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CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SECTOR PRODUCTIVITY VALUES

Narrower Scope, Tougher Standards, and New Rules of the Game

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There can be little doubt that the whole nature of productivity has changed irrevocably in the 1990s. One can examine the public statements of officials (Gore, 1993; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1996; Winter Commission, 1993), survey data (Berman, 1998; Berman & West, 1995), and case studies (Pfister & Van Wart, 1995) or even review general management texts (Cohen & Eimicke, 1995; Halachmi & Bouckaert, 1995; Perry, 1996) to see that our values about productivity no longer are the same. What has changed is the definition of public sector productivity—the scope, the standards, and the rules (and systems) by which productivity is achieved. Not only are the value implications enormous, but so too are the ethical ramifications. The entire scope of the public sector is being narrowed, the standards of efficiency and effectiveness are tougher (sometimes substantially so), and the rules used for personnel and purchasing systems, and even for organizational structures, are moving strongly toward leanness and flexibility, often at the expense of some prized public sector values such as procedural equity.

This article begins with a brief review of historical shifts that occurred in the values and ethics of public sector productivity. Then, we review the fundamental elements of productivity and how they relate to a management perspective. This leads to a more probing discussion of traditional management tools versus the tools emphasized in the New Public Management[1] that concretely illustrates the productivity value changes afoot. The conclusion reemphasizes the fact that productivity changes are likely to fundamentally shift away from the emphasis on big government established during the New Deal, the emphasis on input and procedural efficiencies since World War II, and the emphasis on rigid personnel and other systems established by the Progressives at the end of the last century.

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The first contribution of this article is to articulate a broad framework for the ongoing productivity value shift. Values reflect the preferences and ultimately the priorities of decision makers, no matter whether those decisions are humble or grand. This part of the article is primarily a synthesis. However, the detailed analysis of traditional versus contemporary management tools is new. Management tools are a component and example of the five value sources of public administrators (Van Wart, 1996). The second contribution is to suggest that the value shift is rapidly gaining a social consensus and legal basis that is propelling a new ethical paradigm for public sector productivity. When values are authoritatively asserted by groups (e.g., professions, organizations, nations, societies) and/or are strongly held by individuals, we tend to call them ethics. Many old productivity values had normative overtones and structures such as laws; these have been giving way to value options in a transitional period, and now these new values are beginning to take on normative overtones again as they become widely and strongly embraced. Although space does not allow a full exploration of this theme, it is useful to assert it as a hypothesis so that it can be fully examined and challenged.

This type of analysis is particularly important due to the major changes in productivity values and ethics in the public sector in the past decade. Notions of productivity (i.e., what and how things are done and how much is produced) always have been tied to ethical values (i.e., how things should or should not be done). In being unethical (the lower threshold), an individual or a group violates minimum standards set by society, often set in law or by authoritative groups such as professional associations. In pursuing productivity, an "ethical" individual or group should not do this or that. To be considered highly ethical (the standard at the other end of the spectrum), an individual or a group must attain high standards of productivity in ways that are socially approved. Therefore, both ethical lapses and ethical ideals have concrete productivity consequences and vice versa. Changes in productivity values (generally the driving force today) and public sector ethics have resulted in a major realignment of values. Oversimplifying for clarity, world economic patterns have required a fundamental rethinking of what the public sector should do, how it should do it, and how it should be organized (Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998).

The challenge, from both the normative and practical perspectives, is that public sector ethics mean doing the "right" thing, not only as indicated by law but also as indicated by public opinion and as accepted by management principles and practices as well as by worker beliefs about what is in the overall public interest and what is fair to them (Van Wart, 1996). For example, it is one thing to identify the need for more flexibility in attaining results and greater accountability in so doing; it is quite another to get the public, lawmakers, public organizations, and public servants to agree on the intent, means, and systems changes necessary. Yet, as it turns out, the fundamental tenets of all these sources are shifting in generally coherent and consistent patterns.

The "right" purpose of the public sector is being examined more rigorously and defined more narrowly in the United States and around the world. Expectations about how the public sector acts and what standards it meets have been shifting dramatically. Specifically, strong input controls and procedural "safeguards" are being relaxed, whereas efficiency outputs and effectiveness criteria are being emphasized. For example, quantitative outputs are being measured and compared more closely, whereas

large improvements in qualitative outputs (as perceived by numerous stakeholders) have become a commonplace expectation. This, in turn, has necessitated new ways of organizing public sector structures and employees as well as a new implicit "contract" with workers. The analysis in this article does not assert that these trends have occurred with uniform consistency in the thousands of public sector agencies across the United States. Nor does it assert that these trends are good (or bad). It does assert that (a) some changes in productivity values and ethical systems always are inevitable, (b) the current realignment is paradigmatic rather than incremental, and (c) the configuration of the new paradigm is quite clear in its general features, although its full evolution will occur over many years.

Although these shifts are apt to bring renewed vigor back to the public sector through more questioning of the fundamentals, more balanced value emphases, and higher standards of daily productivity and reinvigorated structures, they also are likely to bring tremendous challenges to operational managers in determining the exact nature of the contemporary productivity paradigm in the hundreds of thousands of public sector organizations in the United States and across the world in which they work.

Historical Shifts in the Ethics of Productivity

The current shift in productivity values is not the first, nor will it be the last. Although Andrew Jackson neither invented the spoils system nor was as serious an abuser of it as is often thought,[2] he certainly did bring a new sense of democratic responsiveness to American politics that infused administration as well. Federalist gentility (and efficiency) gave way to Jacksonian populism. Although some political responsiveness is good and necessary for effective administration, the excesses of the Jacksonian patronage era often were extreme. The Progressives finally held sway in the 1880s after battling to change patronage practices for several decades, eventually ensuring that the vast bulk of positions in civil service systems were held by those of merit rather than by those of political connections (Shafritz, Riccucci, Rosenbloom, & Hyde, 1992). Political responsiveness and patronage were not eliminated; they were simply confined to the uppermost levels of administration. The effect on administration was immense, and "the Progressives' arguments redefined the place of bureaucracy within American democracy" (Kettl, 1996, p. 7). Expertise and professionalism were encouraged to a greater extent, later finding further impetus in the scientific management era of the turn of the century. This new system, delimiting political appointments to senior positions and carefully selecting all others by merit, was a great success and continues to have a great impact to this day. Clearly, the shifts in ethical perspectives on productivity in the 19th century were enormous.

One of the ramifications of the Progressives' success was to build trust and confidence in the capability of government to produce so that when there was a perception of great social engineering needs at the beginning of the Great Depression, the administrative apparatus of the state became the uncontested agent of choice. The New Deal ushered in an era of greater government activism and scope—in social planning, in the regulation against harm, and in the provision of services (Lowi, 1995). Government administration grew larger proportionately.[3] Control was largely maintained by hierarchical structures and work processes stipulated by law and rules continuing the

Progressives' emphasis on efficiency. It was also during this period that the tenure aspects of public employment became prevalent (Van Riper, 1997, p. 219). The Great Society era took the New Deal to its logical extreme in terms of the scope and size of government, even though some aspects of political and democratic responsiveness reminiscent of the Jacksonian era made a partial comeback, and the "cracks" and excesses in the system became more apparent.[4] Therefore, in a historical context, the values and ethical norms relating to productivity have changed substantially in this century as well as in the last one (Stivers, 1994).

Each of these eras had its own standards of productivity and concomitant ethics. An emphasis on detached gentility makes sense in an era of small government with unsophisticated activities that are amenable to relatively efficient management with a standard genteel education. An emphasis on political responsiveness makes sense in an era concerned about replacing financial oligopoly for the royal monarchy it had only a generation earlier. An emphasis on merit employment with protections against excessive political intrusion makes sense when the functions of government become too important to be left entirely to political dilettantes or the baser motives of politicians granted too much power in personnel decisions. An emphasis on laws and rules becomes increasingly important and sensible when the functions of government proliferate in number and type to maintain democratic accountability. So, too, it makes sense that new means of connecting enormous administrative structures to their legislative overseers and the people they serve are appropriate for the expanded government functions we have today.[5] In past eras, the emphasis on the elements of productivity changed from the scope of resources invested, to the definitions of efficiency and effectiveness expected, to the types of systems specified to do the work. With a call today for the consumption of fewer resources, the achievement of greater effectiveness and higher expectations, and the design of new production systems, the values (and indeed the ethics) of productivity are changing—dramatically—once again.

The Fundamental Elements of Productivity

Definitions of productivity are numerous and sometimes complex (Holzer, 1995; Kirchhoff, 1997). We extract a very broad but simple one here, and then we delimit our study to the relevant portions. Here, we define productivity as achieved outcomes as a result of three major elements: purpose, expectations, and human capital.

First, productivity is defined by a purpose that justifies the scope of the physical and financial resources used. Without purpose, productivity is meaningless. For example, requiring the military services to purchase weapons that they have not requested is unlikely to lead to a more effective national defense. This first element of productivity is largely defined by policymakers.

Second, productivity is the result of expectations that set the level of efficiency and effectiveness in using those resources. How much service or product is delivered for the cost, and with what quality? This is the most common (and technical) sense of productivity, but it is too narrow for a broader contextual understanding of productivity.

Third, productivity is the result of human capital that includes the human resources and organizational systems that are intended to accomplish various purposes efficiently and effectively. How capable are the employees of achieving the expectations,

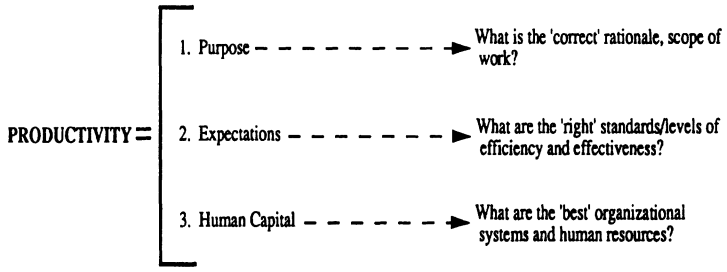

Figure 1. Relating the Fundamental Elements of Productivity to Productivity Values and Ethics

and what are the organizational parameters in which they work? The second and third elements make up the management-related elements that are analyzed in the next section.

Each era of public sector productivity adjusts these elements so that the "correct" purposes, the "right" norms and standards, and the "best" systems are fitted to the changing needs of society. In other words, some eras increase the scope, whereas others decrease it; some eras stress efficiency over effectiveness, whereas others stress the opposite; and some eras encourage regimented systems, whereas others foster more flexible systems. Figure 1 depicts this basic definition and a relationship to the fundamental value issues the definition raises.

Generalizing for clarity, it can be said that since the New Deal, productivity improvements have been achieved largely by an expanded purpose that has been matched or exceeded by increased financial and physical resources. The budgets of the public sector have increased steadily, allowing for program expansion. Where standard productivity improvements were achieved (the second element), it was almost completely efficiency gains due to the enormous technological innovation occurring during the post–World War II era. The third element, human resources and organizational systems, has largely been hierarchically structured using laws and increasingly detailed rules (Howard, 1994) based on the notion of public monopolies in mandated service/regulatory areas. Yet, never has there been such a hue and cry about all elements of public sector productivity simultaneously. The Progressives clamored only for greater efficiency, whereas the New Dealers demanded only greater scope. Today, the public, the media, and elected officials are generally eager for concurrent major changes in all areas of productivity (Altshuler, 1997; Carroll, 1997; Holzer, 1995).[6]

A consensus has largely emerged on three major points. First, there should be a reexamination of what the public sector should do. The broad consensus clearly is that the public sector should do less, a view now articulated by Democrats[7] nearly as often as by Republicans. This is an international trend, the effect of which has been seen even more strongly in diverse countries such as Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand as well as the former Communist world, Third World countries, and the "tigers" of Asia (Ingraham, 1997; Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998). Of course, maintaining the consensus on shrinking the public sector is easier said than done because of constituency support for the specific cuts (focused or across-the-board) that are proposed.[8] Nonetheless, "retrenchment is now a dominant theme" (Newland, 1996, p. 23), especially at the federal level. State and local governments are likely to follow when the current tax surpluses are replaced with deficits in the next economic downturn. This is shifting the notion of the public sector as the social engineer of preference (generally because of its power, prestige, and capabilities) to the social answer of last (or at least lesser) resort. This is very much in keeping with the way in which Schlesinger (1987) suggested that American history rotates great eras of reliance on government action with periods emphasizing private action. In other words, there is a newfound enthusiasm for encouraging less regulation and using more competitive structures, for increasing individual and group responsibility for income maintenance, and for being less prone to apply the government "seal of approval" to everything from bank regulation, to food quality, to barber licensing,[9] to product safety.[10] A critical driving force "in an environment that is less tolerant of spending public money for any purpose" (Kettl, 1996, p. 8) will be the reduction of the size and scope of the public sector. The result will be a continuing interest in downsizing where possible and privatization where appropriate (Stenberg, 1996). In a contemporary example, one city's public housing application standards recently rose dramatically, requiring those applying for subsidies to have an "impeccable rental history" (Carothers-Kay, 1998). The increase in standards was to balance the interests of another customer group (local landlords), increase expectations of the targeted group (those acquiring the subsidy), and increase the fund returns to the city (by largely eliminating noncontributors). As the administrator noted candidly, "We are no longer going to be considered—under my shift—last-resort housing" (p. B5).

Second, it is generally agreed that there should be a reexamination of expectations to substantially improve both efficiency and effectiveness. That is, service closer to that of the private sector is expected in the public sector as well (Kamensky, 1996). The efficiency of government services—both true services (e.g., mail service, garbage collection, road building, maintenance) and regulatory services (e.g., law enforcement, corrections, regulation compliance, immigration and customs)—is expected to increase tangibly.[11] Furthermore, a new emphasis on quality (effectiveness) also is being demanded, and this has not been a historical strength of the public sector in recent decades (Hatry, 1996), especially in terms of customer qualities (e.g., speediness, ease of access, ease of use, customization, choice). Citizens were told where and when offices would be open, how long processing would take, and what choices were available, and they had little recourse if they objected. Lagging far behind private sector standards for a long time was the use of obvious methods of customer service such as evening and weekend hours, credit cards (and sometimes even personal checks), technology such as automated kiosk machines, customer survey data, convenient locations, and one-

stop shopping. Instead, the hallmark of government service too often was lines, waits, inconvenience, and apathy.

Third, because the public is calling for less expenditure with higher expectations for both efficiency and effectiveness (this is the "doing more for less" syndrome that the public sector has been coping with increasingly for the past 10 to 15 years), the public is willing to tolerate substantial changes in traditional human resource and organizational systems (Newland, 1996). Throughout the New Deal era, there was an enlargement of rigid, hierarchical, rule-based systems in personnel, purchasing, contracting, expenditure authorization, work design, and so on. The public (through the media and elected officials) wanted and got more laws and rules to protect against the discretion (because of the potential abuse) of public bureaucrats. Control and equity have been emphasized to a far greater extent than have flexibility, professional integrity, and quality. Public sector employees have wanted greater protection against workplace insecurities and arbitrariness and have used laws and rules as a means of achieving these goals as well. Job security and clarity frequently have been emphasized at the expense of flexibility and job enlargement/enrichment (Behn, 1997; Kettl, Ingraham, Sanders, & Horner, 1996). The long-term result has been rather stultifying to productivity. A more recent result has been the explosion of interest in trying new patterns of organizing the public sector (Barzelay, 1992; Osborn & Gaebler, 1992; O'Toole, 1997; Roberts, 1997). Although no single pattern dominates, all are tending to move the public sector from an extreme hierarchical bureaucratic mode[12] toward either more of a competitive bureaucracy, a group-based organizational structure based on rapid service and product change, or more of a highly flexible project-based design, based on both increased competition and service change (Van Wart, 1998).

The public's interest in reexamining the scope and size, productivity expectations, and organizational and personnel structures of the public sector is already having massive implications for what managers actually think it is right to do (and not to do). It is to a closer examination of the particulars of productivity from a manager's perspective (primarily the second and third elements discussed earlier) that we now turn.

The "Management Elements" of Productivity

Productivity, from a management perspective, can be divided along two key axes. First, productivity traditionally has been analyzed in terms of quantitative-efficiency criteria versus qualitative-effectiveness criteria. "Efficiency is widely recognized as the relationship of outputs to inputs, and effectiveness is recognized as the degree to which purposes or goals are met" (Kirchhoff, 1997, p. 70). We analyze one situation and realize that we have enough service at a reasonable cost but that it does not seem to really accomplish the job for which it was designed (a simplistic analysis of the welfare reform). We realize in another situation that the service is of generally high quality but is simply becoming too expensive for its overall value (perhaps the situation in health care reform). In the worst cases, we decide that both the cost and effectiveness are inadequate (a common perception of large parts of the education system). Furthermore, the quantitative-efficiency perspective invariably has more of an internal focus, whereas the qualitative-effectiveness perspective has more of an external focus.

Table 1. The Management Elements Generally Considered in Productivity

QUANTITATIVE ELEMENTS	Input Quantities - resource inputs: budget, personnel, facilities, equipment, etc. - service needs: quantity of demands, difficulty of demands	Process Quantities - resource design, tracking, and analysis - service design, tracking, and analysis	Output Quantities and Efficiencies - resource outputs - service outputs by target, comparison, competition
QUALITATIVE ELEMENTS	Input Qualities - constituent needs and preferences - legislative and judicial mandates - employee capacity	Process Qualities - qualities desired by constituents ease of use (convenience), timeliness, presentation of service, etc. - due process and procedural technical compliance, accuracy rates, expert review, management review - employee productivity tracking and analysis of employee work, employee involvement in quality	Output Qualities and Outcomes - constituent satisfaction - overall compliance with standards, and policy expectations - employee support
	INPUTS	THROUGHPUTS	OUTPUTS

A second axis is the point of focus on the delivery cycle. Although it would be convenient to focus exclusively on outputs and outcomes in productivity, productivity improvement must look as much or more at inputs and throughputs. If the proper resources are not available or not in the proper mix, then productivity cannot be high. For example, if funding and staffing of new technologies are not made available to a public agency, then it cannot be expected to deliver computer-age productivity standards.[13] Furthermore, even with lavish resources, poor management and poor program design can diminish productivity levels enormously. Productivity efforts, then, must keep in mind and ultimately combine resource, management, and production elements in any overall strategy.

These two axes, first a quantitative versus a qualitative perspective and second an input-throughput-output perspective, form a six-cell matrix. The cells are (a) input quantities and (b) input qualities, (c) process quantities and (d) process qualities, and (e) output quantities-efficiencies and (f) output qualities-outcomes. See Table 1 for a matrix of the management elements of productivity discussed in this section.

The first quantitative cell includes *input quantities* such as resource inputs and service needs. Resource inputs include the budget, personnel, facilities, equipment, and other financial and material resources that make the provision of services possible. Service needs include the quantity of demand for the service as well as the difficulty of that demand. The first qualitative cell includes *input qualities* such as level and type of needs (and preferences) from various constituent perspectives. Another aspect is the

legislative (and judicial) mandates for program definition and success that define quality either directly by setting standards or indirectly by the resources actually provided. The final element in the input qualities cell is employee capacity, for if employees are not capable and motivated, then productivity cannot be high. Ultimately, for productivity to be high, not only do the quantitative elements have to be sufficient and in the right mix, but the qualitative elements must be understood and balanced appropriately as well.

The throughput element that focuses on quantitative aspects is the *process quantities* cell. This cell includes process (or interim) resource and service outputs. The process resources focus on the design, tracking, and analysis of resources as they are expended and as services are provided. The throughput element that focuses on qualitative aspects is the *process qualities* cell. This cell includes factors such as the quality concerns of constituents, the degree to which the work is consistent with due process and procedural compliance, and the way in which employees do and are capable of producing the work.

The output element that focuses on quantitative aspects is the *output quantities and efficiencies* cell. Resource outputs are the actual resources used or expended, as opposed to those budgeted or planned. Another aspect is service outputs that look at the quantities and efficiency of the actual production. Such outputs can be measured in terms of the activity (sheer quantity) or the efficiency (quantity based on some type of cost comparison). The output element that focuses on qualitative aspects is the *outcome qualities and outcomes* cell, often roughly equivalent to the new sense of "results orientation" in the quality management terminology. This cell includes elements such as overall constituent satisfaction; overall compliance with legal, judicial, and executive mandates; and employee support. Employee support as an outcome is relatively new; team-based government has taken this value to its logical extreme, and of course, this is based on the notion that "empowered" employees are more appropriate for today's work environment for a multitude of reasons.

The Use of Traditional Management Tools and Their Emphases

There are two important points about the use and emphasis of traditional management tools. The first point has to do with the relatively restricted use of the tools. The second point has to do with the industrial engineering approach commonly adopted, a close successor to the scientific management approach initiated by Frederick Taylor but one substantially different from the approach adopted in the New Public Management.

It is not possible to say definitively that most management productivity tools are strictly limited to the post–World War II era (i.e., the late New Deal era) or the New Public Management period. Few genuinely new management tools are invented, although many receive renewed interest, new uses, new names, and/or small procedural changes. For example, the quality management revolution provided numerous handbooks of productivity tools such as *The Memory Jogger* (Goal/QPC, 1988) and *The Team Handbook* (Scholtes, 1993). Tools in these manuals include flow charts, brainstorming, nominal group technique, run charts, histograms, stratification, cause-and-

effect diagrams, control charts, force field analysis, Pareto charts, and Pert charts.[14] Although these were not genuinely new tools when published in these manuals, the widespread teaching and application of these tools with frontline workers was radically different from how it was in the past. Few of the older (i.e., traditional) methods have become obsolete, although their use is far more pervasive in the organizational context. (See Poister & Streib, 1994, on this point and for an important longitudinal study of management tools at the municipal level.) What can be asserted confidently, however, is that new emphases combined with the new mix of methods (with a lot of modified older methods and only a few genuinely new methods) change the productivity landscape profoundly. More people (not just managers) are using more tools in organizations today.

The traditional perspective emphasized an industrial engineering approach to productivity. Five general aspects of this approach can be identified. First, this traditional approach tends to rely on a strict democratic hierarchy model. That is, the voters elect politicians, who exercise their mandate through their politically appointed bureaucrats, who direct civil service executives, who direct middle managers, who direct line workers. The more that directives can be clearly defined and rules strictly adhered to, the better. (For a sampling of alternative views, see Redford, 1969; Wamsley, 1996.) Second, the appropriate model for decision making is by managers with the assistance of specialized experts. Third, planning should be highly logical, rational, and long term. Therefore, planning should be conceived and detailed from beginning to end so that everyone knows exactly what is expected of him or her at all times. Fourth, because of cost efficiency, mass production models generally are preferred in service delivery. Customization is expensive and raises concerns about equity. On the regulatory side, absolute conformity is preferred for consistency and equity. Fifth, systems should be as self-contained as possible so that integration and control of the elements can be maintained. Overall, this approach led to a strong bias toward the quantitative (or efficiency) aspects of productivity, as an analysis of the favored methods will indicate.

Some of the preferred traditional methods for productivity analysis on the quantitative or efficiency side were revenue and expense forecasting, financial trend monitoring, service demand analysis (both quantity and difficulty), management oversight, organizational design, time-and-motion studies, task analysis, technical employee training, completion rate and work distribution analysis, work flow analysis, project management, management by objectives, budgeting processes, fiscal audits, activity counts, performance standards, cost-benefit analysis, performance measurement, and comprehensive techniques such as strategic planning and program budgeting. On the qualitative or effectiveness side, traditional methods included review of the authorizing mandates, employee testing, workforce planning, management judgment, program evaluation, and audits. These methods are briefly discussed in what follows. See Table 2 for a display of these methods of productivity. Note that the methods in roman font are the traditional methods, whereas those in italic font are the newly emphasized management tools.

Resource and service demand analyses are classic methods of determining the necessary budget and personnel allocations, based on the level of clientele to be served. Management oversight has been a powerful tool to control resources from fraud, waste, and abuse, and it includes everything from visual inspections to the requirement

Table 2. Management Tools Commonly Used in Enhancing Productivity

QUANTITATIVE EMPHASIS	**Input Quantities** - resource analysis revenue and expense forecasting, financial trend monitoring - service demand analysis: quantity and difficulty	**Process Quantities** - resource controls: management oversight, and organizational design - service management tools: time and motion studies, task analysis, technical employee training, completion rate and work distribution analysis, work flow/flowchart analysis, project management, management by objectives	**Output Quantities and Efficiencies** - resource measures (expended); budgeting processes, fiscal audits - service measures (produced): activity counts, performance standards; cost/benefit analysis, *unit/cost analysis*, performance measurement, *efficiency benchmarking; market share*
	(comprehensive quantitative techniques: strategic management and program budgeting)		
QUALITATIVE EMPHASIS	**Input Qualities** - *stakeholder analysis* - statutes, ordinances, or executive orders - employee testing, workforce planning	**Process Qualities** - *focus groups, complaint analysis, citizen involvement in work design and assessment, community-based planning* - management judgment, *continuous improvement, re-engineering, process benchmarking* - *broader employee training, team approaches to problems and work, employee empowerment and accountability*	**Output Qualities and Outcomes** - *customer satisfaction measurement* - *quality service measures (trained observers, physical measurement devices)*, program evaluation, audits (compliance and management), *outcome benchmarking* - *employee opinion surveys*
	INPUTS	THROUGHPUTS	OUTPUTS

Note. Roman font = traditional tool; *italic* font = new tool.

of multiple authorizations. Organization design is another resource tool that can focus on either control or production. Six methods—time-and-motion studies, task analysis, technical employee training, completion rate and work distribution analysis, management by objectives, and work flow design—all generally have been expert-designed and management-driven methods to define one best way in which to do the work from a rational, analytic perspective. Project management delegated these types of methods to the relevant project manager, no matter what the person's actual position. Program budgeting tried to rationalize and pre-plan the entire service delivery model of the overall system. Strategic management was an analytic method for executives to improve their advanced planning skills by determining what targets or thresholds were likely to be in the future. Output evaluation used budgeting processes and fiscal audits as a means of tracking and controlling resources. Target efficiency (and pseudo-efficiency) tools traditionally have included activity counts (number of widgets produced) and performance standards (number of widgets to be produced based on an engineered standard). Comparison efficiency measures have included cost-benefit analysis, which generally was conducted at the service level of analysis (as opposed to a cost-per-item basis) and used for internal consumption, and measures of performance that have largely compared prior organizational performance to current performance and that were largely for external consumption, especially legislative bodies.

Qualitative tools were significantly fewer in traditional approaches, which partially explains the interest in the "quality revolution" today. Experts and managers would examine and interpret authorizing mandates. Employee testing and workforce planning were management tools to make sure that employee capacity was available. Process quality was almost exclusively in the management domain and exercised through management judgment. The quality of outputs and outcomes often was verified by internal program evaluations and external audits (both compliance and management).

Newer Management Emphases and Tools

If the traditional perspective on productivity was typified by an industrial engineering approach, then the newer perspective is exemplified by a quality management approach.[15] The general aspects of this approach differ markedly from those of the traditional approach. First, the quality management approach takes a much looser attitude toward the democratic hierarchy model. Accountability is not ideally a single linear progression. Although hierarchical responsibilities should not be broken, they also should not be exclusive. This leaves both line workers and client groups too far from the actual decision making, especially when that decision making is essentially local, unique, minor, or timely. Furthermore, according to this perspective, a large public sector in a market economy frequently should use market models, rather than solely bureaucratically engineered compliance models, to discipline and account for itself. Where market forces are used (one form of accountability), a looser democratic hierarchical model must be employed (a different form of accountability).[16]

Second, much decision making can be done by line employees and their supervisors, in consultation with clients and customers. Moderate and appropriate decision making at lower levels of the organization, from this perspective, discourages litigiousness, conserves managers' time (ideally, there are fewer managers), fosters creative solutions, and creates goodwill. The aggressive use of customer service standards requiring extensive feedback from customer groups at the federal level is a prime example (National Performance Review, 1995).

Third, large planning projects in the public sector rarely lend themselves to the "blueprint" approach preferred in the traditional industrial engineering model (Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Mintzberg, 1994). Blueprints tend to work well with complex construction projects such as bridges and buildings because of the relatively inert nature of the materials and process. They do not work as well with complex social engineering phenomena, where a more flexible, evolutionary approach generally works better because so many people are involved, not only as implementors but also as products. Many of the tough social engineering projects on which the public sector works do not have clearly defined methods, and the variables for success are too numerous and dynamic for static, one-time analyses. New client groups demand a say in planning long after the planning phase, methods that applied in one setting need significant but unplanned modifications to work in another, untapped resources are identified, the human capital supporting a public policy becomes more sophisticated, and so on.

Fourth, more flexible production models make sense in a world of fast-changing needs and tastes, more diverse customer/client groups, and enormous changes in technology making smaller "batches" more efficient than in the past. Equity issues

generally are overstated, according to this approach, and it is actually less expensive to give the customer what he or she wants in the first place than to place time-consuming and costly strictures on the process. (Of course, this philosophy must be modified in the public sector, where the "customer" who is paying for the service might not be the same as the customer who is receiving the service.) Examples of this more flexible approach to production include one-stop neighborhood service centers for municipal services, continuous improvement philosophies allowing for innumerable system "tweaks," and the increased use of citizen advisory groups to allow for midcourse and technical corrections. More flexibility also is encouraged in regulation delivery, whether it is the increased use of selective enforcement based on past experience (e.g., inspections with low risk possibilities), customized regulation services (e.g., electronic automobile recognition for commuters who cross the border daily), or the use of competitive models (e.g., deregulation in policy areas as diverse as communications or dairy products).

Fifth, a larger conception of service systems is envisioned so that the organization less frequently is the unit of analysis and the government system (city, county, state, federal) more often is the desired level of integration. Sometimes, the integration is intergovernmental or public-private as well. How can aspects of organizational systems be shared, both to cut costs and to improve quality through achieving a superior critical mass of expertise? Many management systems are eligible—training centers, computer systems, purchasing units, vehicle and large equipment pools, maintenance teams, and so on. Collaboration in this model is more strategic and aggressive, largely driven by funding cuts, higher expectations, and increased competition.

The few genuinely new tools (to the public sector at least) all are at the output stage. Unbelievably, unit costs, long a staple of the private sector, are now being used with some real frequency. The generalized cost of ambulance service makes policymakers' eyes glaze over, but the per-run cost is a statistic to which they and the public can relate. The cost of neonatal services might seem reasonable until the per-case cost is identified. Efficiency benchmarking, or making tough assessments of the comparative performances of various organizations, is increasingly a reality with the continuing maturation of performance measurement. Finally, competitive strategies go one step further and place public sector organizations (or parts of them) in direct competition with other service providers (Halachmi & Holzer, 1993; Savas, 1987). Competition in a growing number of areas implicitly uses market share and profitability as a form of accountability and a sign of success. It is the widespread use of these rigorous comparison and competitive output methodologies that demonstrates that quality management is not focused solely on qualities and that quantitative improvements are expected *simultaneously.*

This is not to say that efficiency has been abandoned or even neglected. In fact, many efficiency tools have been either expanded or reinvigorated. Service demand data have increasingly paid attention to the fact that all clients and services are not equal and that a true comparison can be useful only if service demand groups are comparable. Poor inner-city schools cannot be usefully compared to rich suburban schools, nor can the road maintenance records of midwest states be compared to those of sunbelt states with their milder climate. In other words, much more attention is being paid to the level of difficulty. Another example is in work flow analyses, previously

used as educational tools for new employees or bewildered members of the public, which have been reborn (flowcharts) as tough analytic spotlights to rebuild out-of-date or dysfunctional processes. (Newer) performance measurements differ from (older) performance standards in that much greater effort is made to use industry-wide specifications, allowing for far greater comparability than in the past.

The dramatic changes, however, are in the vast range of effectiveness tools promoted by the quality management revolution. This range of tools includes stakeholder analysis, focus groups, complaint analysis, citizen involvement in work design and assessment, community-based planning, continuous improvement, reengineering, process benchmarking, broader employee training, team approaches to problems and work, empowerment and employee accountability, customer satisfaction and measurement, quality service measures, outcome benchmarking, and employee opinion surveys. Two points stand out about these tools. First, although none of these tools is conceptually new, the *widespread use* is distinctly and profoundly new. Second, the acceptance of the far broader role of *service recipients* and *employees* in the quality-defining process is a radical philosophical change. From a values perspective, not only is it increasingly considered ethical to pay far more attention to quality issues and to do so with enormous input of customers and employees, it also is increasingly considered unethical not to do so.

Stakeholder analysis is hardly new but has been used with an aggressive vigor in the past decade to reevaluate all those whose legitimate needs must be considered in any change process. Customers are now more routinely tapped for their assessments of service or product quality through tools such as focus groups, complaint analysis, and community-based planning. Management judgment no longer reigns supreme as the arbiter of quality from a technical standpoint but rather is joined by notions of continuous improvement, reengineering, and process benchmarking. Continuous improvement shifts the emphasis of productivity from the expert and manager to the line worker, as improvement becomes everyone's business constant. A continuous improvement philosophy requires employee empowerment (increased decision making at a lower level), but this also entails increased accountability (responsibility for those decisions when they are poor or uncorrectable). Re-engineering processes provide a top-down alternative (to the bottom-up option provided by a continuous improvement philosophy) when a process or system is severely dysfunctional or completely outmoded and needs radical overhaul (Hammer & Champy, 1993; Linden, 1994). Process benchmarking can be used either at the throughput level, when it is processes that are being compared and improved, or at the output level, when it is final service or product levels that are being compared. It requires the study of models of industry excellence. Reliance on employees in the flatter, less redundant organizations means that they receive broader training (including former "management" skills), use team approaches to problems and work, and are empowered and concomitantly held far more accountable for their performance.

Outputs and outcomes are now directly assessed against users' judgments in the widespread use of customer satisfaction measurements conducted by independent third parties on a regular schedule. Whereas technical assessments of quality in the past were largely confined to program evaluations and audits, management is now more rigorous about finding external quality service measures (e.g., trained observers,

physical measurement devices). Outcome benchmarking, the classic and most dramatic of which is the Oregon Benchmarks project, is taking root around the country. Finally, wholesale employee support is itself an outcome necessary for service success, for employee retention in a more stressful work environment, and for recruitment of high-quality employees (Kettl et al., 1996).

The Shift to Narrower Scope, Tougher Standards, and New Rules of the Game

The unpleasant but widespread notions that "big government is dead," "more must be done with less," and "government systems and employees are both inefficient and ineffective" do not represent minor management conundrums; rather, they represent a full-scale sea change. It does not simply mean a substitution of one set of technical values for a new emphasis on another. The shift in values leads to a narrower view of governmental purpose and scope, to tougher standards across the board, and to new rules about how organizations are designed and how employees are incorporated into those organizations. Those who fail to deliver at higher levels of productivity are increasingly likely to find the game rules radically shifted by downsizing, privatization, aggressive underfunding, constant audits, reorganization and reengineering initiatives, or other similar measures. Because the new, tougher reality has already swept through the private sector (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Peters 1982, 1992), it should not be a surprise that the public sector has followed suit.[17] Of course, it has both its bad and good points, as critics and supporters of the new productivity paradigm have pointed out.

On the negative side, the new, tougher productivity values are not without their problems and challenges. Purging of systems has left many people thrown off their expected life paths; some never will fully recover. For example, the massive downsizing of the management ranks meant that a significant portion of those laid off or forced to retire early never will return to mid-level or senior positions despite their interest in doing so. Whereas some social service clients might be better off by being purged as they are forced to "take responsibility" for their own good, many others are likely to be incapable of rising to the challenge, especially when the economy declines, as it surely will. The new emphasis on change is good when it is successful, but it is not always so. Successful change requires good leadership (and new leadership skills), and when good leadership is lacking, this can make a bad situation worse. Numerous public sector organizations have launched campaigns of change, not fully understanding why or how to do so, only to find increased employee cynicism, reduced productivity, and more annoyed client groups. (See Rago, 1996, for a personal experience of the challenges.) The increased productivity expectations and more visible change strategies also have allowed increased political interventions and, in some cases, partisanship. Because of the high productivity standards expected, it is common for politicians to run on platforms critical of their current or future administrative subordinates. This is hard on morale and the development of a corporate spirit with policy leaders. Finally, public sector employees have seen a massive increase in job stress (Golembiewski, 1996), yet new incentives such as higher pay, better benefits, and more recognition rarely are forthcoming (Gilpin, 1996). Instead, less security, more work, more

responsibilities, and more confusion are common. Thus, although the new productivity ethics often are better for the long-term health of systems and organizations, they often have taken a heavy toll on individuals (Connor, 1997).

On the positive side, the overall approach to public productivity probably is significantly more balanced. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, public productivity was excessively focused on mass efficiency (primarily in terms of mass quantity) and compliance at the expense of systemic effectiveness and quality. The "more is better" philosophy led to larger budgets, more personnel, and more services without much thought about the expense to the economic and social system. Such an incrementalist philosophy has given way to a notion that the limits of publicly provided services have been reached or exceeded. The new strategies emphasize overall system balance. In the private sector, this has led to the popular notion of a balanced scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). First, this means there is a new emphasis on quality in the public sector that is having a very positive effect. Citizens are less likely to experience long lines, impersonal service, lack of input into planning processes, excessive delays, and other quality problems. To use a common example, it means that the trip to the motor vehicle department is more likely to have ample and pleasant seating, signs notifying customers of their expected wait times, immediate production of driver and vehicle licenses, and more courteous service. Second, it means that more rigorous standards of efficiency also are being met. Those services that cannot be provided in a cost-effective manner often are subjected to draconian reductions. It also means that organizations are far more determined to cleanse systems of low-yield approvals and inspections and to root out freeloaders both inside and outside their systems. Change no longer is something that occurs infrequently and with glacial slowness; it now occurs in the public sector frequently and with alacrity. Overall, this means that public productivity is very much on the minds of public employees and that impressive strides in organizations are common. Improvements in both efficiency and effectiveness, especially as they currently are defined, have become a major ethical imperative. Organizations are more likely to take a critical look at their own services, sometimes recommending service terminations voluntarily, rather than waiting for external mandates. The way in which organizations and personnel systems are designed also is being reexamined in many places, with the most dramatic changes since the Progressive era.

Conclusion

Productivity is concerned with what and how things are done, and values and ethics are concerned with how things should or should not be done. A quick historical review identifies at least two major productivity value shifts before the New Deal era. In the recent past, however, connections between productivity values and their normative structure have been poorly articulated because New Deal value assumptions about overall public sector purpose and scope, productivity expectations, and systems arrangements had become so stable. The current revolution in values, here labeled the New Public Management, challenges old assumptions, exposing values for easier analysis and comparison.

From the productivity side, the *what*, *how*, and *who* elements all have shifted significantly. Although the scope of work or purpose often is antecedent to productivity

discussions, where production occurs has enormous ramifications and is laden with normative assumptions. The scope of the public sector is being rigorously examined, and growth is being curtailed. Whereas current American success in this area is far less than that in many other advanced economies, the next recessionary cycle will affect government differently from how it has in the past because widespread antigovernment sentiment will force deep structural reductions in difficult-to-cut areas such as entitlements and popular programs.

A major thrust of this article has been an examination of productivity expectations through a detailed analysis of management tools. This analysis revealed (a) a moderate strengthening of efficiency strategies, (b) an enormous new emphasis on effectiveness or quality strategies, and (c) a massive expansion of the personnel using management tools, especially by nonmanagement personnel. Given the seriousness of the antigovernment sentiment, the expansion and improvement of such tools is leading to genuinely tougher standards.

Because these tougher standards could not be achieved by many of the older structures, systems, and implicit organizational assumptions, new rules of the game are being created to reflect the new reality. Organizational structures generally are flatter, leaner, and decentralized, and they are selectively adopting radical team, competitive, or outsourcing alternatives. New structures are requiring new systems. Not only is the streamlining of procurement, civil service, and operations systems common, but landmark changes are occurring as well. For example, Georgia's new state personnel system abandoned the civil service concept altogether, making all new employees at-will (Condrey, 1998a).

The ethical perspective relates to high levels of social consensus of what, how, and by whom work is done. Ethics do not emerge simply from the law, which is an important but single source of values; they also emerge from public opinion, accepted management principles and practices, and worker notions of the public interest and fairness to themselves. The preceding megatrends represent coherent (but certainly not lockstep) shifts in each of these fundamental value sources. Because of space limitations, this article examined only one area in detail, management principles and practices, and it examined that area only through an analysis of the use of management tools and their emphases. Yet, the trend lines were sketched and examples were offered in other areas as well. The public's antigovernment sentiment, demonstrated by direct polling data and reflected by hostile politicians and news media, provides the impetus for legal changes. As an outgrowth of public opinion, laws are increasingly reflecting priorities to narrow public sector purpose, increase efficiency and effectiveness criteria, and fundamentally reshape operational systems. Worker sentiments generally are the last to shift because the changes affect them so profoundly, and they have much to fear and less to gain in the short term. Increasingly, however, they perceive the long-term benefit of the new value shifts.

Although the shift is difficult, requiring both change and higher overall standards, public sector employees largely have passed through the phase of complaining about the obstacles (or perceived impossibility) of doing "more with less" to a phase in which this is the understood reality and in which doing more with less is the challenge at hand. Disbelief gave way to resignation, which in turn largely has given way to determination to confront the new productivity demands, different and harder though

they may be. This probably is because the public sector has seen the seriousness of the environmental pressures. Privatization and downsizing are increasing (Dilger, Moffett, & Struyk, 1997), and former public sector sacred cows are being dramatically overhauled including civil service protections (Condrey, 1998b), powerful agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service (Barton, 1998; Hirsh, 1997; Samuelson, 1997), and major New Deal programs such as welfare.

To be sure, these value megatrends have many counterexamples, and they are not specific enough to identify the precise variables on an agency-by-agency basis. However, the general outline of the new, tougher productivity values is clear. A new ethical paradigm, arising largely from contemporary productivity challenges, is not as clear but is emerging. Of course, the specific ramifications for organizational mission, leadership, culture, and design must be worked out within unique conditions. This search for the right mix of old and new emphases is part of the tougher task ahead for public sector organizations.

Notes

1. We use the *New Public Management* to mean all of the major changes currently occurring in public management practices, no matter whether from total quality management, reengineering, public choice, excellence in government, or the like.

2. Jefferson was the first president to remove numerous opponents from federal offices, and Lincoln was a far worse offender of patronage appointments than Jackson had ever been.

3. For example, from 1940 to 1990, all government receipts grew from 18% to 37% of the gross national product.

4. Patronage grew in many governments, especially at the federal level. For example, in 1960 there were only 451 political appointees, but by 1992 there were 2,393 during a time when the number of federal employees was largely stable (Light, 1995). A number of analysts bemoan this fact. Meier (1997) suggested that it would be wise to "restrict and perhaps even eliminate political appointees" (p. 197). Sherwood (1997) stated, "The bureaucratic villains today are often . . . the transitory representatives of the party in power. They often shoulder institutional burdens for which they have little competence and commitment" (p. 215). Also during this time, various forms of citizen input were being incorporated into administrative practice such as public hearings, focus groups, and citizen planning boards. As Cigler (1996) noted, "Generally, citizens now have more mechanisms for representation in the policy process . . . and more access to every phase of the policy cycle" (p. 66). Expertise and the law were not enough for good, ethical administration when they were poorly connected to the political leadership of the executive branch and popular needs of the citizens affected. Furthermore, the excesses of the civil service system began to outweigh its blanket approval in the past few decades. Kettl, Ingraham, Sanders, and Horner (1996) noted that the current problems of the civil service include inflexible appointment rules, rigid governmental job qualifications, a complex and arcane job classification system, formula compensation rules, and reduction-in-force rules that often require five or six "bumps" (p. 24).

5. Although federal employment has been relatively static since the 1960s, federal programs and expenditures have expanded greatly. An even greater expansion of employment and expenditure has occurred at the state and local levels.

6. The following statement by Holzer (1995) is representative: "The necessity for productivity improvement is a recurring theme . . . by heads of state, the media, international agencies, corporations engaged in international trade, economists and public administrators, and the public" (p. 413).

7. Although President Carter promoted the reform of government, President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union address, in which he touted "the end of the era of big government," signaled the completion of the philosophical change that had infused all mainstream political thought.

8. Iowa is a good example of the continuing growth of the government that has continued unabated at the state and local levels despite a single conservative governor (Terry Branstad) for 16 years who has been a champion for less government. In spite of a negative population growth of approximately 1%, the number of state employees has increased more than 11%, and the state budget has increased 231% (relative to income growth of 205%) during his tenure from 1983 to 1997. However, the next governor, whether Republican or Democrat, is more likely to reduce the size of state government in the current climate.

9. As an example of occupational licensing, the state of Georgia regulates 35 professions (Miller & Pruitt, 1998). Some of the less obvious professions that are regulated are auctioneers, athletic agents, athletic trainers, construction workers, foresters, funeral service directors, librarians, private detectives, and used motor vehicle and parts dealers. Because of a large Examining Boards Division under the secretary of state in Georgia, there normally are about 1,000 cases pending at the state attorney general's office. Nonetheless, there is public concern that neither the licensing boards nor the attorney general's office are moving quickly enough due to staff shortages. The secretary of state, Lewis Massey, maintains that the backlog and staffing are at acceptable levels, and he is not requesting additional staffing, despite an enormous state budget surplus in the 1998 budget year.

10. Resisting using government as a protector against harm is difficult. For example, it is good (to a point) to have the government insist that food, drugs, the environment, products, equipment, facilities, and transportation all meet certain standards and then to rigorously enforce those standards. Yet, as the standards become higher and the enforcement becomes more rigorous, the expense to government becomes greater and the intrusiveness into the commercial realm becomes more onerous. A society that seeks zero-risk levels in most areas and uses government as the primary means in a regulatory mode must expect higher taxes and more intrusiveness. A society can make greater use of the market as a curb on harmful practices if the public has good comparative information, good education about those comparisons, and choice.

11. A comment by Altshuler (1997) is typical of many of those critical of government: "Public dissatisfaction with government is attributable to the belief that government costs too much per unit of benefit delivered (inefficiency), that many of its activities fail to generate much benefit at all (ineffectiveness), and that it seems unable to customize the application of general policy to specific cases (nonresponsiveness)" (p. 52).

12. Hierarchical-bureaucratic cultures are characterized by security, stability, order, and routine. Rules and regulations are plentiful to ensure similar standards, evenhanded treatment, and due process to prevent capricious behavior. Success rarely is a satisfactory excuse for breaking a rule because rule breaking preempts public authority directly or indirectly. Control and accountability are emphasized because neither competition nor market change naturally curbs organizational or individual self-interests over time. It is important to note that high-performing hierarchical bureaucracies produce large amounts of services or products very efficiently, consistently, and fairly, using authoritatively derived orders and technically expert plans. Many modern critics complain, however, that low-performing hierarchical bureaucracies often suffer either by becoming too stable (rigid) and thus unresponsive or by becoming too rule bound and thus diminishing their efficiency, normally an inherent strength of this organizational type. Because of the innate characteristics of the public sector such as the need for democratic control and oversight and the importance of law, it is highly unlikely that hierarchical bureaucracies will disappear. What is likely (and is occurring) is a reduction of the purity and dominance of this organizational form, with more blended types of public sector organization thriving in the future.

13. Kettl et al. (1996) pointed out that "the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, the [Department of Defense], and the National Weather Service have each made multibillion-dollar mistakes because they did not invest in enough smart people needed to manage new computer systems" (p. 3).

14. Note that in the ensuing analysis, microanalytic tools, such as brainstorming and Pareto charts, are subsumed into larger categories such as continuous improvement strategies and process benchmarking.

15. The term *quality management approach* is meant to be more comprehensive than just total quality management practices that certainly are an important part of the New Public Management. Reengineering, for example, uses quite a different philosophy than does total quality management but has become a useful tool in radical streamlining in the new public sector environment.

16. Romzek (1996) noted that "many of the reinventing government reforms essentially call for substituting one form of accountability for another" (p. 110).

17. Perry (1996) noted, "What should citizens expect to receive in exchange for their taxes? The answer appears to be 'more for less,' regardless of how difficult it may be to create such value" (p. 3).

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