TOWARD EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN CANADA: CONVERGENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY

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Abstract: A growing theme in management education literature is that of effectiveness assessment. Integrated effectiveness assessment systems represent a growing important challenge in public management education in Canada. This paper examines the service effectiveness framework that evolved from comprehensive auditing developments in the public domain. It presents an integrated model of effectiveness assessment systems and the current issues that impede its full development and implementation in Canada. Finally, the paper examines the evolving effectiveness assessment challenges that could fundamentally change public management education in Canada.

Résumé: Un thème croissant dans la littérature en éducation de gestion est celui de l'évaluation de l'efficacité. Les systèmes intégrés d'efficacité représentent un défi important et croissant en matière d'éducation de gestion publique au Canada. Cet article présente un modèle intégré de systèmes de vérification d'efficacité ainsi que les questions et les défis associés à son plein développement et son implantation dans le domaine de l'éducation de la gestion publique au Canada.

A growing theme in management education literature is that of effectiveness assessment. The essential question is whether public management programs at postsecondary institutions in Canada are having a desirable impact on the management development of public service executives. Most of the discussion revolves around outcome assessment, defined by professional career performance indicators such as economic remuneration, personal satisfaction, organizational influence and level of authority, fiscal responsibility, and demonstrated professional competence. Successful educational programs are often defined as those in which the students have attained demonstrable high levels in each of these

areas. Yet is this really the ultimate assessment level that the field wishes to achieve? Despite the relevance of these indicators, what others might also be beneficial in assessing the effectiveness of public management education?

In Canada, the search for excellence and performance effectiveness is a growing concern throughout the academic community (Bok, 1986; Chakravarthy, 1986; Koch & Cebula, 1994; Paquet & von Zur-Muehlen, 1989; Sharma & Steiner, 1990). In dynamic and changing academic environments, there are increased calls for public accountability (Caro, 1994; Kernaghan, 1994; Sibley, 1993; Smith, 1990); a reexamination of fundamental educational values (Woiceshyn, 1992); strategic restructuring and realignment (Cheit, 1985; Maher, 1990; Sibley, 1993; Small, 1994; Webber & Peters, 1983); and organizational redirection (Davis, 1987; Levinthal & March, 1993; Millard, 1991; Wexley & Baldwin, 1986) in an increasingly globalized environment (Deans & Jurison, 1995; Masuda, 1980).

This paper examines the service effectiveness paradigm that evolved from comprehensive auditing developments in the public domain. It presents an integrated framework of performance effectiveness assessment and the evolving effectiveness assessment challenges that could ultimately alter public management education in Canada.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE EFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

In Canada, the field of comprehensive auditing is continually impacting on all facets of public sector management. A comprehensive audit, or value for money audit, is formally defined as:

> an examination that provides an objective and constructive assessment of the extent to which financial, human and physical resources are managed with due regard to economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; and an assessment as to whether accountability relationships are reasonably served. (Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, 1987)

Driven by the fundamental principles of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, comprehensive auditing is an independent and objective means to enable a public organization to attain its full potential. A comprehensive audit typically examines financial and management controls, information systems, and reporting practices and recom-

mends improvements where appropriate. Comprehensive auditing evolved from two public-sector management tenets: one being that public service affairs should be conducted in a way that makes optimal and responsible use of public funds; the other that those who conduct public business be held fully accountable for the prudent and effective management of fiscal resources.

In essence, comprehensive auditing examines whether a public service organization is receiving service value for public monies. It attempts to answer questions such as: are public funds spent in an organization promulgating its mission, goals and objectives efficiently, economically and effectively? Are the public investments in social development endeavours such as educational services effective? What parties are involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of this public investment? What organizational and reporting structures are there to support effectiveness assessments (Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, 1993)? All of these issues are pertinent to the public management education area.

PERFORMANCE EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENTS

Ideally, performance effectiveness assessment needs to be as integral a part of management educational thinking as is strategic thinking. Figure 1 presents an effectiveness assessment framework for public management education that includes strategic networks, performance report infrastructures, and integrated effectiveness support systems.

Integrated performance effectiveness assessment systems can enable the universities, faculties, and their respective public management programs to attain their intended educational missions, goals and objectives.

Strategic Networks

The relevance of strategic planning of academic programs has been stressed in the literature (Brown, 1988; Davis, 1987; Maher, 1990; Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Universities, faculties, and public management programs should have effective and interlinked strategic plans, which clearly define a hierarchy of respective missions, goals, objectives, and strategic priorities that are reviewed annually. Such plans should be based on organizational analyses, including an assessment of perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as an

Figure 1
An Effectiveness Assessment Framework for Management Education
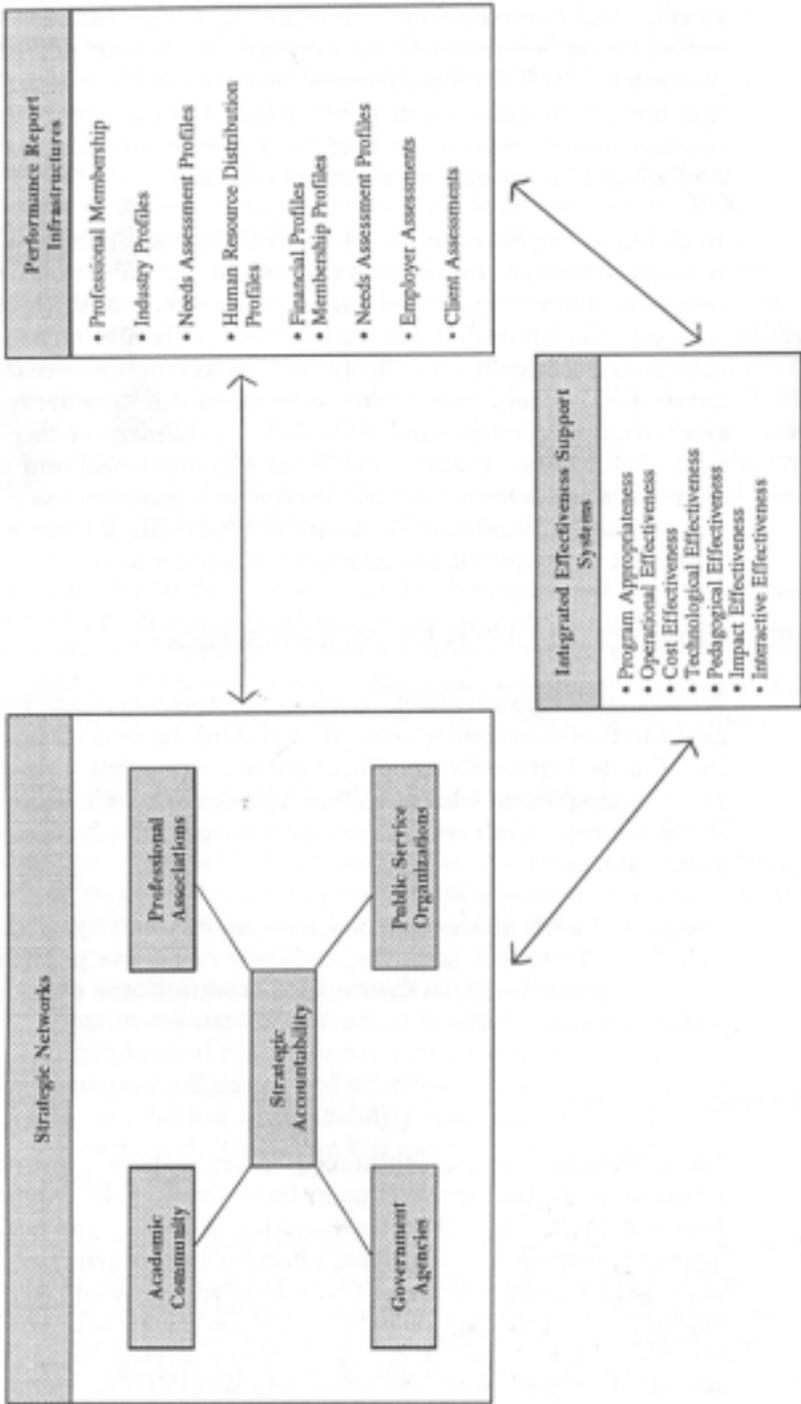
identification of opportunities for growth and service contributions. Providing perspectives on resource constraints and strategic opportunities, such plans should also include a complete synopsis of the internal and external academic resources that could be drawn upon.

Effective strategic planning does not take place in a vacuum, but rather within an interactive network of academic institutions, government agencies, professional associations, and other public service organizations. The strategic plan should reflect the needs and demands of the larger societal environment. In the case of public service management, the plan should position an educational program to respond to identified public service needs effectively. External advisory committees, composed of academic representatives, senior public managers, and graduates, have a special role and responsibility in creating and developing proactive strategic plans that define the strengths and opportunities for public management education programs in the context of a greater service community. The academic community with its critical strategic function of serving this community must effectively network with key public service management communities across Canada, including the relevant professional organizations, government agencies, and various management graduate associations.

Health services management programs are a case in point. Across Canada, programs accredited through the Accrediting Commission on Education in Health Services Administration, such as those at the Universities of British Columbia, Alberta, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Dalhousie, train health care executives at a graduate level. These programs network with a number of professional bodies and colleges that influence educational quality standards. These include organizations such as the Canadian College of Health Services Executives, the American College of Health Care Executives, and the Association of University Programs in Health Administration. The graduate and alumni associations of these programs also play important roles (Caro, 1994).

Performance Report Infrastructures

A second dimension to this model is the performance reporting systems, which include all the relevant effectiveness reports produced within the academic communities, such as graduate profiles and relevant cost and financial reports, as well as those produced by government agencies and professional associations that provide

needs-assessment profiles and cross-organizational information. Market surveys of the service population are also important, as are routine graduate surveys. These reports should be integrated with those produced by the community—an interlinkage requiring close networking of academic databases with those of other service communities and professional organizations.

Integrated Effectiveness Support Systems

Effectiveness assessment is predicated on integrated information systems support (Caro, 1994). Of critical importance is the integration of and linkage to databases that track the geographical and organizational location of graduates. In postsecondary education settings, a primary vehicle is a management program's graduate, or alumni, database. Ideally, this should be supplemented by active linkages to external professional organizational databases, which provide measures on key career and service performance information. Public management programs should routinely monitor the geographical and professional mobility patterns of graduates, in cooperation with their respective graduate associations. Doubtless, there are problems of maintaining the reliability, validity, and continuity of databases, given the geographical and organizational mobility of graduates. Nevertheless, active graduate associations provide incentives for alumni to network and maintain contact throughout their professional careers.

Table 1 provides a summary of the key performance effectiveness assessment components and the critical educational system issues that should be addressed and integrated with postsecondary management decision making.

EFFECTIVENESS SUPPORT SYSTEM CHALLENGES

There are five important challenges in the development and implementation of effectiveness support systems in public management education in Canada. These include: service effectiveness metrics, strategic accountability in a diverse community, effectiveness leadership, strategic actions for effectiveness, and accountability for effectiveness.

Service Effectiveness Metrics

A public management education program should systematically and regularly assess its overall effectiveness, using a strategic plan as

the baseline review document. The theme of the literature focuses on professional career performance measures, including levels of economic remuneration (Weinstein & Srivnivasan, 1974; Williams & Harrell, 1964); the level of personal satisfaction (Orpen, 1982); organizational influence, as measured by level of authority (Srivnivasan, Shocker, & Weinstein, 1973); the level of fiscal responsibility; and, finally, demonstrated professional competence (Curry, 1989). Ironically, relatively little work has been done on professional service performance indicators, and yet these measures represent

Table 1
Key Effectiveness Support System Components

Effectiveness Components	Definitions	Educational System Issues
Cost Effectiveness	• The extent to which the public management education program delivers educational services cost effectively	• Is the program operating cost effectively?
Impact Effectiveness	• The extent to which the public management education programs have a positive impact on the target service community	• What is the impact of the program on the service community?
Interactive Effectiveness	• The extent to which public management education programs interact effectively with the professional and service community to define pragmatic educational goals and objectives	• Is there effective interaction between the university, government agencies, professional community, and the client population being served?
Operational Effectiveness	• The extent to which public management education programs are effective in meeting defined missions, goals and objectives	• How does the program measure up to these structural and process measures? Is there a strategic plan with appropriate education measures?
Pedagogical Effectiveness	• The extent to which the public management education programs efficiently and effectively convey critical knowledge and skills needed by the service community	• Is the faculty pedagogy effective?
Program Appropriateness	• The extent to which the public service management education programs respond to the demands and needs of the target service community	• What is the relevance of the program to the target community? Is the program responding to market demand or community service needs?
Technological Effectiveness	• The extent to which the public management education program optimizes its use of appropriate educational technologies to best service the target community	• Is optimal use being made of educational technologies?

the kernel of true effectiveness assessment (LeVasseur, 1992; Richards, 1985). Indeed, the literature emphasizes the need for public management programs to foster a service mission to the community (Bok & Callahan, 1980; Levey & Hill, 1986). This service mission cannot be measured solely by salary levels, career satisfaction, and positional level within the organization. Indeed, some authors caution against relating program performance to career performance (Pallett & Hoyt, 1968). Other important elements, such as the personal characteristics of management students prior to admission, can influence career performance and the level of positional authority within an organization. The marketplace may also play a significant role in professional career mobility and placement.

Ironically, however, some of the least remunerative positions often demand the greatest personal sacrifice and their worth cannot be measured by materialistic values. Who would argue about the personal contributions of Albert Schweitzer, Lotta Hitschmanova (Sanger, 1986), Jean Vanier, or Mother Theresa of Calcutta, whose extraordinary impact on their service communities cannot be quantified (Caro, 1994)? In Canada, the greatest public service management needs may lie precisely where economic remuneration may not necessarily be competitive, but rather where personal sacrifices of a high order are called for. For example, the Dene and Inuit peoples in parts of Canada's northern regions have health standards approaching those of the Third World. Rural and northern provincial and territorial regions are often in pressing need of qualified health administrators and planners, in addition to other personnel. As Brown states:

> The real test of the performance of administrators should be in their leadership in areas, such as health care for the poor, health services in rural communities, care for the elderly, the control of costs of services and appropriate use of technology. How many programs use these measures of performance and how do graduates measure up using these standards? (1988, p. 10)

Indeed, the factors most easily measured are not necessarily the ones most critical to an assessment of performance effectiveness (McClennan, Winters, & Stuart, 1982). Yet, as the Smith report mentions:

> The real need is for measures which indicate how well the University system is meeting the reasonable expec-

tations of its own society and how well a given University is fulfilling its own declared mission. (1991, p. 124)

In essence, performance assessment indicators should be designed and developed to reflect public service management excellence and innovation (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1989). Currently, for example, many graduate databases in health services administration strive to capture positional information, including economic remuneration levels of graduates within an organization. Little attempt is made to assess either effectiveness, service contributions, or service impacts of the public service managers in target communities. The ultimate goal is to evolve integrated effectiveness assessment systems that will ultimately do so.

Table 2 provides examples of potential effectiveness measures reflecting service impact, outcome, process and structural system levels, together with their potential database sources.

The design, development and implementation of integrated effectiveness systems involves entirely new thinking and cognitive paradigms

Table 2
Examples of Performance Effectiveness Metrics

System Level	Performance Effectiveness Measures	Potential Database Sources
Structural	• Numbers of senior-level positions occupied by non-university graduates in public service management	• Government agencies • Professional associations • AUCC
Process	• Total educational cost per graduate • Graduate employee turnover rates • Graduate field exit rates	• Service communities • Professional bodies
Outcome	• Percentage of graduates satisfied with faculty pedagogical skills • Graduates trained on a long-distance basis • Graduates satisfied with university training	• Graduate associations • Service communities
Service Impact	• Graduates demonstrating excellence in management • Graduates demonstrating management innovation • Graduates demonstrating outstanding community service	• Professional associations • Service communities • Graduate associations

that focus on public management service contributions to the community. The design of such systems would bring attention to challenging issues, such as assessing leadership skills, vision, ethical constructs, strategic thinking capabilities, quality management, and demonstrated service impacts and professional competencies (Innes & Southwick-Trask, 1989; Porter & McKibbin, 1988).

Ideally, public management education programs should strive to assess the extent to which graduates effectively contribute to the strategic development of the public sector. Management activities should lead to innovative changes that promulgate better public service to the target population they serve. This requires a vision of what better public service is, as well as the necessary leadership skills needed to support this vision. Strategic and multidimensional thinking capabilities, as well as strong ethical groundings, are sine qua nons in such leaders.

Strategic Accountability in a Diverse Community

A core issue in evolving integrated effectiveness assessment systems is the a priori identification of the accountability structures and linkages between them. Although almost entirely funded by provincial government sources, postsecondary institutions take considerable pride in their organizational autonomy and independence while pursuing their unique educational missions (Cutt & Dobell, 1992). Provincial government agencies maintain a special responsibility in approving and funding postsecondary education. At this time, the ultimate accountability for overall public management education is diffuse and fragmented in Canada. This seriously impedes any concerted effort to develop an integrated approach to performance effectiveness assessment of public management education. Where accountability is weakly defined, it is difficult to assess service value for these programs. In essence, effectiveness assessment initiatives need to be strategically orchestrated through a central accountable body with input from diverse communities, all involved in one way or another with management education.

Effectiveness Leadership

In the absence of clear accountability structures and in the presence of strong institutional autonomy in Canada, it is difficult to evolve effectiveness assessment frameworks that will integrate critical postsecondary education and government agency information.

Without strong incentives and organized efforts to integrate, performance effectiveness assessment efforts of management education are severely hampered. The irony is that government agencies continue to finance academic initiatives without having the reasonable means to assess whether the public at large is deriving service value, or value for money. The development of integrated effectiveness assessment systems founded on performance indicators can potentially be the basis of new structural innovations and approaches to delivering higher quality educational services.

In a period of increasingly unmanageable national and provincial deficits and debts in Canada, the public outcry for accountability for effectiveness has been increasing (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1989). The challenge for governments is to reasonably respect institutional autonomy, while at the same time encouraging the development of integrated performance effectiveness assessment systems that respond to public fiscal concerns. In the realpolitik of postsecondary education in Canada, academic financial resources have been declining at an alarming rate and will continue to do so. The risk exists that educational issues will continue to be decided on strictly financial criteria, rather than on a service value basis. In the absence of proactive leadership to promulgate performance effectiveness assessment initiatives, these risks increase, constituting a significant challenge that needs to be met.

Proactive leadership and strong proponents for effectiveness are two ingredients critical to securing the necessary financial and human resources to reengineer organizations. Strong leadership needs to deliver the message that there is a high opportunity cost to any organization in not pursuing service value, or effectiveness, goals. These opportunity costs are translated into risks of providing poorer delivery of educational services, lower quality education, misallocation of financial and human resources with wasted energies and talents and, finally, a misappropriation of public funds to misdirected educational priorities and opportunities.

Costs incurred in linking databases and encouraging organizational dialogue to develop and implement effectiveness frameworks represent an essential investment with promising and substantial medium- and long-term returns and benefits—all far outweighing short-term design costs. Investing in effectiveness represents an organizational commitment to reduce high operational costs in postsecondary institutions by streamlining costly infrastructures to better service clients—the students and the public at large.

Strategic Actions for Effectiveness

> Within an organization, effectiveness frameworks need to be designed, developed, and implemented strategically. Government funding agencies should require demonstrated evidence of fiscal responsibility and commitment to service effectiveness from the recipient institutions. Requiring strategic plans of these organizations together with step-by-step objectives and strategies to operationalize effectiveness frameworks are key starting points. Such plans need to address the costs and tangible benefits of reengineering and restructuring public management education and the concomitant retooling of human resources to attain effectiveness goals.

Accountability for Effectiveness

> In order to enact organizational change for effectiveness, political pressures need to be brought to bear on senior management of public institutions. The public and government agencies need to continue to express their demands for greater accountability and responsibility for effectiveness in postsecondary institutions. The drive for effectiveness in such institutions becomes possible when auditing and evaluation processes are open to the public. In its quest for service value for money and as supporters of public management education, the public increasingly demands solid evidence of fiscal responsibility and accountability. Accountability for effectiveness is occurring in open public forums, where taxpayers are increasingly demanding appropriate information and an opportunity to exercise their rights to provide input.

> Auditor General reports are another key mechanism that can promulgate the drive for effectiveness. Audit report results can demonstrate where and why effectiveness goals and objectives have not been met. Accountability linkages and deficiencies can be also identified. In essence, open public scrutiny and Auditor General reviews lay an external basis for ensuring that public accountability structures are implemented, that service effectiveness metrics are developed, and that there is demonstrable leadership commitment to effectiveness in public management education.

TOWARD CONVERGENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY

> Effectiveness assessment, with its emphasis on service value for money, is becoming an important integral part of management think-

ing in Canada. The concepts and frameworks will continue to evolve as they impact on postsecondary educational systems. Clearly, it may not be possible to ascertain whether the substantial investments in public management education is cost-effective until such time as there is more focus on performance effectiveness indicators brought about through greater dialogue between the academic, government agency, professional, and service communities. Canada is in the midst of a significant Internet revolution with organizational connectivity as the prevailing watchword. As the postsecondary institutions take full advantage of new information technologies, there will be even greater opportunities for organizational interchanges and partnerships. Ideally, dialogues should initially focus on strategic planning, linking databases, and standardizing reporting structures (Sweeney & Oram, 1992). It is incumbent on postsecondary institutions and government agencies to take initiatives to establish such dialogues, as a responsibility bestowed by those funding them.

Table 3 provides a summary of the current focus of assessments of public management education in Canada and the directions in which it must evolve in the future.

Table 3
Public Management Education Effectiveness Support System Challenges

	Current System Focus	Evolving System Focus
Accountability Structures	• Diffuse accountability • Program accountability	• Stronger accountability • Greater centralization • Strategic accountability
Management Focus	• Management education curriculum • Efficiency • Production	• Management education innovation • Management education system re-structuring • Program zero basing • Accountability/effectiveness assessment
Database Support	• Input/output measures • Process measures • Structural measures	• Outcome/impact measures
Strategic Networks	• Program/field interfaces • Graduate market needs • Horizontal integration	• University/community networking • Community service needs • Vertical/horizontal integration

Currently, the academic community focus in Canada is on management efficiency objectives with database support that focuses on input, process, structural, and output measures. Accountability structures are largely diffuse, fragmented, and ill-defined among diverse stakeholders in public management education. The strategic planning perspectives is largely focused on programmatic perspectives that are largely driven by the market. Curricular changes remain the key focal point of academic control.

The challenges for the future are clear. There will be calls for stronger and more centralized accountability structures together with greater emphasis on service value objectives, integrated performance effectiveness assessment systems outcome, and impact measures. The planning perspective will shift increasingly from an internal programmatic one to one that involves greater dialogue between postsecondary institutions and the public. The central focus will be less centred on curricular issues and more on academic management ones. These include issues such as organizational innovation, postsecondary program reengineering, restructuring, and programmatic zero-basing, where academic programs will have to peridiocally justify their own existence. As performance effectiveness assessment systems evolve, it will be the public service ethic that will gradually complement the market ethic. Greater social accountability and responsibility for public monies will be a persuasive outcome for this evolving mode of public management thinking in Canada.

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