



Challenging the Performance Movement: Accountability, Complexity, and Democratic Values (Public Management and Change series)

Beryl A. Radin

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"Accountability" is a watchword of our era. Dissatisfaction with a range of public and private institutions is widespread and often expressed in strong critical rhetoric. The reasons for these views are varied and difficult to translate into concrete action, but this hasn't deterred governments and nongovernmental organizations from putting into place formal processes for determining whether their own and others' goals have been achieved and problems with performance have been avoided.

In this thought-provoking book, government and public administration scholar Beryl Radin takes on many of the assumptions of the performance movement, arguing that evaluation relies too often on simplistic, one-size-fits-all solutions that are not always effective for dynamic organizations. Drawing on a wide range of ideas, including theories of intelligence and modes of thought, assumptions about numbers and information, and the nature of professionalism, Radin sheds light on the hidden complexities of creating standards to evaluate performance. She illustrates these problems by discussing a range of program areas, including health efforts as well as the education program, "No Child Left Behind."

Throughout, the author devotes particular attention to concerns about government standards, from accounting for issues of equity to allowing for complicated intergovernmental relationships and fragmentation of powers. She explores in detail how recent performance measurement efforts in the U.S. government have fared, and analyzes efforts by nongovernmental organizations both inside and outside of the United States to impose standards of integrity and equity on their governments. The examination concludes with alternative assumptions and lessons for those embarking on performance measurement activities.

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