analysis it's possible to draw some extremely significant lesson learned, that can support the use of PI among Italian PA:

1. *Strong political-administrative commitment.* Vertex must be proactive for the diffusion of a performance measurement and evaluation culture, supporting a results-oriented management. The vertex must become constantly committed to the use of PI, through their frequent and effective communication. PI constant diffusion promotes a major internal and external accountability among the employees and in the organization. GAO (2008) indicates how the administrative commitment level can be strengthened by intensifying meetings targeted to analyse and discuss the performance level achieved, the eventual gaps, as well as correctives and improvement procedures. Besides, political commitment level could be further extended by making the drafting of existing information instruments compulsory.
2. *Resetting the information/formative/selective activities for public managers and the whole personnel.* It is the starting of accurate

formative programmes targeted to the diffusion of PM principles and logics. It is important to activate accompaniment programmes, so to enlarge the level of awareness and of adoption of specific tools for PI measurement, evaluation and practice, supporting the so-called *managerial thinking* (Ammons, 2002). This is about the diffusion of know-how and expertise on issues as quality and CAF self-evaluation. In the longer term it's needed to adjust public managers selection procedures, which must overpass a mainly juridical approach in favour of the selection of subjects of managerial culture and closer to a results-oriented attitude.

3. *Improving the PMe legitimacy level.* It's appropriate to make public managers and collaborators take part to the different operating steps of the system, avoiding to impose it uncritically, following a top-down logic. Thus, it's necessary to respect administration features and peculiarities, the users' information needs, to make all external stakeholders participate and to overcome system self-referentiality by opening it and making it clear and useful to services beneficiaries.
4. *Plan an efficient PMe,* i.e. coherent in terms of mission, targets and indicators through a cascading logic. PMe must be integral part of the information system and of adopted scheduling papers. It's needed to process strategical plans in which missions and medium and long term targets are made clear. These ones must be included in the agenda and updated each year, so to identify targets and activities to be achieved, and, among them, monitoring times and procedures.
5. *Process a functional PMe.* It's needed to monitoring how PMe impact the administration itself in terms of internal and external accountability increase, and quality of supplied services, as well as of decision-making processes improvement. It must effectively affect resources, targets and priorities programming.
6. *Introducing and intensifying the organizational routines actions from which is expected an explicit use of PI.* Employees' behaviour is shaped by organizational routines (Moynihan and Lavertu, 2012). In such sense, in order to promote the use of PI by public managers, it must be supported the diffusion of organizational routines scheduling their explicit application. It is to transfer PM principles in the modus operandi of the organization and to spread systematic and constant managerial procedures of information practice.
7. *Communicate and endorse the good praxis* in PI practice within the administration, so to develop expertise, competence and meritocracy.
8. *Perform systematic monitoring and reporting activities* so to understand system, targets, indicators and strategy limits and potentiality. Besides, measures must be constantly updated and reviewed.

9. *Make benchmarking and start networking.* The practice of common indicators allows debate and analysis of weakness and strenghts. It facilitates homogeneous monitoring of costs and benefits, activating shared development and improving procedures of measurement and evaluating instruments. In this way it's improved reciprocal knowing and are started activities of local networking promoting experiences exchange, collaboration among administrations and diffusion of self-assessment and constant improvement planning practices.
10. *Integrate PI into PA information systems,* also through provision of adequate software supporting the organization as well as information management and enhancement.

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