Performance Management:
Steering, Motivation and/or Learning?

MA course, 10 ECTS.

Teacher:

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Time:
Mondays: 16-18
Location: U-144

Introduction:

Public organizations are subject to increased demands to demonstrate and improve their results. These demands are reflected by increasingly comprehensive performance measurement systems, as well as by the introduction of performance measurement to new areas of the public sector at the local, regional, and national levels. For instance, there have been considerable public debate over school rankings, but also areas like health care, child care, police, and employment agencies are subject to performance measurement. Nevertheless, the potential for performance improvement through performance measurement and management is highly disputed, and in the academic literature there is no clear consensus about the positive or negative effects of performance measurement.

This seminar introduces the participants to a range of important aspects regarding performance-based management. First, what makes up results or organizational performance when we are working with public organizations, and how can performance be measured. Second, how are performance-based management systems designed in practice, and how do they match different performance management recommendations. Third, we will discuss different theoretical perspectives that can be used to understand the rationales behind and effects of performance management, including how different rationales might be at odds with one another. These rationales include greater transparency, increased motivation through improved incentive structures, greater focus and goal clarity, as well as improved organizational learning and management through continuous feedback about organizational performance. Finally, the course places great emphasis on understanding the effects – intended or unintended, functional or dysfunctional – of actual performance management systems, including which contextual factors might affect the impact of performance management.
Learning objectives:

At the end of the course participants should be able to:

• Account for and discuss different conceptualizations of performance in the public sector.
• Account for different ways in which performance-based management can be designed, including discussing which rationales lie behind different designs.
• Account for and compare different theories about steering, motivation, and learning with reference to performance management.
• Assess analytical strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches to performance management.
• Apply theories and approaches to the analysis of actual cases of performance-based management systems.
• Discuss strengths and weaknesses of different methods and research designs in empirical analyses of performance management.

Teaching formats:

Class is taught 2 hours per week for 12 weeks. Towards the end of the semester there will individual and group-based counseling regarding the participants’ final papers.

Teaching will be conducted primarily as discussion-based teaching based on the participants’ own preparation – individually and in study groups – for class. Class discussions will focus on both theoretical discussions and the application of concepts, theories, and methods to the analysis of actual examples of performance measurement and performance-based management systems. Participants are assigned to study groups in which they are expected to participate actively in the discussion of smaller assignments and questions.

Examination:

Students may choose between:

• Oral exam with a short written synopsis (2-3 pages) about a relevant theoretical or empirical question.
• Final paper (max 20 pages) about a relevant question chosen by the student.

Course readings comprise no more than 1,200 pages.
Class 1: Introduction


(46 pages)

Class 2: Weber vs. public choice – challenges to the bureaucratic organization


• pp. 97-109; 113-115; 129-132. (20 s.)


• pp. 3-9; 15-30; 36-42. (30 s)


• Read thoroughly!

(89 pages)
Class 3: NPM and Performance Management


  • Read only the abstract (1 s.)


(72 pages)

Class 4: Evaluation criteria: What is performance?


(90 pages)
Class 5: Performance-based incentives – at the organizational level


(88 pages)

Class 6: Performance-based incentives – managers and front-line employees


Nielsen, Poul Aaes & Maria Falk Mikkelsen (2009): Speciale-abstract
  • Lægges på Blackboard. (1 s.)


(97 pages)
Class 7: From Performance Measurement to Management


(59 pages)

Class 8: Performance information use and organizational learning


(88 pages)
Class 9: Organizational learning from performance feedback


(78 pages)

Class 10: Citizen responses to performance data


(88 pages)
Class 11: The politics of performance data


(84 pages)

Class 12: More politics, implications for management, and further perspectives


(96 pages)