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Contents

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE ZIMBABWE CIVIL SERVICE - A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in 1996 in order to review the progress in the implementation of the Zimbabwe Civil Service Reform Programme with a specific focus on the implementation of performance management and a performance based salary increment and bonus. The study established that the introduction of performance management was strongly resisted by teachers in the civil service and most staff associations on the grounds that:

(1)   the employees concerned were not consulted in the formulation of the programme;

(2)   performance management is results-oriented and is not compatible with public administration which focuses on social services;

(3)   civil servants cannot be held responsible for non-attainment of targets, when they do not control the resource inputs. Indeed, the civil service top managers, the permanent secretaries, rejected the concept of their being put on a contract by government because of the uncertainty in resource mobilisation and control;

(4)   performance management was introduced at the same time government was carrying out economic reforms, which entailed the reduction of the public service employees by 25% in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. The performance management programme was perceived by the staff associations as a means to downsize the civil service;

(5)   there was a strong apprehension amongst the civil servants that some of their members would need comprehensive training in order to survive performance management, as they had been recruited with inadequate skills and knowledge, as a result of the 1980 government affirmative action intervention in the form of the Presidential Directive.

Introduction

The Government of Zimbabwe introduced performance management in 1995 in the civil service as part of the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP). The Kavran (1989) Public Service Review Commission Report had noted, inter-alia, the following dysfunctions within the service:

- The civil service was bloated, cumbersome, and heavily centralised, and was managed by an inexperienced personnel.

- There was a lot of overlapping and duplication of functions between departments and ministries, resulting in wastage of resources.

- There was secretiveness and a lack of transparency in the conduct of public affairs; civil servants were inaccessible to the general public, absenteeism was rife, and rudeness to the clients was the order of the day.

This in turn resulted in inefficiency, ineffectiveness and corruption within the civil service. The government in 1991 embarked on the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which, among other things, called for the reduction of the role of the state in the economy and the strengthening of the private sector as the engine for growth. In reality, this meant the downsizing of the civil service by 25%, and an introduction of business management ethos in the public sector. The focus was on 'value-for-money' and results-oriented work ethos. Strategic Planning was introduced with its insistence on mission statements, strategic objectives, and individual job/task objectives. The civil servants, represented by staff associations, objected to the introduction of performance management and

results-based appraisal system. They took the government to court by the civil service staff associations contesting the introduction of a performance-related bonus. The wrangle culminated in the unprecedented civil service strike of August to October 1996.

The Literature Review

Performance management is a management tool for the achievement of organisational goals. Cushway (1994) defines performance management as, a management process designed to the link of an organisation's objectives with those of the individual in such a way as to ensure that both the individual and corporate objectives are met as far as possible. The definition links individual objectives to group and organisational goals. If the two do not coincide, inevitably problems arise. Barnard (1968) suggests the administration of an 'economy of incentives' to induce the individual to align his or her objectives with those of the organisation. He advocates the use of training and indoctrination in order to bring individuals into a cooperative relationship with the organisation and elicit their contribution. Armstrong (1991) sees performance management as a continuous process, and not a one-off event. This calls for the constant monitoring and evaluation of performance. Effective communication is usually one of the main aims for introducing performance management. Managers and the work-force will need to interact and communicate with each other frequently in order to have greater clarity about the organisation's aspirations and share a common vision.

The Process

Performance management emphasises a process of mutual adjustment between the superior and surbodinate. It utilises the tenets of Management By Objectives (MBO). Management By Objectives as articulated by Drucker (1954) is meant to assist the business organisation to coordinate the contribution of each individual task towards the whole, that is, the organisational purpose:

> Business performance requires that each job be directed towards the objectives of the whole business. The performance that is expected of the manager must be derived from the performance goal of the business, his results must be measured by the contribution they make to the success of the enterprise.

MBO can therefore be defined as a process where the superior and subordinate managers in an enterprise identify jointly, common goals, define each individual's major areas of responsibilities in terms of the results expected, and use the measures as guides for operating the unit and assessing the contribution of each individual (Szilagyi, Jr). MBO is based on the assumption of a close cooperation between the subordinate and the superior. The process involves a number of stages involving the diagnosis of the work environment, planning, defining the employee's job, setting goals, review of the objectives by the superior which should eventually result in a joint agreement between the parties. The implementation of the joint agreement will be intercepted by the mutual joint reviews. MBO focuses on the contribution to the whole made by each individual unit, and generally tends to be quantitative rather than qualitative, because of its conception in the business environment. However, the objectives have to be linked to the corporate plan. Top management's strong commitment to performance management is assumed. Objectives set at the operational level by the manager and his subordinate, have to be clear, specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-bound. The objectives should focus on the key result areas of the job and be prioritised. A performance culture has to be cultivated within the organisation if performance management is to succeed (Cushway, 1994) . According to Poister and Streib (1995) the performance management process which involves the planning of performance, managing of performance, reviewing performance, and rewarding performance, hinges on the successful conclusion of a performance contract between the manager and his surbodinate . The contract has the following components:

(1)   Major objectives to be accomplished by the surbodinate manager within specified completion dates.

(2)   Resource commitments to support these objectives.

(3)   Action plans and milestones for accomplishing these objectives.

(4)   Periodic meetings of the manager and the surbodinate to review progress and make mid-course corrections if necessary and

(5)   An assessment at the end of the cycle of the surbodinate's performance which feed into both personnel appraisal process and planning for the next cycle (Poister & Streib 1995 , p. 48).

Performance Management in the Public Sector

Performance management in the public sector is rather problematic. To start with, the goals tend to be less translatable into quantities. The public sector specialises in the provision of public goods and services which are difficult to quantify and measure. For example, how does one quantify the work output of a local government promotion officer, or that of a policeman ? The question of adequate resource allocation, also comes in. Arguing against the introduction of performance related pay increment, the Public Service Association's Executive Secretary is quoted as saying

> Performance appraisal is output oriented, the public sector is service oriented, a veterinary officer may intend to go to Tsholotsho to vaccinate some cattle but may fail to do that for the next three months, not because of his choice, but because the Government has no transport to take the officer there" (The Herald, 30-01-97).

Performance management has been attacked for overly centralising organisations through rigid controls at the expense of the need for flexible response and coalition and that it promotes individualism at the expense of team building (Poister & Streib, 1995).

In Africa, the results oriented appraisal system used in performance management is attacked on the grounds that it is incompatible with the African environment where favouritism based on kinship (Hyden, 1983)

gender, ethnicity, patronage, and race are rife (Moyo, 1994) . As Blunt and Popoola (1985) comment,

> ...in public organisations, favourable performance appraisals are linked more to particularistic criteria than they are to universalistic ones. Those closest to the appraiser in terms of kinship or ethnicity, and maintain good relations with him, will in general fare better than those who only have distant connections or none at all.

This particularistic behaviour in Africa, has been exacerbated by the adverse effects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) introduced in order to stimulate economic development. SAPs have generally resulted in more unemployment, retrenchments, budget cutbacks and the downsizing of organisations. The subsequent economic hardship has led to an increase in the incidents of corruption and moonlighting (Makumbe, 1994).

Methodology

A survey of teaching staff in the Ministry of Education in Harare was carried out to establish their views and attitudes on the introduction of performance-related salary increments and bonus. A questionnaire was administered to 98 respondents, mostly teachers from the Ministry of Education. About 10 respondents were from the Ministry of Education Head Office, the Public Service Commission and Public Service Association Secretariat. The main limitation to the study is the small size of the sample. However, the limited interviews and the questionnaire administration within the Harare region, did bring out interesting issues which a follow up study could expand on.

Results

Table 1

Membership of Staff Associations (N=98)

| Current Membership | | Non-Member | |
N	%	N	%
83	84.7	15	15.3

Table 1 indicates that the respondents were highly unionised with 84,7% being members of staff associations.

Table 2

Awareness of Performance Appraisal Exercise (N=98)

| Aware | | Not Aware | |
N	%	N	%
94	95.9	4	4.1

The majority of the respondents were aware of the performance appraisal scheme. Most of them had learnt about the programme from their employer.

Table 3

Sources of Information Concerning the Performance Appraisal Programme

Source of information	Frequency
Employer	79
Staff Association	11
Colleagues	8
Media	2

One interesting aspect noted was that although most resppndents were members of the staff associations, their respective associations had not been providing information regarding the new scheme.

Table 4

Issues Concerning Consultations Prior to the Introduction of Performance Management

	YES	NO	Undecided
Do you have a job description for your current position? 0	83	15	
Were you consulted before the implementation of the performance appraisal scheme?	7	90	1
Do you have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the new performance management?	15	80	3

From the above it shows that a majority (85%) had or were aware of job descriptions of their current positions.

Responses indicated that the employees were not consulted before the introduction of the performance management scheme. A large proportion of the respondents also confessed ignorance of the intricacies of the new scheme. Responding to a question as to whether they regarded their superiors as having sufficient knowledge and skills to implement the performance management, 55 respondents (56%) regarded their managers as not having sufficient knowledge and skills, 31(32%) were undecided, and only 12 (12%) thought their superiors had sufficient skills and knowledge required to implement the scheme.

Training in the form of workshops, seminars were presented as the top possible solutions to the dearth of skills of the supervisors and juniors alike in the implementation of the performance management scheme.

Use of Performance Appraisal Results

The question was whether the respondents agreed to the use of performance management results for the determination of rewards (like payment of bonuses, annual increments) and sanctions (like withholding of bonuses and delaying promotions) . The responses were as reflected in Table 4.

Table 5

Do You Accept the Linking of Performance to Rewards and Sanctions?

Response Item	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	4	4,1
Agree	12	12,2
Disagree	25	25,5
Strongly Disagree	57	58,2

The few respondents who agreed argued that linking results of performance management to rewards and sanctions would entice individuals to work harder and encourage people to be results oriented. It was regarded as being fair to reward high performers for `going that extra mile'. The majority of them preferred not to associate performance management results with rewards and sanctions for the following reasons:

- Performance management could be used by the supervisors to settle old scores with their subordinates. The system can also encourage employees to concentrate on building good relations with the bosses at the expense of the achievement of organisational goals.

- Supervisors were not adequately trained to effect the policy and the resultant errors could have a negative impact on other members in the service.

- The assumption is that the quality of results rests mainly on the teacher's ability whilst in reality, it was argued, other variables like students, initiative, parental input and availability of material resources have a major impact on the final results.

Table 6

Do You Agree That the Performance Appraisal Scheme is Appropriate for Your Type of Work?

Response Item	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	3	3
Agree	19	19.6
Disagree	29	30.0
Strongly Disagree	46	47.4

Those who agreed to performance appraisal were of the opinion that goals that guide any review exercise can be set for any job, including those that fall in the public sector domain. From this viewpoint, performance management is believed to keep everyone aiming at achieving the agreed goals. It is also 'traditional process as teachers have always been assessed since the inception of the service, the only difference being that the new proposals seek to achieve the same in a more systematic manner'.

Respondents who did not approve performance management regarded it as being inappropriate especially in the education field as results in that field took several years to show, unlike in other fields were products were tangible. It was difficult to assess the impact of other important variables like the material resources available, student ability, and parental input and that the new performance management concentrates on measuring individual effort whilst successful education is a result of team work. The new system was seen as involving too much paperwork at the expense of the actual teaching. It was also pointed out that those subjects not officially examined, especially at primary school level would suffer as teachers concentrate on those subjects that are subject to public examination.

The Major Weaknesses of the Performance Appraisal Scheme

Weaknesses presented by the respondents mainly centred on the issues of consultation, appropriateness of the scheme, and the timing of implementation. The major weaknesses cited by about 63% of the respondents was that the scheme was open to abuse by the supervisors as they might attempt to settle old scores with some of their juniors. The exercise was very demanding in terms of skills and time, especially filling in of the forms. There was also no consultation before the programme was implemented and that had created a lot of mistrust. The junior members felt that the superiors were not even well versed with the new system and yet any errors could be costly in terms of remuneration and career advancement of those assessed.

In general, the programme was regarded as having a great potential of creating animosity between the supervisor and the supervised as in most cases it is difficult to agree on the goals, objectives and the Key Results Areas (KRA) . It is also difficult to quantify and agree on the achievement scores of each individual. The language used in the official forms is too complex and in some instances ambiguous and the respondents were not clear on the objectives and the procedures to be followed. It was also observed that discussions and interviews were usually held in a very tense atmosphere, with the appraiser having an upper hand.

Possible Solutions to the Identified Weaknesses

The most popular recommendation was for the employer to engage in more consultation with all levels of staff and maybe come up with slightly different appraisal mechanisms for different sectors of the civil service. Respondents favoured a situation where workers' representatives are involved in the processes and where there is a fair mechanism for redress in order to build trust and transparency in the system. In this regard, parties involved should be trained and provided with clear guidelines on the implementation procedures. Another strong opinion was that there be more than one person assessing a particular individual. It was also felt that the performance appraisal should not affect decisions concerning remuneration but should form the basis for employee development. It was the view of the respondents that the scheme should be well funded if it is to be a success.

Table 7

Adequacy of Consultations Between Superiors and Subordinates in Setting Performance Goals

Response Item	Frequency	%
Inadequate consultation	55	56
Adequate consultation	30	31
Do not Know	13	13

The respondents indicated that there was insufficient consultation and that the time for the setting of targets and assessment was inadequate. It was indicated that in some cases the superior did his own assessment independently and only used consultations for validation. Those who argued that there was not enough consultation professed ignorance of all the requirements for the new system.

Table 8

Acceptance of Use of Performance Appraisal for Training Needs Identification

Response Item	Frequency	%
Yes	18	19
No	39	40
Do not Know	40	41

The table shows that a majority of the respondents were not aware whether or not the evaluation results are being used for training needs assessments.

Conclusions

The results indicate that the introduction of performance management was premature as no groundwork had been done to prepare both the employees and the implementers of the scheme. There was also no corporate plan that should have gone with the implementation of the performance management exercise. There is evidence of insufficient consultation between the stakeholders, namely, the teachers, staff associations, and the Public Service Commission. The linking of performance appraisal results to rewards and punishments did not go well with the teachers in an environment where mobilisation and availability of the necessary resources could not be guaranteed. Furthermore, the system was open to abuse by way of victimisation and favouritism and there were no clear structures for redress.

It is the contention of the study that performance management can be successfully implemented in the public sector setting provided there is mutuality of respect, confidence, professionalism, clarity of goals, and participation by all the stakeholders. Extensive training and development of managers and subordinates on how the systems operates and its implications should be part of any performance management exercise in order to ensure that it is regarded as an instrument for employee participation in decision making, productivity improvement and enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness.

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