

Graduate Pathway Students: Three Contributions

The School of Government at Victoria University of Wellington each year accepts a small number of promising undergraduates into its Professional Masters programmes. They undertake an accelerated programme that involves a for-credit short internship. In this issue of *Policy Quarterly* we feature short articles by three students – Alice Denne, Matthew Macfarlane and Danijela Tavich – based on their internship research. The students had highly varied experiences ranging from supporting a social enterprise in its work with contractors to government, researching productivity

with the Productivity Commission, and exploring covenanted land and sustainability for the Waipā District Council. We are very proud of our excellent Graduate Pathway students and look forward to their graduation this December.

We sincerely thank our internship sponsors from 2016/2017 - Waipā District Council, Ākina Foundation, New Zealand Productivity Commission, the State Services Commission and the Ministry of Justice.

Dr Barbara Allen, *Graduate Pathway Coordinator*

Alice Denne

Lessons from an Internship at Waipā District Council motivations and incentives

Creating change through policy interventions relies most often on changing individuals' behaviour. To create effective change, it is important for policymakers to understand the attitudes and motivations of the people most affected. I learned how important this is while spending my summer interning at the Waipā District Council in Waikato as part of Victoria University's Master of Public Policy graduate pathway programme.

Isolated from the rest of the world, New Zealand is home to much indigenous natural heritage. The rise of agriculture and suburban living has dramatically reduced the dense native bush that covered most of the country just 200 years ago. The Waipā district is not exempt from this trend and, as a farming region,

now all but 7.5% of the district's land has been cleared. It is home to 73 nationally threatened species, including kahikatea, tawa and podocarp forest, kānuka shrub and species of bat and gecko (Kessels & Associates Ltd, 2013).

As a local authority the district council must work to prevent further destruction of the heritage that remains. The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires territorial authorities to protect 'areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna', while preventing inappropriate land use, subdivision and destruction (s6(c); Waipā District Council, 2010). The challenge is that the most vulnerable land and many threatened ecosystems are found on private property, outside council authority. In

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order to meet biodiversity goals, the efforts of landowners to protect and maintain the quality of the environment that surrounds them is essential. Limited in their ability to monitor or enforce regulatory measures, the councils' role is then to encourage landowners to protect their own natural heritage sites.

Natural heritage covenants are promoted as an effective way to ensure the ongoing existence of threatened species on private land otherwise vulnerable to destruction. Covenants prevent both current and any future title holders from removing the heritage feature and are administered by either the Queen

be divided into two camps: those who farmed for money and economic gains, and those who farmed for the lifestyle, driven by stewardship values to care for the environment (Scarlett, 2004; Sullivan et al., 1996; Taylor, Cocklin and Brown, 2011; Maybery, Crase and Gullifer, 2005).

These motivations were consistent with what I found in the Waipā district: four of the six landowners were protecting their natural heritage because they cared about the environment. They talked about being motivated by the knowledge that they were leaving something behind for future generations and felt a responsibility to protect what was left.

plant the land, their ecological benefit will be minimal. For this reason, not only are the covenants important, but it is also important for landowners to have a stewardship attitude towards their land and be motivated to look after it. Hence, the current policy is not doing enough to change the attitude and behaviour of landowners unwilling to protect natural heritage and threatened species.

Some interviewees talked about neighbours who saw covenants as 'black marks on the landscape' and thought that maximising the agricultural potential of land was always more important than protecting bush. It is these attitudes that need changing to prevent the further destruction of the district's natural heritage. Awarding subdivision entitlements to those unwilling to maintain their heritage sites brings few benefits to the region, and at the cost of undermining the district's rural growth strategy. The strategy aims to reduce ad hoc rural development created by these unplanned residential lots scattered between towns.

As it stands, the current incentive offered by the Waipā District Council reaches the low-hanging fruit, mostly those individuals already motivated by stewardship values to restore the natural environment in their care. The financial incentive is not great enough to overcome the loss of property rights or compensate for the ongoing work that must be done by farmers. It is not easy to see the degeneration of natural environments that happens gradually over generations. The council should increase awareness of the issue of biodiversity loss in the district. It needs to inform people of what they can look for as indications of this on their own land and highlight what changes they should be concerned about in their waterways, soils and visible landscape.

After awareness is increased, the strategies the council uses to reduce the effects and prevent further damage can be better communicated. I suggest that there should be greater awareness of the biodiversity corridor strategies and protection for significant natural areas, and why these are important priorities for the district. Support can be built through profiling the environmental work already

This study taught me the importance of knowing the people whose behaviour you are seeking to change and understanding their motivations.

Elizabeth II National Trust or the council. In the Waipā, landowners are incentivised to use covenants by being offered a subdivision entitlement in exchange. These can be used on another section of their land or sold to another property within the district. This creates a financial benefit to compensate for the loss of potential economic value the land had prior to covenanting.

To better meet the requirements of the RMA, the council sought to evaluate the effectiveness of this scheme. I wanted to know how people were responding. Was this incentive attractive to landowners? Were farmers interested in covenanting their land, which often comes with costly management plans on top of loss of property rights, for the economic benefit of a subdivision? Or was there another, more important motivator for seeking covenant status?

My exploratory study was centred on interviews with landowners who already had covenants on their properties. Altogether, I conducted seven exploratory interviews in early 2017, six with landowners and one with a local property valuer. Existing literature suggested that the farmers and their motivations, broadly speaking, could

For the environmentally motivated farmers, the subdivision entitlement was a reward for the work they were already doing on their property, not an incentivising factor to apply for covenant status. The legal protection a covenant provides is not enough to ensure ongoing protection of threatened species; many sites require fencing, riparian margin planting, and ongoing weeding and pest control. Before a covenant is created, landowners are made aware of the management required and are able to make a decision on whether this ongoing cost is worthwhile. Even with a covenant, without the effort, time and financial investment of landowners maintaining their sites, the preservation of natural heritage would be lessened by uncontrolled weeds and pests.

The two farmers who were motivated primarily by the economic value of the entitlement claimed that their sites required very little, if any, maintenance. Neither was motivated to protect the environment in their care.

As they provide ongoing legal protection, natural heritage covenants are essential for the long-term preservation of biodiversity. But without the effort of individuals to weed, control pests and

being undertaken by role models and champions in the community. Greater benefits will be achieved if social norms regarding land use and the environment can change.

Yet changing attitudes alone will be ineffective when significant barriers still exist. I recommend that the council tries to better understand the specific barriers faced by Waipā residents who may intend to act pro-environmentally but are limited in their capacity to do so. I found that barriers are both financial and related to

capacity, skill and time. These can be reduced by profiling external funders, community restoration projects, and increasing education about what landowners can do to restore natural heritage on their own properties (Steg and Vlek, 2008; Taylor, Cocklin and Brown, 2011).

This study taught me the importance of knowing the people whose behaviour you are seeking to change and understanding their motivations. It is easy for policymakers to make inaccurate

assumptions and then design policies that miss the mark because of this. Policy is about people: it is about their values and motives and the way they respond to incentives, sanctions and barriers. Policymakers do not know everything and must often make decisions based on limited information. But it is important to engage with those most affected by the policy and develop a better understanding of their motivations and barriers to change.

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Matthew Macfarlane

Two Key Lessons from a Public Sector Internship

accountability in public sector contracting and client-level data

I served as a research intern for the Ākina Foundation through the School of Government's graduate pathway programme

during the summer of 2016-17. Ākina, which is dedicated to fostering social enterprise in New Zealand, was contracted by the Ministry

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of Social Development (MSD) to facilitate and manage the co-design and implementation of its Acceleration for Results programme (Ākina Foundation, 2017). This programme seeks to transition the providers with MSD contracts from output-based contracts (i.e. purchase agreements) to results-based contracts (i.e. contracts which specify desired changes in recipients' quality of life according to prescribed measures). The new contracts are intended to assist MSD in reaching its Better Public Services (Ministry of Social Development, 2015) targets by measuring (and incentivising) provider performance based on client

The following reflections focus on two specific issues raised by the new policy: first, the implications of the new form of contracting for accountability; and second, the privacy issues that have arisen as a result of the desire of policymakers, in the interests of more effective interventions, to acquire greater client-level data from social service providers via the new contracting regime.

The impact on accountability

When government programmes are contracted out, the tasks to be undertaken are carefully defined at the outset so that both parties have matching expectations.

... one of the risks of contracting out the provision of publicly funded services via tightly defined contracts is that NGOs focus narrowly on the terms of the contract, potentially at the expense of wider public goals.

outcomes, rather than directly purchasing services from providers.

During my involvement the policy programme was at a pilot implementation stage. That is to say, there was a small sample of social service providers working with MSD and Ākina to understand the goals of the policy, identify barriers to change from the perspective of both MSD and providers, and iteratively design some prototype contracts. Approximately 20 providers were involved across the four workshops I attended, and about 15 MSD staff from regional and central offices.

My role for Ākina was to observe the processes and context specific to the new contracting policy, and to conduct an independent literature review. From these I prepared recommendations that highlighted international practices and potential risks. The project also involved some rapid processing of data from workshops and surveys to assess provider readiness, mood, and satisfaction with the early implementation stages of the policy.

This creates a client–provider relationship dynamic, and enables providers to be held to account for their performance. These features have an impact on both the design and the implementation of the policy, because the relationship of a client to a provider is different from that of a department or ministry to a minister.

Public servants juggle difficult, sometimes conflicting accountabilities – to their line managers and chief executives, to the government of the day and the individual minister, and to their stakeholders – alongside responsibilities to be good stewards of resources and to maintain political neutrality. Public servants are offered tools to navigate these accountabilities: the State Sector Act, the code of conduct for the state services, and other resources, written and unwritten, including constitutional conventions. The accountabilities for non-government entities working on government programmes are different. The bulk of their accountabilities are outlined

specifically in a contract; their other accountabilities are only those set out by their individual organisation (e.g. in codes of conduct) or their professional standards.

This is a problem because public resources are expended by organisations not covered by the State Sector Act. Aside from each organisation's professional practices, and what is outlined in their respective contracts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not obliged to act like public sector agencies. For instance, they are not responsible for providing free and frank advice to ministers; they are not obliged to serve the government's wider objectives, such as stewardship; and they are not required to contribute to the objectives of public agencies with which they do not have contracts. Hence, contracting out presents a structural risk in the design and implementation of public policy in New Zealand. One example in the social investment space is that there is no mechanism for NGOs to account for the benefits which accrue to departments they are not contracted with. For example, an NGO contracted to the Ministry of Social Development has no incentive to create savings for the Department of Corrections other than what may be stipulated in a specific contract. By contrast, a public servant working in MSD is ultimately accountable to cabinet (in hierarchical terms) and therefore has a responsibility to consider the wider public interest.

Structural risks necessitate structural solutions. One way forward would be to place an additional responsibility on public servants to ensure that contractors provide ongoing feedback on how their activities might contribute to wider governmental objectives. This implies strong relational contracting, with regular interactions between those tasked with commissioning and those responsible for delivering publicly funded services. A key goal must be to ensure that departments cannot contract away their responsibilities to be good stewards of public resources.

Individual client-level data

Individual client-level data is, as defined by MSD, 'information about a client that typically doesn't change over time and

is identifiable by its nature' (Ministry of Social Development, 2017). This includes information such as names, ages and locations, as well as what services clients are accessing. Here I briefly outline the key controversies that have become the subject of media attention (Brunton, 2017; Kirk, 2017) and a report from the privacy commissioner (Privacy Commissioner, 2017). These arose during my internship as the collection of individual client-level data was (at that time) to be included in every new contract. The opportunity for first-hand exploration of the issues was personally exciting.

Concerns surround both privacy as something intrinsically valuable, and the potential consequences of a client's unwillingness to consent to providing personal data – such as reduced trust in providers or choosing not to use services they would benefit from, thereby incurring harm. In the workshops I attended providers were almost uniformly opposed to the collection of individual client-level data. The privacy commissioner reports that anecdotally around half of providers have clients who would be unwilling to release their personal data.

However, some providers also reported that their clients were largely unconcerned,

or at least were willing to trade privacy for the promise of 'better' outcomes. Even so, these providers were unwilling to support the government's proposals. This raises questions about whether it is right ethically for providers to adopt a paternalistic approach to their clients, and conversely whether it is justified for the government to use its coercive powers and funding mechanisms to compel organisations to release this required information.

The willingness of some clients to sacrifice their privacy for a better quality service aligns with the view that privacy is a luxury good (Trepte and Reinecke, 2011; Angwin, 2014) that can be traded away for something individual clients value more highly. The question of whether people, especially vulnerable people reliant upon social services, should be *compelled* to exchange privacy for the services they need raises significant ethical issues. Much depends on the value placed on individual privacy and the extent to which less privacy is likely to enhance the achievement of other important societal goals. For those who value privacy highly, there will need to be powerful reasons for trading even modest amounts of it away.

Concluding remarks

My experience as an intern brought to the fore critical issues of governance. One of these relates to the risks associated with governments contracting out the design of public policy. Another concerns the practice of contracting with NGOs for the provision of services. In both cases, important issues of accountability arise. More specifically, one of the risks of contracting out the provision of publicly funded services via tightly defined contracts is that NGOs focus narrowly on the terms of the contract, potentially at the expense of wider public goals. Another concern is that government departments are unable to fulfil their responsibilities to be good stewards of public resources and their capacity to pursue wider government objectives is diminished. At the same time, it will be important in an age of big data and the unequal distribution of personal privacy and material resources that governmental contracts with NGOs do not impose unjustified demands for personal information.

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Danijela Tavich

New Zealand Productivity Commission Internship

social sector productivity

For my internship I prepared a short paper on social sector productivity for the Productivity Commission. The objective was to consider the implications of introducing productivity measurement in the social sector, given some of the complexities of observing outputs and outcomes for certain sector tasks. To do this I selected one typology, James Q. Wilson's matrix of government tasks in Gregory (1995b), and attempted to apply this to a set of tasks within one organisation in the social sector, namely the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). The tasks were drawn from MSD's annual report for 2015/16.

Productivity in the social sector

The social sector is complex, covering a variety of activities, including health, education and welfare services. Productivity measures the capacity of an economy, industry or organisation to produce goods and services (outputs) using inputs such as labour and capital (such as machinery, computer software and land). It is a quantitative measure of the ratio

of the volume of output to the volume of inputs (Gemmell, Nolan and Scobie, 2017). Productivity is a useful concept in the social sector because delivering more or improved services with the same inputs (or the same services with fewer inputs) can potentially enhance well-being, all else being equal (Conway, 2016).

An important component of productivity measurement is quality

adjustment, which ensures that quality changes are considered when measuring productivity, to ensure a fair picture of performance and minimise the promotion of productivity improvements at the expense of quality (Hanushek and Ettema, 2015). Consequently, to be able to apply standard productivity measures to social sector tasks we must be able to observe some defined input, and the output or outcome, and we must be able to quality-adjust the result.

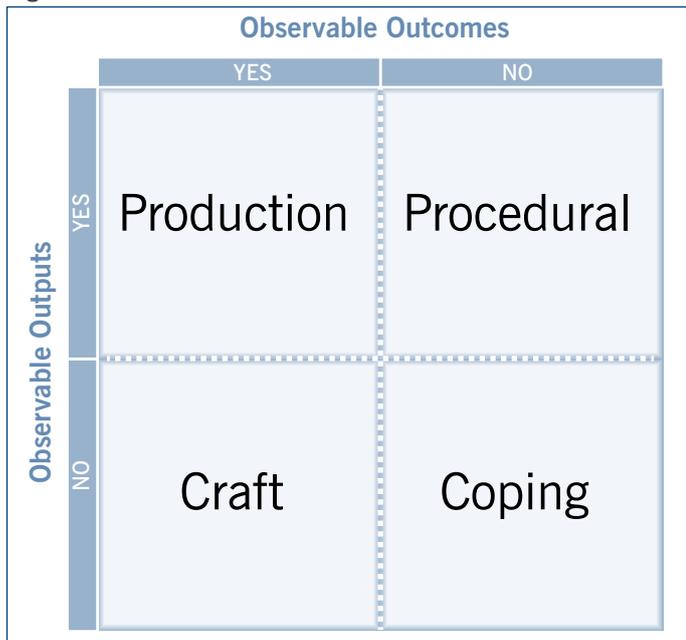
Theory

Wilson's typology differentiates among types of tasks by the observability of outputs and outcomes, and identifies four categories, as shown in Figure 1. Production tasks have observable outputs and outcomes; procedural ones have observable outputs but outcomes that are difficult to observe; craft ones have observable outcomes but outputs are difficult to observe; and it is difficult to observe both outputs and outcomes of coping tasks (Gregory, 1995a).

Wilson's typology, and this analysis, employ a broad definition of outputs as the work that organisations carry out and the things (goods and services) produced, and outcomes as the effects of this work

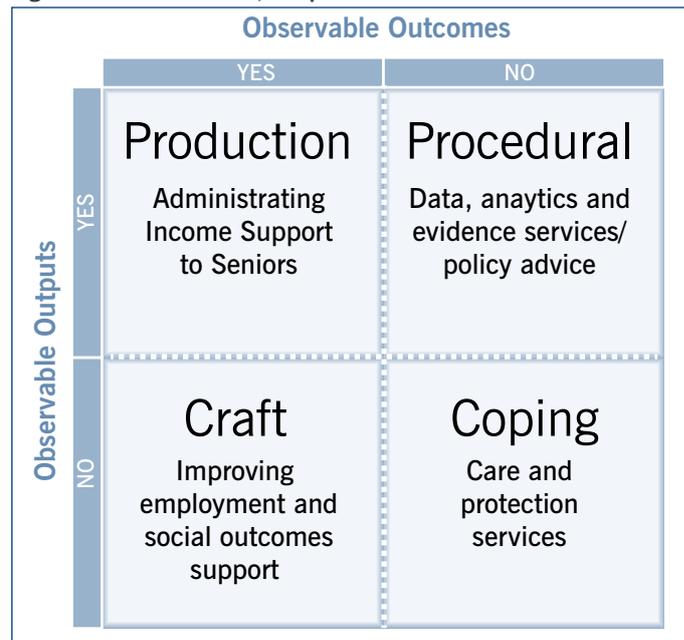
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Figure 1: The James Q. Wilson matrix



Source: Tavich 2017

Figure 2: Tasks of MSD, adapted from James Q. Wilson



Source: Gregory, 1995b, pp.172-3

on communities and society at large (Gregory and Lonti, 2008). However, outputs and outcomes can be further broken down according to the level at which we wish to observe them, a point which will be returned to later.

Practice

Performance measurement practice in the social sector is governed by the requirements of the Public Finance Act 1989, which, in contrast to Wilson’s typology, considers all organisations to be based on production-type tasks, with observable outputs and outcomes (Gregory, 1995b; Treasury, 2005). For many years the government has tried to shift performance measurement in the social sector to an outcomes focus (Destremau and Wilson, 2016, p.33). However, it can be difficult to observe (and, consequently, to measure) some outcomes, particularly those that only become evident in the long term (Alford 1993; Productivity Commission, 2015).

Further, co-production can cause issues for measuring some social sector tasks. Co-production entails the contribution of people or organisations external to the producing organisation (such as the target group being regulated, or other public actors) to accomplish objectives (Alford, 1993). Co-production is usually required for more complex tasks, namely craft and coping tasks, and

can cause significant issues for attributing outcomes to a single organisation by making it hard to unpick the causes and effects of contributing efforts (Gregory, 1995b). As craft tasks have some observable outcomes, the effects of co-production are slightly less significant for measurement, as there is some observable end which can be linked with production technologies (technical knowledge). However, in the case of coping tasks this matter can be challenging (ibid.). Nevertheless, much measurement already exists in the social sector, including for tasks which have complex, long-term goals, such as social work (see Ministry of Social Development, 2016).

Key findings

Limits of the typology

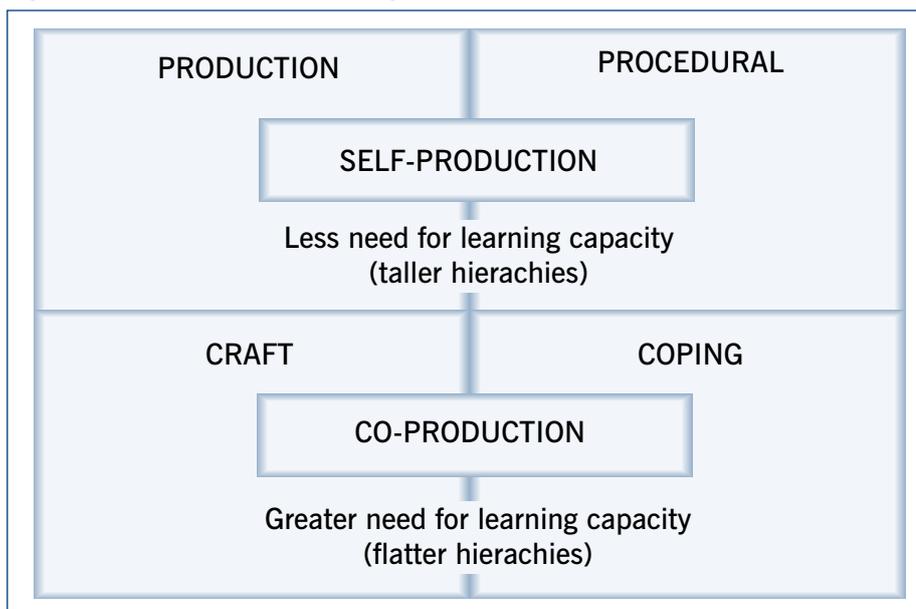
There are some clear limitations to Wilson’s typology when applying it to practice. Indeed, Wilson himself once warned that the typology should be used ‘with caution’ (1989, p.159). Significantly, the attempt to categorise many complex tasks into a small number of categories – in this case four – is unduly restrictive (Lonti and Gregory, 2007). The exercise of applying Wilson’s approach to the services undertaken by MSD (see Figures 2 and 3) illustrated this, and the lines between quadrants in Figure 2 have been dashed to represent that the classifications are not definitive.

In some instances, a classification that would allow a task to straddle the lines between quadrants might be most appropriate. For example, certain tasks can have sub-tasks that are more or less observable. For instance, fraud prevention is a sub-task of administering income support to seniors (Ministry of Social Development, 2015). Fraud prevention requires more discretion on the part of officials and thus is more difficult to observe and might not fit within the production quadrant. Nonetheless, other tasks fit relatively neatly within the typology, with care and protection services (social work) a clear coping task.

One-size-fits-all approach not sufficient

Despite the limitations, applying the typology to MSD highlighted that much task diversity exists within a single social sector organisation, as shown in Figure 2. This indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach would be inappropriate for productivity measures in the sector. Inevitably, the measurement of a coping task like social work will require a different approach from that required by a production task like processing payments (Gregory, 1995a). In these more complex cases, moving away from standard productivity measures and towards productivity-type measures, such as cost-effectiveness (i.e. measuring the relationship between inputs and final

Figure 3 The reliance of tasks on co-production



Source: Gregory, 1995a, p.174

outcomes) and more innovative bespoke measures or proxies, might be most appropriate.

Defining levels of measurement

The way we define outputs and outcomes affects how we might go about measuring them. Wilson’s typology employs a broad definition of outputs and outcomes, but these can be further broken down according to the level at which we wish to observe them. Outputs can be observed either at the level of the specific day-to-day activities of individuals (as Wilson

suggests), or at a higher-level overview of this work, such as the number of hours worked or the number of children seen in the case of a social worker (see Laking, 2008). Similarly, outcomes can be broken down into intermediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes, the former being more observable, shorter-term goals and the latter being the final desired effect of the task, which could take years to eventuate and is more consistent with Wilson’s definitions (Coglianese 2012; Gregory 1995a).

There is a need for greater clarity about what we mean when we refer to outputs and outcomes, as using the same words interchangeably can create confusion, not least when exploring performance measurement issues. Certainly, it will be easier to observe a higher-level overview of an output, and an intermediate outcome, than it would be to observe outputs and outcomes according to Wilson’s definitions, and the former set of definitions are more consistent with those employed in the Public Finance Act 1989. Nevertheless, which level of measurement is appropriate depends on the objective – what it is that we are trying to achieve or learn by measuring the outputs and outcomes of a certain task – as different goals will require different levels of detail. Approaching measurement in this way will help to avoid ‘hitting the target and missing the point’ (Bevan and Hood, 2006, p.421).

Conclusions

Wilson’s typology is a useful tool that raises interesting questions about social sector productivity measurement. In many cases standard productivity concepts are compatible with social sector tasks. In others, however, we may need to apply more innovative, bespoke methods to capture performance. Above all, it is imperative to define outputs and outcomes clearly and avoid a one-size-

Table 1 Compatibility of selected tasks with productivity concepts

Task type	Inputs (labour and capital)	Outputs	Outcomes	Ability to measure quality change
• Production – Administering income support to seniors	• Capital (money, computers, buildings etc.) • Labour intensive	• Monetary transfers • Entitlement eligibility assessments	• Ability of seniors to maintain independence and social participation	• Using outputs or outcomes
• Procedural – Data, analytics, evidence and policy advice	• Capital (money, computers, buildings etc.) • Labour intensive	• Advice delivered to Minister	• Unobservable – outcome attribution issues, impacts of work uncertain	• Using outputs
• Craft – Improving employment and social outcomes support	• Capital (money, computers, buildings etc.) • Labour intensive • Attributes of clients etc.	• Unobservable – much discretion by officials, difficult to prescribe outputs	• Clients moving closer to independence (away from benefit dependency)	• Using outcomes
• Coping – Care and protection services	• Capital (money, computers, buildings etc.) • Labour intensive • Attributes of clients etc.	• Unobservable – much discretion by officials, difficult to prescribe outputs	• Unobservable – attribution problems, impacts of work uncertain	• Difficult

fits-all approach. Plainly, the social sector is too complex to be fully captured by Wilson's typology, which consequently, as he warned, must be used 'with caution'.

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Patrick Nolan for his time in supervising my work. The views expressed here are my own.

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