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A Review of Empirical Research on Politicians' Behaviour as End-users of Performance Metrics

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1. Introduction

This working paper briefly sets out the background to the current project and reviews in detail seven key empirical studies, which examined the behaviour of politicians as ‘end-users’ of performance metrics. In addition to considering main findings, the review has been used to examine alternative research designs and methods, which may be employed in the current study and to identify behavioural explanations which may be of relevance to the current study.

2. Performance metrics

The term ‘metrics’ refers to measures of performance, such as indicators, targets, ratios, league tables or benchmarks, which are used to assess and monitor the quality of care that patients receive in health services. (Institute of Medicine 2001; Walburg, Bevan, Wilderspin and Lemmens 2006). While the term ‘metrics’ is widely used, particularly in the area of health policy, there is not a single term which denotes this range of information. The terms *performance information* and *policy information* are used in the studies reviewed to refer to the same systems described in the current study as performance metrics. The term *accounting information* may also, in certain circumstances, be used in an inclusive fashion to embrace performance. Government, audit agencies, local health service providers, professional bodies are likely to be the principle sources of performance metrics. Performance metrics will be available to parliamentarians in many different forms including evaluations, annual reports, audits and budget-related performance information. The sources of performance metrics will include both agencies of the state and non-government organizations. Parliamentarians may also be in a position to conduct inquiries themselves through the work of subject committees. Internationally, health services are usually located in a policy process particularly rich in performance metrics. In the United Kingdom the NHS has moved from a low capacity for performance measurement, as recorded by the Griffiths Report in 1984, to become an international leader in the production of performance metrics.

3. The current project – some background

The current study is focused on Scottish parliamentarians' use of health care related performance metrics. The study is exploratory and intended to indicate how a comparative study could be designed at a subsequent stage. It is logical in an era of greater political transparency, where for example the work of health service provider organizations, doctors and other clinicians comes under measurement on a systematic basis to want to know the extent to which parliamentarians take the opportunity to examine metrics to conduct oversight, make suggestions for improvement and take informed decisions. If used in the context of such a rational scheme of governance, performance metrics have major significance as resources for enabling an enhancement of the democratic process. The capacity of parliamentarians to access and use performance metrics and other types of evidence would underpin their judgments, which inevitably would be much influenced by the concepts of performance underpinning the production of performance metrics. Performance metrics may be crucial in realising the practice of transparent government. For proponents of transparent government, performance metrics based around easily accessed, unambiguous performance concepts facilitate the 'reading' of the policy process by interested parties outside of government. Yet in spite of the easy logic for adoption, the promise of a 'rational' performance metrics influenced democracy, conducted through a transparent governance system, where information is both available and valued by parliamentary users, is not yet proven to influence political practice. As O'Neil (2006) has observed in relation to transparency, little of consequence may be gained unless there are effective mechanisms of communication which cause stakeholders to actually examine the records of either government or private institutions. Revealing the performance of public services through publicly accessible sets of performance metrics, however systematic in their coverage, is not enough in itself to remedy democratic deficits. Taking this criticism of the transparency boom one stage further, we should also question the impact of performance metrics for democracy, even if they are effectively communicated to parliamentarians, when there is also scant evidence of their use in the pursuit of oversight functions. The current study is also intended to add to the literature dealing with such emergent paradoxes in the application of NPM. (Hood & Peters, 2004)

While the academic community has made considerable progress in relation to researching the growth in performance management over the past twenty years, much of the work has been focused on describing, categorizing or probing the accuracy of performance measures. (Armstrong, 2001; Holzer & Yang, 2004; Pollitt 2006; Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, & Walker, 2006). Pollitt (2005) concluded in a recent review of published evidence that use of performance metrics is patchy and that much of what has been established suggests that evaluations, performance reports and audits are in fact seldom highly valued by politicians. A literature review conducted by Van de Walle & Boivard (2007) also found little evidence to confirm strong interest in performance metrics from politicians.

4. Literature review

The studies discussed below all relate to performance metrics and oversight. This is what is meant here by the term politicians as 'end-users'. Studies which deal with the related problem of discovering how performance metrics are used in different aspects of the policy process, such as agenda setting or decision taking, are not dealt with in this working paper. Also, only studies which gathered empirical data are considered. A significantly larger literature exists in relation to the use of performance metrics by government, some of which has an empirical basis. Seven articles were retrieved which met the twin criteria of being sufficiently focused on oversight and making reference to new empirical data. Table 1 sets out general features of the seven studies examined.

Table 1. Empirical studies of the behaviour of politicians using performance metrics in the act of oversight.

Investigators	Institutional focus/users	Data gathering method	Population/ response rate	Time fame
Ezzamel et al (2004)	Four parliaments/ parliamentarians Scotland, Wales, N. Ireland and New Zealand	Mixed. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation of committee meetings	Members, officials, advisers, population 58 interviews Response rate: not specified	Document analysis 1999-2003 Interviews 2002-3

van Dooren (2004)	Members of Parliament Flemish Region Belgium	Single. Content analysis of transcripts of 270 parliamentary questions	Random selection of 30 questions from 9 policy sectors within the competence of the Flemish Region Government. Response rate – not applicable	2000-3
ter Bogt (2004)	Dutch municipal government/ aldermen	Mixed. Content analysis of planning and control documents, conversations with civil servants / Questionnaire – aldermen	698 alderman (from 165 municipal authorities chosen from a total of 206) Response rate - 37.5%	Three year for document review 2002-5 Interviews 2003
Ho (2005)	US municipal government/ elected mayors of US towns	Mixed. Phase 1. questionnaire, fixed-questions Phase 2. interviews	Phase 1. 697 mayors. Response rate - 39% Phase 2 5 from 13 Sampling details provided	Questionnaire and interviews 2003
Sterk & Bouckaert, (2006)	Parliaments in Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Canada/ Experts, mainly civil servants	Mixed. Semi-standardized interviews with experts Content analysis: Government reports, budgets and legislation	60 experts in four countries Response rate: selection criteria not specified	Document analysis 2002-5 Interviews 2005
Johnson & Talbot (2007)	House of Commons/MPs Committee Clerks	Mixed. Questionnaire survey Document content analysis of select committee reports 2002-5	All members of select committees - 241. Response rate - 17% All committee clerks - 43. Response rate - 43% Documents from 11 Select committees.	Document review 2002-5 Questionnaire 2005
Askim (2007)	Norwegian local authorities/ councillors	Single. National questionnaire survey	Population -1500 councillors. Response rate - 50%	Questionnaire 2005

5. Focus of studies and key findings

In an effort to discover how devolution in the United Kingdom had impacted on the use of accounting information, defined in broad terms to include performance metrics, Ezzamel and colleagues focused on the oversight work of parliamentarians in Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish parliaments/assemblies. They further examined usage in New Zealand to establish a further sense of perspective and comparative reference point. Ezzamel et al found evidence of greater than expected transparency, consultation and scrutiny in regards budgets, accounts and performance but also strong indications that there was extensive information overload facing parliamentarians and hence greater than anticipated reliance on experts and advisers. They also acknowledge the need for a more detailed longitudinal study. The current study is designed to meet this requirement.

Van Dooren, 2004 tested the claim made by civil servants about the lack of political interest in the policy indicators that the administration makes available and examined issues related to the supply and demand for such data. The term 'policy indicator' is used in similar sense to 'performance metrics', although probably his definition is more inclusive than in the current study (insufficient evidence is provided to verify this conclusion). The results of a content analysis of 270 parliamentary questions in the Flemish parliament refuted this contention. Van Dooren's study was concerned with the ad hoc form of oversight conducted on the floor of parliament rather than the more systematic work conducted in committee. Van Dooren found that demand for indicators as expressed in parliamentary questions was higher than the 'supply' contained in ministerial answers (141 questions compared to 125 answers). MPs frequently asked for indicators on policy issues and indicators seemingly played an important role in the political arena under examination. Van Dooren established that indicators were included in 52 per cent of the MPs' questions to the executive and in 48 per cent of the executive's answers. His study also detected significant differences between policy sectors. In quantitative terms, the policy sectors 'mobility and public works', 'employment', 'welfare and public health' and 'housing' produce more indicators and the policy sectors 'internal affairs', 'education' and 'culture' have fewer indicators. Johnson and Talbot (see below) also drew similar conclusions. This finding provides encouragement to make comparisons between health and other

policy sectors once the current exploratory study has been completed. Van Dooren also discovered that policy sectors differed in terms of the focus of measurement. For example ‘mobility and public works’ were input oriented, ‘housing’ was output oriented and ‘environment’ more effect-oriented. The current study will allow for the focus of performance metrics used by Scottish parliamentarians to be categorised and measured in a similar manner.

Ho in examining the work of US mayors (including their oversight functions), concluded that performance measurement tools are perceived positively, but that their impact is dependent on sufficient integration into city planning systems and adequate communication taking place between elected representatives and departmental staff and also whether stakeholders are involved in developing measures. (Ho makes a strong case for considering the role of mayor to be part-executive, part-oversight; hence the inclusion of the article in this review).

ter Bogt studied the use of output orientated performance metrics by politicians in Dutch municipalities. He concluded that many Dutch aldermen saw little value in the output-oriented performance information that is available in the planning and control documents of their organizations and that they used it only infrequently. His study makes important points in relation to how user behaviour can be conceptualised and researched further. This is discussed below.

From an analysis of the conduct of United Kingdom Parliamentary Select Committees and a survey of Select Committee members, Johnson and Talbot found that Parliament itself has been ‘more challenged by performance reporting than challenging of the executive’. Their study discusses attempts by Parliament to make performance scrutiny more systematic in character. Sterk and Bouckaert conducted a four-country study which compared performance budgeting initiatives in Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Canada. In the report reviewed here, they described and explained the ‘performance of performance budgeting, from a ‘parliamentary angle’. The report provides sufficient evidence on performance metrics usage to merit inclusion in this review. They found little direct evidence that performance information found in budgets and annual reports was being used directly by members of parliament in their oversight function. They chose to qualify this finding by

allowing for the possibility that performance information influenced them in a more ad hoc or implicit way. Members of Parliament base their opinions on a wide range of data sources, they reasoned, and it is difficult to find out to what extent performance information influences them. Establishing the range of performance metrics sources used by Scottish parliamentarians will be an important element in the current study as will the possibility that ‘background’ use is more significant than ‘direct use’.

Askim, in contrast with the other studies reviewed here, was interested in how performance metrics were used in the pre-decision, decision and post-decision implementation oversight contexts of Norwegian local government. The study establishes how important performance information was for councillors, concluding in marked contrast to ter Bogt that there were high levels of utilization exhibited across the policy process. Askim concluded that politicians were eager to play the role of ‘ombudsman’ and bring attention to gaps between aspirations and actual performance in service delivery. It appears that performance information is helpful to Norwegian councillors in identifying and articulating service delivery gaps. As was the case with van Dooren’s study, this finding encourages consideration of how comparative international research could be conducted to quantify usage in different parliamentary or local government contexts.

Research designs and methods

The studies reviewed tended to employ a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods for gathering data, five of the seven projects involving two or more methods of gathering data. Surveys were popular but only Askim relied exclusively on a large scale postal questionnaire based method. Three other studies also used a postal questionnaire, but also employed face to face interviews to supplement the data gathered. Five studies used a content analysis of documents as part of the research process. Van Dooren alone relied entirely on this method in his examination of parliamentary questions, with multiple criteria used to organize the content analysis. Ho, Johnson and Talbot and Bogt and Askim all used surveys to collect data. Ho’s study employed a large sample (639) and achieved a reasonable response rate (39%) in line with what could reasonably have been hoped for, given the subjects. Bogt’s project secured a very similar response rate from roughly the same sample size. Johnson and Talbot surveyed 241 members of Parliament but only received a 17%

response. Askim was notably more successful in securing a 50% response rate from a sample of 1500. In assessing the viability of this method, logic suggests there was a strong likelihood that the responders were more interested or experienced in using performance metrics than the non-responders. It is unlikely that a higher response rate could be anticipated in a postal survey of Scottish parliamentarians.

There is also the standard problem with a questionnaire based survey, where a response is likely to be hard to secure, in that a limit is placed on how much actual thought questions demand of respondents. For that reason questions need to be relatively easy to answer. The closed question solution used in the three questionnaire-based studies, carries an inherent risk of distorting respondents views on performance information. For example Ho's questions to a certain extent presuppose that respondents accept there is an instrumental service-quality-enhancing purpose in using performance information, and prejudge what will be of importance to the mayors surveyed. Askim noted the problem of establishing that respondents understand what is meant by performance information. For example some Norwegian councilors might not differentiate between performance information and inputs data. Askim provided a brief definition and pre-tested this with a number of subjects. In the current study the broad scope of performance management, the need to deal with process, output and outcomes and the sheer number of health and community care performance metrics in circulation would have made a questionnaire communicated definition unworkable. Van Dooren employed a sophisticated nine categories content analysis of transcripts of proceedings in assessing the use of performance metrics made in parliamentary questions. It was concluded that the current study should use a content analysis of the full transcripts available of meetings of the Committee under examination. As was the case with van Dooren's content analysis, this will provide stronger evidence on actual behaviour than can be anticipated from the alternative research strategy of relying on self-reported behaviour collected through questionnaires and interviews. In line with most of the previous studies a two phase approach has been adopted for the current study, involving a content analysis of relevant documents followed by interviews with performance metrics producers and users. It is planned to conduct interviews with parliamentarians and other key actors in the oversight process. Content analysis derived data will allow for this stage of the

project to be conducted from a position where it is possible to differentiate between actual practice in relation to the use of performance metrics and claims of use.

Four of the projects examined documents relating to a period of more than three years, reflecting an intention to capture a longitudinal perspective on user behaviour. The content analysis therefore spans a nine year period 1999-2007. A longitudinal approach allows for developments in committee approach and individual behaviour to be followed and set in the context of policy change. Ezzamel et al concluded that such an approach would be needed to answer some of the outstanding questions in their findings. In a bid to maximize the sense of policy and institutional context the current study deals with a longer time frame than previous projects. Additionally the current project examines parliamentarians who are either current or past members of the Committee. It is anticipated that a fuller picture will emerge of attitudes to performance metrics, if both current and past members of the committee are interviewed.

Choice of subjects

In deciding on the subject focus of the current project a number of useful observations were made on the seven studies under review. Ezzamel and colleagues conducted interviews with 58 parliamentarians, ministers, audit agency officers and advisers. Van Dooren examined parliamentary questions posed by members of the Flemish Parliament. A total of 270 questions were randomly selected across nine policy areas. The questions dated from 2002-3. The Ho study examines elected mayors who are operating in a part-executive, part-executive oversight capacity, in the sense that they take decisions and also call directors of city services to account. Bogt studied aldermen who similarly operate as an executive and as an oversight group in the context of Dutch municipalities. Johnson and Talbot researched the user behaviour of British Members of Parliament. Here select committees members were chosen as the 'users' of performance rather than a random selection of individual members of parliament. This followed logically from the authors' appreciation of recent parliamentary reforms. Since select committees were assigned a set of core tasks under the House of Commons modernization programme in 2002, they have been obliged to examine metrics and targets contained in PSAs as part of their remit. The Sterk and Bouckaert study gathered data from the public service experts associated

with budget reforms, rather than the parliamentarians themselves. Their findings therefore relate to opinions of how performance information was used by parliamentarians. Askim surveyed well over 13% of the total population of Norwegian local councilors. In taking the current study forward it was decided that the subjects to be examined should be parliamentarians whose role was exclusively confined to scrutiny of the executive. This particular choice of subjects removes a certain ambiguity as to the reasons for using performance metrics, which could confuse analysis and conclusions.

Source of performance metrics

On the basis of prior general knowledge about the role played by elected representatives in local government and national parliaments, it seemed obvious that they would access performance metrics in various forms and for multiple purposes. A limiting factor in the Ezzamel et al, Johnson and Talbot, Sterk and Bouckaert and to a lesser extent the Bogt studies is their concentration on responses to the budget process reform. Van Dooren is focused on the performance metrics produced by government and does not attempt to examine the use of non-government sources of performance information. Bogt, Ho and Askim appear more conscious of the need to recognise elected representatives' position in a wider governance network than Ezzamel et al, Sterk and Bouckaert or Johnson and Talbot. An important part of the current project, both in document content analysis and interview phases, is concerned with identifying the policy networks which MSPs are part of and how this influences their use of performance metrics. The current project is examining parliamentarians and their responses to metrics, in whatever form or context they are produced. Parliamentarians may well prefer service data which is 'richer', more local or comparative, than that contained in for example budget process reports. For this reason a score will be kept of the number of references which particular sources of performance metrics merit in committee records and publications.

A second issue is whether the provision of indicators is subject to 'producer dominance' in the sense that user behaviour is a supply-driven phenomenon. As pointed out by van Dooren the conventional position is that use of performance information is demand-driven and the need for information as expressed by politicians determines the supply. In reality it is quite possible that organizations by supplying

information are creating a demand. The current project is intended to investigate the extent to which producer dominance is evident in constraining the scope and quality of oversight through a monopoly of the range of performance metrics offered to politicians.

Behavioural explanations

Ezzamel et al although concluding that the devolved parliaments in the United Kingdom had achieved a significant degree of transparency and openness in respect of budgetary and accounting information, were not in a position to offer evidence as to the use to which this was put to by parliamentarians. They did however establish that knowledge of accounting practices, broadly defined to include performance was fairly limited amongst parliamentarians. Their respondents indicated that information overload is a factor for parliamentarians. Parliamentarians they discovered tended to prefer 'rich information' channeled through face to face contacts rather than look for information contained in 'technical' written formats. The Ho and Bogt studies attempted to examine the behavioural basis of why performance metrics were used. Bogt found that aldermen most frequently receive information during informal, verbal consultations with top managers, with slightly less information being provided by formal meetings and consultations with the same managers. In general, all aldermen seemed to prefer rich, verbal information to sources of written information, probably because they work in a relatively complex and uncertain political environment. In the context of the current study it is important to note that the parliamentarians under scrutiny are outside government and will be largely excluded from the departmental driven rich information loop, but on the other hand are likely to meet frequently with 'local' insiders such as NHS and social services managers in their constituencies, who may be their sources of rich information. They may also have personal contacts with performance metrics producers outside the central government loop. They will certainly be the target of briefings organised by interest groups seeking to gain influence in parliament. Bogt's study reported that alderman are also draw on signals from and consultations with citizens and companies, news in various information media, signals from members of the municipal council. This is a demonstration of sorts that network governance prevails and that aldermen are linked into civic society, reducing their dependency on municipal government information sources. Askim was also able to produce evidence as to the respective popularity of different sources of

information, concluding that performance information contained in annual reports and balanced scorecards was preferred over national data bases or 'local surveys'. In the current study it can be predicted that parliamentarians will access a range of informal sources of information and more specifically performance metrics. For example a local media campaign may be used by a parliamentarian as their source of performance information on a local hospital, rather than the data produced by the hospital itself or a central audit agency. Ho concluded that performance measurement tools were perceived positively, but their impact was dependent on the extent of integration into the city's planning system, the quality of communication between elected representatives and departmental staff and also whether stakeholders were involved in developing performance measures. These are factors which will also be examined in the current project.

Bogt acknowledged but was unable to examine the possibility that aldermen's opinions and their use of information could be influenced by their educational backgrounds, professional experience in previous jobs and political backgrounds. The current project will examine this further, seeking to explore the extent to which individual and party backgrounds appear to impact on performance metrics usage patterns.

Bogt also raised the intriguing possibility that performance information usage behaviour can be explained by the concept of 'political efficiency'. Here claims are made that conscious calculations are made by politicians over the value of the various effort that they can make to attract voters in elections. Bogt observed that for example politicians may conclude that members of particular interest groups and voters, do not judge politicians only or primarily in terms of economic efficiency as revealed through performance metrics. In the context of health service policy in Scotland, parliamentarians are likely to be acutely aware of the way in which voters will interpret policies in their constituencies. It is quite possible for instance, that support for an efficient, economic and effective policy of centralising neurological services in one Scottish hospital, may be highly politically inefficient in the sense that even when performance metrics are readily available, difficult, time consuming justifications would be required to protect votes in constituencies where such facilities were earmarked for closure. Bogt's discussion of political efficiency raises wider questions

related to the economics of performance metrics usage by parliamentarians. Parliamentarians we can assume are utility maximisers. It is logical to presume that at some level a calculation goes on in the minds of parliamentarians, when faced with the possibility of reviewing a set of performance metrics along lines comprehensible in economic terms. To some extent at least other means of engaging with issues of a more 'sentimental' or subjective kinds are likely to be considered. The second stage of the current project which will involve interviews is intended to address these issues.

In the study which reported the greatest enthusiasm for use of performance metrics by politicians, Askim found that over 70% of councilors thought performance information was important in agenda setting, although not so significant as 'input from the local population'. When asked to consider the importance of performance information for evaluating the implementation of the municipal authorities policies, 72% of Askim's respondents reported that it gave them a good idea of the population's needs were being met. A further 65% also agreed that performance information gave them an ability to identify parts of the service that were not performing to satisfaction.

Van Dooren laid stress on examining the link between user behaviour and supply of performance metrics by government departments and associated agencies. His study was able to differentiate between the volume, quality and type of performance metric supplied in different sectors of the Flemish Governments areas of competency. His conclusions encourage further investigation into the limitations imposed by metrics producers. Most policy sectors showed an undersupply of indicators. The main undersupply was to be found in the policy sector 'welfare and public health'. In particular, effect indicators are lacking in this policy sector. The extent to which behaviour of performance metrics users in the Scottish Parliament is constrained by producer limitations in terms of the quality and scope of data made available is a question worth pursuing and should be taken account of in the design of the current project.

Askim was also able to differentiate between the attitudes of councilors with responsibilities for different policy areas in respect of the utility of performance

information. Claimed utilization was higher among councillors working with elderly care, administrative affairs, and educational affairs than among councillors working with cultural affairs, technical services and planning and commercial development. The link between policy area and performance metrics utilization is therefore an issue which should be considered in the current study. Health care is assumed to have generated a greater depth of performance information than other policy sectors in the United Kingdom.

Existing research suggests that behaviours exhibited in relation to the use of performance metrics may be sometimes be unexpected. Sterk & Bouckaert (2006) for example suggest there may be even be unintended negative consequences associated with the transparency motivated budget reforms they have examined in a comparative study of four countries. They conclude that despite the fact that the performance budgeting reforms had the claimed purpose of increasing transparency of the budget; the complexity of the budgeting process was also increased during the same policy phase. Hard to grasp technical accounting reforms combined with transparency reforms appeared to have cancelled out any potential to increase usage by parliamentarians. The current project is designed to identify any similar paradoxical impacts associated with parliamentarians' use of performance metrics in the act of oversight.

Institutional context

Ezzamel et al, van Dooren and Johnson and Talbot and Sterk and Bouckaert all pay attention to the legislative institutions structure and working practices in the parliaments they examine. While Askim provides little information on institutional context, the attention given to the linkage between policy area and utilization is of significance in terms of understanding the significance of institutions. A similar conclusion can be made in respect of van Dooren's study. While previous studies have recognised the importance of institutions it is quite possible that a more detailed appreciation of rules and practices will be needed to explain user behaviour adequately in the context of the current study. For example in the Scottish Parliament is 'overload' evident, meaning that members are overwhelmed by the volume of information produced? If so is this effect which a number of researchers have hinted at, a consequence of limited individual capacity for information handling or related to

an institutional weakness in allowing systems to be established for the management of knowledge? Or regarding a different aspect of institutional context that is referred to as the 'party system', it is immediately obvious that in contrast with Westminster, the Scottish parliamentary system where the current study is located has required political parties to form governing coalitions. So far Labour and the Liberal Democrats, during 1999-2007 and from 2007 onwards a minority SNP-Green Party coalition, have formed governments. Related to the balance in political party strength in the Scottish Parliament, there is a distinct possibility that the precise nature of government-backbencher relationships have an impact on the uses made of performance metrics. Both Johnson and Talbot and Sterk and Bouckaert point to the dominance of the executive power in the budget process. In the context of the current study executive dominance is a factor which must be taken into account. There is also in broader terms a need to gain more detailed knowledge of the oversight process within the context of the Scottish Parliament. It is clear that relatively little is known about the institutional practices which impact on the consumption of performance metrics by parliamentarians in the act of oversight. For this reason it is intended to conduct interviews with officials in the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government and key audit agencies in an effort to supplement evidence drawn from the content analysis of Committee meetings transcripts conducted.

6. Summary

The review of empirical studies conducted in this working paper has been used to help design a research project, which will attempt to capture the complex nature of end-user behaviour in relation to performance metrics. In drawing on previous research a more rounded and exhaustive programme of investigation can be developed than would have been the case without the studies examined in this working paper. The study is nevertheless an exploratory exercise, which will at times identify behaviours that will only be understood when further empirical work is conducted. This will be designed to make comparisons either between user behaviour in different policy sectors or parliamentary contexts and will provide a sense of perspective lacking in the literature thus far. The study currently being undertaken will provide the conceptual and methodological basis for further comparative work. The results of the

current project will initially appear on the Public Services Programme in the form of further working papers and conference papers.

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