

# **Performance Evaluation of Civil Service in Taiwan: Process or Resulted Oriented?**

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## **Abstract**

Performance Evaluation is a common and universal issue in study of public personnel management, but it also contains multiple meanings and influences in practice. In Taiwan, for centralized and unified administrative tradition, different categories of civil service use same performance evaluation legislation and standard, so the validity and reliability of evaluation often be criticized, besides, since results of evaluation will influence civil service's rewards and career development, it also leads to make conflict explanations. In order to solve this problem, this paper try to identify performance evaluation in process view and suggest that performance evaluation is not only a rating tool, but also can provide multiple feedback information about both performer and organization.

## Introduction

According to *Encyclopedia Americana*, performance means “The way in which someone or something functions” (<http://go.grolier.com/>) The definition shows that performance is common sense to both individual and organization in concept. But if we want to implement it, especially in civil service management, performance might be a troublesome for complex meanings and environments of government. That means to evaluate civil service’s performance correctly and attach appropriate management treatment is a difficult challenge.

In Taiwan, Performance evaluation of civil service maybe more difficult even government passed a special legislation, The Civil Service Performance Evaluation Act (CSPEA), because every civil service is regulated by same performance standards and evaluation process no matter he or she works in central or local government, or in different position or class. Besides, outcomes of performance evaluation will be decision base of performer’s annual rewards or punishment and will influence her future promotion and career development. Since the results may influence so much, agency head or superior manager usually avoid rating subordinate low rank in order not to be trapped in crisis of arbitration.

Instead of put performance evaluation in result orientation, the paper would analysis performance evaluation from process view. The author argue that since performance concepts of civil service have different explanations, manager should evaluate it from multiple sides of civil service’s behavior in organizational process and reduce its direct influence toward rewards or punishment. That means performance evaluation is not ends itself, but should play role as feedback and improvement mechanism of civil service management.

### Performance evaluation vs. Performance management

Although Improve personnel performance seems as common sense of public administration, how to evaluate it is a sever challenge. Especially for civil service, for their position, behavior, and all actions are regulate by personnel legal systems, so someone perform well may have different means. For example, if someone’s behavior totally obey rules but does not satisfying citizen’s anticipation, can we say that this guy perform bad? In other view, bureaucracy actions should reflex environmental characters including social, political, economic, and culture...etc., that means their work are not only routine or objective action but also need subject judgment (Kalu, 2003: 550- 551). So before clarify problem of performance evaluation of civil service, we might have to know first about what it means and how it runs in public personnel management.

#### • *multiple meanings of performance*

Although different people inside or outside organization may has different explanations of civil services’ performance, any performance evaluation action will be used in following situation (Sharfritz, et.al., 2001: 270) :

##### 1. Organization dimension

In this situation, performance evaluation may be used as basis or considerations of management.

That means:

- a. as a basis of rewards or pay judgment.
- b. as a recruitment factor.
- c. as a training need
- d. as indicator of supervision
- e. as commitment of work on documentation of work agreement.

##### 2. Individual dimension

In this situation, performance evaluation as targets of work, life, and development for people in organization. That means:

- a. as a standard of management equity.
- b. as a factor of horizontal or vertical transfer of position

- c. as an insurance of protection of work right
- d. as platform of participation and communication.
- e. as media of integration of human resource management

Beside the two dimensions, performance evaluation can also produce three functions of public personnel management (Fox & Shirkey, 1997: 207- 208): first, for general manager, it can be tool of control or judgment factor of human resource development. Second, for personnel staff, it can be criterion of assessment or appraisal. Third, for individual performer, it can be basis to strive or protect worker's rights. According to this idea, performance play not only control role but also can provide critical information to improve both individual and manager work. To sum up, Performance evaluation in organization is not only a rating tool, but also a strategy and can bring following functions (Gabries & Ihrke, 2001: 158; Daley, 2002: 174- 176):

1. Development functions

This means performance evaluation can improve workers' value in organization. By the way of thinking, every person in organization has their critical potential, so manager has to dig it out through performance evaluation and to change work design, leadership style...etc.

2. Judgment functions

This means performance as consideration of personnel management which manager use it to judge if there is necessary to change actions of supervision, control, rewards and punishment...etc. By the way, output of work and rewards should have positive relations, so performance evaluation should play judge role to decide who deserve reward or penalty.

To civil service management, use multiple concepts of performance may be even more important, for their position and behavior are regulated (protected) by law, so the question of performance evaluation cannot only from views of superiority or even outside people, regulations of law or performer's professional judgment are also important.(Buchner, 2007: 62-66) Under strategic viewpoint, performance evaluation can provide not only passive functions like control or supervision but also can play more positive or valuable role, like as facilitator of government effectiveness.

### • *from evaluation to management*

On surface view, ways of performance evaluation of civil service is quite clear, for personnel staff just has to compare performance indicator and actual work results. But in practice, as civil service has to satisfy different expectancies, so to decide her action is qualified or not will become a difficult challenge. This argument can explain form following factors of work environment and civil service themselves:

First, from view of work environment, actions of civil service are end results of many sources of influences, like legal system, financial restriction, time availability,... etc., which means civil service may has little choice in their work.

Second, from view of civil service, a good performance behavior might has multiple or even mutual conflict explanations, for example, work slowly may means bad performance, but work slowly to get stakeholders' consensus might be explained as good performance.

According multiple considerations, performance evaluation should represent different categories of organization, as table 1 show:

**Table 1: Performance measurement categories**

Category	Description
Core government business	What business are we in as a government?
Mission	What is our Ministry's overall purpose? Who are our customers?
Goals	What must we achieve to carry out our mission?
Outcomes	What are our expected results?
Strategies	What are the approaches we should use to ensure our goals are met?
Performance measures	How well are we achieving our intended outcomes?
Performance management	What are our employees' expected results? What support do they require to achieve those results? How well are they achieving their intended results?

※source: Townley, et.al., 2003: 1052.

Table 1 shows performance measurement should include different level and scope categories, according this same idea, evaluation should also include multiple categories. This argument can be proved from OECD's experiences. In 2002, OECD published a report about human resource management modernization of OECD countries, one basic point in this report was advocated that performance should be core concept of public personnel management and might contained two functional dimensions (Richard, 2002: 3-5):

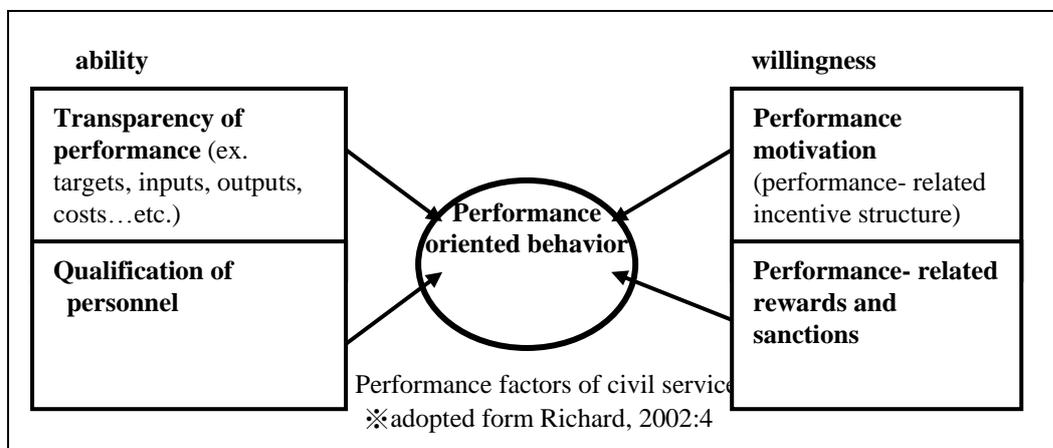
1. Dimension of ability

It means contains of civil services work and include two sub categories: a. passive factors, like obey rules. b. positive factors, like attend goals, cut costs, ...etc.

2. Dimension of willingness

This means organization should provide motivations that drive civil service behave high performance. This dimension also includes two sub categories: a. reward mechanism, and b. punishment mechanism.

The dynamics of these two dimensions can show in figure 1:



In ideas of figure 1, even performance is been assessed from individual behavior, it is actually an end results of personnel management of organization. That means if someone behave good performance, it may ascribe to good personnel management, on the opposite side, poor management may leads to bad performance. According this idea, performance evaluation is not only to assess individual work behavior but also to assess personnel management mechanism of organization. The author argue that only by use macro viewpoint then we can figure out real meanings of performance, on passive side, both manager and performer will hold complete picture of performance, and on positive side, performance evaluation will contribute to efficiency and effectiveness of organization by multiple factors assessment.

## Public Performance evaluation mechanism and problems in Taiwan

Public personnel management systems are very unique in Taiwan as compared to other countries. First of all, as an independent branch of government, the Examination Yuan responsible policy formation and implementation standards of public personnel management legal systems through out all government agencies. Second, all government agencies use same personnel management system, it means all civil service play same rule of game no matter she or he in different level or kind of government. In this environment, performance evaluation of civil service became an oxymoron: in one side, performance evaluation of civil service become quite direct and routine, for different levels, size, or kinds of government use same legislation, the Civil Service Performance Evaluation Act (CSPEA), and same method and standard. But in another side, for use in all agencies, the implementation of performance evaluation become extremely rigid, for every evaluate action used in one agency should also compatible in other. In order to fulfill different situations, the mechanism of performance evaluation became resulted oriented:

- Standard assessment format

CSPEA regulate all categories and assessment requirements of performance evaluation:

1. Civil servant performance evaluations are classified as a. Annual Rating, b. Additional Ratings, and c. Special Ratings.
2. The maximum annual rating is 100 points and separate to A, B, C, and D Ranks: A: 80 points or above; B: higher than 70, less than 80; C: higher than 60, less than 70; D: lower than 60.
3. Civil servant performance rating, other than special situations, shall be compared within the scope of the same rank.
4. Supervisory personnel at all agencies shall review ratings of performance evaluation items and dispatched to the Ministry of Civil Service(of The Examination Yuan) for approval.
5. Each and every agency shall convene a Performance Evaluation Board, the organizational provisions of which are determined by the Examination Yuan.

- Emphasize the linkage between performance evaluation and rewards/ penalties

Another important part of CSPEA is to regulate rewards and punishments after performance evaluation administered:

1. Annual performance rating rewards and penalties shall be administered in accordance with the following provisions:
  - Rank A: receive a basic pay rate promotion of one level and a lump-sum bonus of one month's wage.
  - Rank B: receive a basic pay rate promotion of one level and a lump-sum bonus of one-half month's wage.
  - Rank C: remain at existing pay rate.
  - Rank D: dismissal from employment.

2. For Additional performance ratings, persons given a Grade A rating receive a lump-sum bonus of one month's pay; persons given a Grade B rating receive a lump-sum bonus of one-half month's pay; persons rated Grade C do not receive a bonus; persons rated Grade D are dismissed from employment.

Under result oriented considerations, performance evaluation could influence civil services' rewards and career development, but because position and rights of civil service are protected by other law and if someone received bad rating result by performance evaluation she may accuse her boss and run a long lawsuit process, so many superiority choose to run performance evaluation "equally", it means most of subordinates can get Rank A or B except he or she commit a serious fault. In result, performance evaluation lost function and cannot separate good from bad, as table 2 shows:

Table 2: Screening and Review Results of Civil Servants Performance Evaluation(2006- 2008)

Year	Total	Rank A	Rank B	Rank C	Rank D
<b>2006</b>	<b>257885</b>	192806	64486	590	3
(%)	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.74764</b>	<b>0.2501</b>	<b>0.0023</b>	<b>0.00001</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>249936</b>	187267	62259	406	4
(%)	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.74926</b>	<b>0.24910</b>	<b>0.00162</b>	<b>0.00002</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>240033</b>	180075	59632	323	3
(%)	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.75021</b>	<b>0.24843</b>	<b>0.00135</b>	<b>0.00001</b>

Source: <http://www.mocs.gov.tw/index.htm>, 2010.05. downloaded and recalculated.

Table 2 shows that over 70% of civil service got Rank A form 2006 to 2008 and only 1% or 2% got Rank C or below. Even worse, it seems that the higher position got higher Rank, as table 3 & 4 shows:

Table 3: Screening and Review Results of Civil Servants Performance Evaluation of General Civil Servant of central government agency(2008)

	Total	Rank A	Rank B	Rank C	Rank D
Senior Rank(Detail)	<b>5763</b>	5287	470	6	0
(%)		<b>0.9174</b>	<b>0.0816</b>	<b>0.0010</b>	0
Junior Rank(Detail)	<b>37038</b>	28373	8632	33	0
(%)		<b>0.7661</b>	<b>0.2331</b>	<b>0.0009</b>	0
Elementary Rank(Detail)	<b>18947</b>	12922	5999	26	0
(%)		<b>0.6820</b>	<b>0.3166</b>	<b>0.0014</b>	0

Source: <http://www.mocs.gov.tw/index.htm>, 2010.05. downloaded and recalculated.

Table 4: Screening and Review Results of Civil Servants Performance Evaluation of General Civil Servant of local government agency(2008)

	Total	Rank A	Rank B	Rank C	Rank D
Senior Rank(Detail)	<b>1106</b>	1061	45	0	0
(%)		<b>0.9593</b>	<b>0.0407</b>	<b>0</b>	0
Junior Rank(Detail)	<b>41589</b>	32633	8926	30	0
(%)		<b>0.7847</b>	<b>0.2146</b>	<b>0.0007</b>	0
Elementary Rank(Detail)	<b>26723</b>	18193	8488	42	0
(%)		<b>0.6808</b>	<b>0.3176</b>	<b>0.0016</b>	0

Source: <http://www.mocs.gov.tw/index.htm>, 2010.05. downloaded and recalculated.

Table 2&3&4 shows the implementation of CSPEA may distorted for most civil services received Rank A and attach rewards and punishment situation is very rare. In order to correct this fault, the Ministry of Civil Service (MOCS) brought out an amendment of CSPEA in April, 2010, the most important reform is to restrict ratio of every rank in every agency: Rank A cannot over 65%, C and D cannot less 3%, and set a new Rank, the Rank A plus (A+), its ratio cannot over 5%. (<http://www.mocs.gov.tw/方案說明/公務人員考績法修正草案說帖.pdf>) By setting ratios, MOCS hope every chief of agency would rate every Rank in balance ratio and alive function of CSPEA, but many civil service do not accept the proposal about setting fix ratio scale especially those in low level positions and local civil service, for they afraid the dominant of superiority and traditional bureaucracy culture will make them in unfair evaluation situation and even sacrifice their rights. So the debate is still lasting.

## Towards process oriented evaluation

After analysis multiple meanings of performance evaluation and problems of evaluation mechanism of Taiwan, The Author will suggest that key to solve imbalance outcomes of evaluation is to change role of performance evaluation from result to process oriented view. This idea will be explained from both basic identification and functions of civil service management:

### • performance evaluation as information feedback of management actions

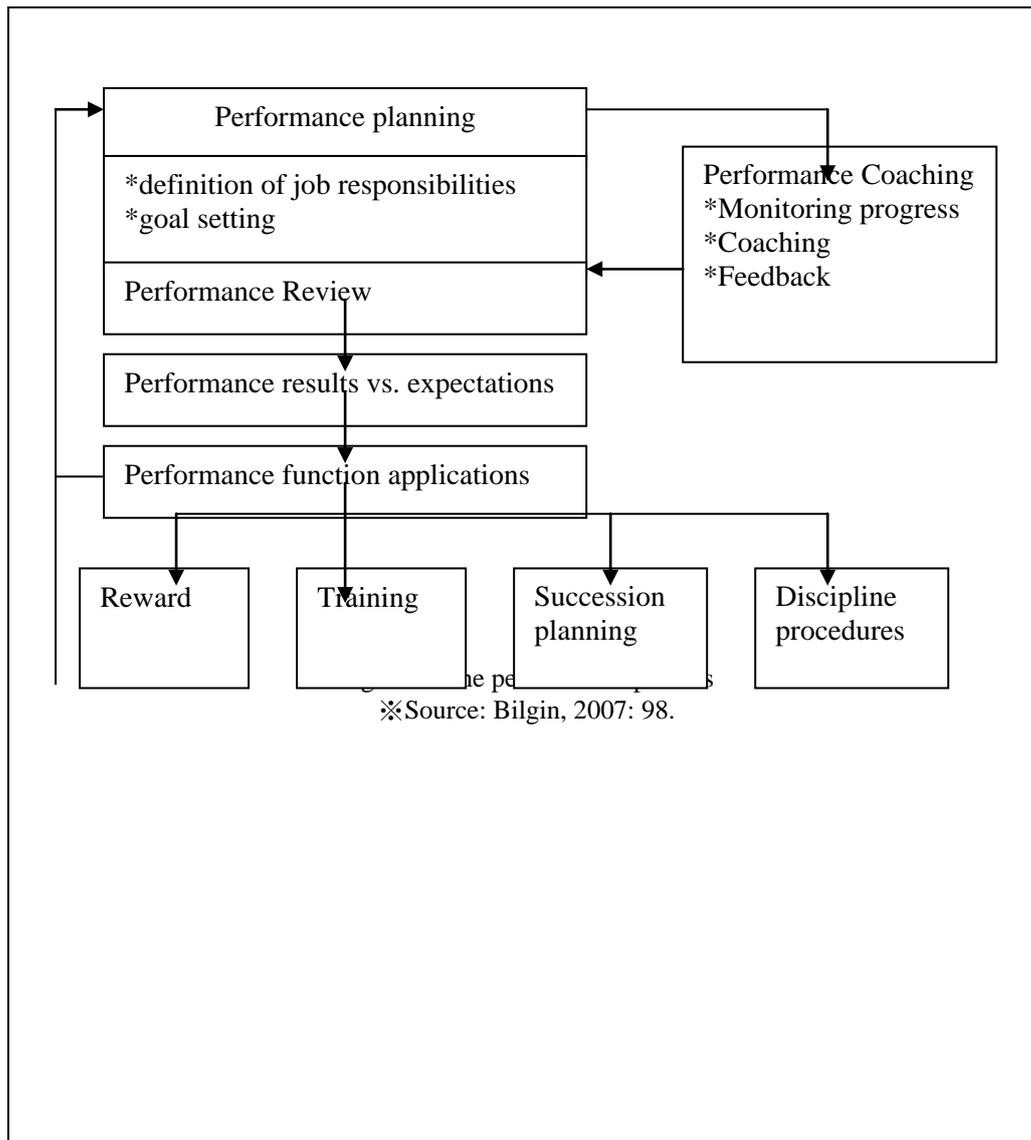
Performance evaluation is not only an independent action but also a linkage of whole public personnel management, so just focusing it in the rating outcomes and appending rewards and punishment will limit its function and even become obstacles of personnel management development. Richard collected performance appraisal experiences of OECD countries, and found that if appraisal actions are closely linked with performance agreement and incentive system, they will lead to following deficits (Reichard, 2002: 9):

1. difficulties to measure relations between performance and goal achievement.
2. difficulties to allocate fair judgments to individuals, due to a tendency of leniency. This means superiors might value loyalty more than performance.
3. difficulties to "punish" low performers, it is hard allocate sanctions due to civil service regulations only if he or she has over- or under- performance against targets.

These deficits show that only put performance evaluation as causes of rewards or punishment decision may not in positive relations with performers' actual work output and might take risk of misunderstanding or unfair treatment. In order to solve this problem and provide active functions, the author will argue that we should re-integrate performance evaluation into performance management process and make it as information feedback to adjust management behave. This argument is based three reasons:

1. Every management actions will influence evaluation result  
Any civil service in his or her position is not an independent job, but a complex network in whole bureaucracy. Especially in Taiwan, there is only one public personnel management system and most behavior requirements are decided from separated and independent branches, so if someone performs bad may not because he is bad but because he has a bad boss or bad position.
2. Performance management is a series and jointly actions  
For attaining performance targets, organization has to take performance management actions, this means there is no single action or behavior can be evaluated independently, and reward or punish performer by specific evaluation resulted might not reflex the real story.
3. The most important function of performance evaluation is to promote whole systems performance  
Even it is necessary to evaluate people in agency and to reward or punish him for no other substitute base, the role of performance evaluation is still as means of public personnel management, and only we can link cause and effect clearly between evaluation and performance, then all the evaluations can be justified.

All three analysis point out that to use implement performance as information feedback mechanism and combine it into process of performance management will be better choice to match the context of government and can be helpful to promote efficiency and effectiveness of civil service. The process idea can be shown in figure 2:



• **fulfill needs of both performer and organization**

The aim of identifying performance evaluation from process orientation not only to avoid possible deficits, but also can use it to produce useful information for individual and organization. Since individual’s interest is not equal to the whole organization, so the evaluation must gather following information:

1. from organization’s perspective

Although the main function of evaluation is to profile Performance picture, it will be necessary to take care of different dimensions which may produce information. Mwita(2000) analyzed different models of performance management and addressed “systems- based approach”. In his view, organizational performance may contain five dimensions (P28):

- a. mission statement. Such as including purpose of existence, community expectations, values...etc.
- b. strategies and plans. Such as corporate objectives, training, development and retention policies,...etc.
- c. action planning. Such as operational objectives, key tasks and responsibilities, agreement and performance contracting,...etc.
- d. performance recognition. Such as measurement of performance, rewards and sanctions,...etc.
- e. management accounting information system. Such as feedback loops, performance information-set, suggestions box, ...etc.

Mwita’s study provides fields to evaluate, which means by evaluating these different dimensions that

we can get more complete performance picture of organization.

## 2. from individual perspective

Although individual performer's action doesn't equal to his performance, but it would be most direct way to gather performance information. Besides, for avoiding drawbacks of evaluation according resulted orientation, evaluating individual performance should rating from multiple aspects. Bunchner studied relations between performance appraisal and performance management theory and argue that many performance problems in organization had been produced by manager, so assessment form performer's view may be critical to facilitate organization's performance, it contains: (2007, 66- 69)

- a. goal setting (ex. What information do I have or need to make informed decisions about my job priorities?)
- b. feedback and control (ex. What do I need to pay attention to? How can I make my self- observation consistent?)
- c. cognition and self efficiency (ex. What are my tendencies regarding self- beliefs? What can I learn from their experiences?)

Of course from Bunchner's idea, it is not to mean that there are just three categories to evaluate, but to emphasis the importance of multiple aspects. The proper aspects or categories to choose will dependent on scope and definition of performance.

## Conclusion and Implication

If promote performance is important target of civil service management, then evaluating their performance definitely will be critical and have to be institutionalized. But interestingly, as this paper discussed, if we just put performance evaluation from view of result of individual's action and link with rewards or punishment, evaluation will not really reflex reality of performer's work, and may even worse to provide wrong image of performance. So explain and implement evaluation form process view and put it as information feedback mechanism may have more chance to help both evaluator and performer clarify problems and response in right direction.

The experiences of implementation of CSPEA in Taiwan may explain the drawbacks of evaluation under resulted orientation. Since evaluation result will influence civil service's reward, promotion, and other personnel management, superior class will be over prudent and rate too many high ratio of Rank A. Definitely, by settle down and restrict fix ratio of every Rank will solve this problem efficiently, but that way still leave problems of reliability and validity of evaluation and may produce side-effect of fairness, because if all agency, no matter different sizes or characteristics, use same ratio of Rank restriction, will have great chance to distort its real performance and may hamper civil services' rights.

The author argue that only by changing basic identification form result to process orientation, then performance evaluation can really work and be a useful mechanism of public personnel management. And function of performance evaluation is not rewards/ punishment decision base, but instead, manager can use it to check civil service's real behaves in every step of organizational process. Only by doing this, performance evaluation can reveal problem in time and also will become a useful improvement factor to public personnel administration.

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