ARTICLE

Performance Management Systems and Productivity in the Public Sector:

WITHER AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Performance management has attracted a lot of debate in the recent past. It is a systematic effort to improve performance through an ongoing process of establishing desired outcomes, setting performance standards to improve performance and productivity and aim at improving the quality of public service delivery. In view of this, the article discusses the extent to which performance management practices influence performance and productivity in public sector institutions in Africa. It notes that though performance management has been introduced in the African public service with the intentions of monitoring, reviewing, assessing performance and recognizing good performance, performance management systems in Africa have not been able to achieve the expected level of performance which will improve productivity. As a result, the article gives brief overview of public sector performance in some African public services and recommends among others that African public services need to lay more emphasis on productivity through effective implementation of performance management systems. It concludes that public sector organisations in Africa can learn a lot from Western companies which have been wrestling with this issue for over two decades now.

Keywords: Performance Management, Public Administration, Productivity, New Public Management, Public Sector Reforms.

Introduction

Performance management is increasingly gaining momentum in the public sector. It is a strategic approach to the management of public resources and involves the quest for efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. This approach has become a statutory performance measure to deliver quality services in a dynamic and diverse public sector environment (Pillay and Subban, 2007:55).

The wave of public sector reform, which started in Anglo Saxon countries during the late 1970s, has spread throughout the world. It has become an evolving phenomenon, as each nation develops its own model and pattern (Hood, 1995:95; Olson, 1998:7; Groot and Budding, 2008:11). Performance management in the public service has become almost ubiquitous over the past three decades and has been a central concern of elected officials, public administrators and citizens for decades. Managing performance has been one of the key drivers in the reform of the public sector in recent years and one of the central planks of the "reinventing government" movement (Holzer and Kloby, 2005:591; Greling, 2005:533). No wonder, McCourt and Minogue (2001:10) argued that the past two decades have seen a process of almost continuous reform in managing public services through importation of market-type managerial practices into the public sector. The reforms have all aimed at improving the quality of performance in public services, creating new forms of relationship between public and private sector organizations, and new types of regulation and accountability. Conversely, these public management reforms have, in a variety of ways, been transferred to the state systems of developing and transitional economies. Thus, there has been a significant increase in the use of performance management systems in the public sector.

The overall aim of performance management is to establish a high performance culture in which individuals and team take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and for their own skills and contributions within a framework provided by effective leadership. So the objective of performance management is to develop the capacity of employees so that the performance of every individual can be improved (Pareek and Rao, 2006:31). In fact, the purpose of the outcome performance system is not limited to measuring outcomes and outputs. It serves as a mechanism to guide the direction of policy implementation and to ensure that we are doing what matters most.

This article is on performance management experience and productivity in the African public service. It highlights the background and context within which the drive for performance management has been used in developed societies. This article traces some of the factors why performance management is being taken up rapidly in Africa. It also gives an overview of the applicability of performance management as a tool for improving performance across the different public sector organizations in Africa. The article is exploratory in nature and involves a conceptual analytical approach. Conceptual analysis is a technique that treats concepts as classes of objects, events, properties or relationships (Funer, 2004:233). Conceptual analysis is used in order to get a better understanding of procurement practices in the African public sector.

The Concept of Performance Management

Performance management is a term borrowed from management literature that has only recently been adopted. It was first used in the 1970s, but it did not become a recognized process until the latter half of 1980s (Armstrong and Baron, 1998:89). It is a broad tern that became popular in the 1980s as performance appraisal. Performance management is an essentially western development originating in the United States, and much of the research into its use and operation has been conducted in a domestic setting (Locke and Latham, 1984; Armstrong and Baron, 1998:83). The term, performance management, is widely used and yet when probed provides substantial differences of meaning. According to Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield (1995:348), performance management is a comprehensive approach to performance, emphasising the use of all management tools, to ensure achievement of organisational goals. Performance management is a continuous process of identifying, measuring and developing the performance of individuals and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization (Aguinis, 2009). Performance management is many times mistaken as performance appraisal, but the latter is just a part of the former.

Performance management is an integrated and continuous process that develops, communicates and enables the future direction, core competences and values of the institution and helps to create a horizon of understanding. It is the process by which executives, managers, and supervisors work to align employee performance with the institution's goals (Beardwell & Holden, 2001:538). Performance management is a systematic effort to improve performance through an ongoing process of establishing desired outcomes, setting performance standards, then collecting, analyzing and reporting on streams of data to improve individual and collective performance (Shane, 2010:19). Performance management is a continuous process of improving individuals, team and organisational performance. It has been the core of all organisations since it gives strategic direction on how resources are going to be distributed towards the achievement of set goals and objectives (Bussim, 2012:102). The concept is also based on the principle of management by agreement or contract rather than management by command. It emphasizes development and the initiation of self-managed learning process plans as well as the integration of individual and corporate objectives. It is a continuous and flexible process that involves managers and their subordinates within a framework that sets out how they can best work to achieve the required results. Its focus is on future performance planning and improvement rather than on retrospective performance appraisal. It provides the basis for regular and frequent dialogues between managers and subordinates/teams on performance and development needs (Dzimbiri, 2008:47).

Armstrong and Barron (2002:76) also observe performance management can also be seen as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors. Performance management is a broad set of activities aimed at improving the performance of employees. The process involves aligning human resource management practices with the goals of the organization to ensure that the performance and development of employees are both enhanced. The goal is to maximize organizational performance through a process of continuous improvement, which entails conducting performance reviews that focus on the future rather than the past (Spripirabaa and Krishnaveni, 2009:951).

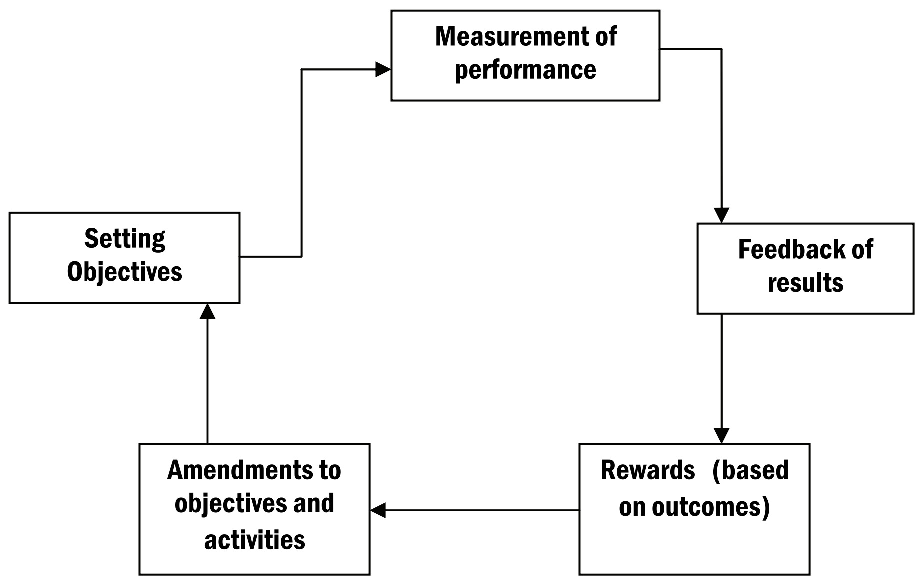
The key features of a successful performance management system according to Fryer; Antony, and Ogden (2009:482) include:

- Alignment of the performance management system and the existing systems and strategies of the organization.
- Leadership commitment.
- A culture in which it is seen as a way of improving and identifying good performance and not a burden that is used to chastise poor performers.

- Stakeholder involvement; and
- Continuous monitoring, feedback, dissemination and learning from results.

In addition, Mabey, Salaman and Storey (1999:180) have prescribed the model of performance management system in the form of 'performance management cycle'. This cycle suggest how performance management system should be implemented in an organization as shown below:

Figure 1: The Performance Management Cycle



Source: Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1999:93.

From the above, the five elements of performance management system cycle include:

- Setting of objectives.
- Measuring the performance.
- Feedback of performance results.
- Reward system based on performance outcomes
- And amendments to objectives and activities (Mabey, Salaman, and Storey, 1999:95).

Performance management aims at improving the quality of public service delivery by focusing on the achievement of end-user needs (Otley, 1999:370). It is a strategy for improving employee performance, productivity and effectiveness (Chan, 2006:149). It emphasizes the integration of organizational objectives with individual goals, the ongoing monitoring of performance, and training and development. From the above definitions, it is obvious that performance management is a process not an event which is integrated with other management processes and is continuous.

By and large, performance management aims at attaining operational effectiveness which refers to a number of practices in a broader sense that permits an organisation to utilize its resources better. Every organisation aims at productivity, speed and quality (Wanyama, 2013:26) and this has generated some techniques and management tools such as total quality management, benchmarking, re-engineering, and change management, *etc*.

Theoretical Orientation

The article employs goal setting theory to analyse performance management and productivity in African public service.

Goal Setting Theory was proposed by Edwin Locke in the year 1968 (Obasan and Sotunde, 2011:116). The theory emphasizes the important relationship between goals and performance. The goal setting theory starts from the simple observation that setting performance goal for employees motivates them to strive towards achieving these goals. In this way, an assigned goal influences employees' beliefs about being able to perform the task at hand and if it becomes certain that current performance is not achieving desired goals, employees will be motivated to increase effort or change their strategy (O'Neil and Drillings, 1994:94; Schultz, 2006:16). It suggests that the individual goals established by an employee play an important role in motivating him for superior performance. This is because the employees keep following their goals. If these goals are not achieved, they either improve their performance or modify the goals and make them more realistic. In case the performance improves, it will result in achievement of the performance management system aims (Salaman, John and Billsberry, 2005). The reason why goal setting typically has a positive effect on performance is that a specific high goal affects choice, effort, and persistence; that is, a specific goal or target increases a person's focus on what is to be accomplished versus putting it off for a later date. Commitment to a specific high goal also leads to persistence until the goal is attained.

Goal setting theory was developed inductively from the results of empirical studies conducted in laboratory and field settings on individuals and teams. The theory as observed by Latham, Borgogni and Petitta (2008:392) states that:

- A specific high goal leads to higher performance than an easy goal; a general goal such as ''make children healthy'' or an exhortation to ''do one's best,'' or no goal setting.
- Given ability as well as commitment, the higher the goal, the higher a person's performance.
- Variables such as participation in decision making, feedback, including praise, competition, and monetary incentives only affect a person's behaviour to the extent that they lead to the setting of and commitment to a specific high goal.

A key ingredient for effectively coaching employees is the prudent use of goal setting. The prime axiom of goal setting theory is that specific, difficult goals lead to higher performance than when people strive to simply "do their best" (Locke, 1966:64, Locke & Latham, 1990). Goal setting theory states that situational factors are a moderator for the effect of a goal on performance. The level of government where goals are set may also be a variable that limits or enhances the relationship between goal setting and an employee's performance. Regardless of the level of government, goal setting has a role to play in the practice of public sector management and administrative reform. The problem of intentionally setting vague performance outcome goals for employees at the national level may be overcome by setting specific high behavioural goals. Setting specific challenging learning goals would also appear to be applicable at any level of government where employees lack the knowledge of how to attain a given outcome (Latham; Borgogni and Petitta, 2008:399). The two unique characteristics of the goal-setting theory that make it more effective than any other theory of motivation to date are its strong empirical basis, and its continuous process of development. It is therefore a useful tool in analyzing performance management and productivity in African public services.

The Essence and Scope of Performance Management

Managing performance is essential for any organisation. It creates a framework that offers encouragement, support and guidance and helps to establish a performance-orientated culture (Dixon, 2004:94). Performance management emphasizes agreement of objectives and development needs and the importance of self-assessment and self-development. It focuses on the evidence provided by the analysis of what individuals and their managers did or did not do as an explanation of the results achieved and gives direction to the employees through guidance from management (Medlin, 2013:49).

Performance management is a shared process between managers and individuals and the teams they manage. It rejects the assumption that only managers are accountable for the performance of their teams and replaces it with the belief that responsibility is shared between managers and team members. This system is based on the principle of management by contract rather than command, although this does not exclude the need to incorporate high performance expectations in such contracts. Bezuidenhout (2006:97) also observes that performance management is based on the principle of management by agreement or participative management rather than management by command. There must be an agreement of objectives, knowledge, skill and capability (competence) requirements, performance improvement and personal development plans (Pillay and Subban, 2007:56). The objectives of performance management in the view of Fagbemi (2006:96) include:

- ensuring the continuous relevance of an organization's mission;
- ensuring that managers have the capacity to derive goals from the mission statement;
- equipping managers with the capability of deriving short-term objectives/targets from the goals of the organization;
- using target setting, accountability, performance standards and measures to enhance employee performance;
- equipping managers with skills to appraise and review organizational and individual performance;
- using reward as incentive for high performance.

The above stated objectives provide the framework of performance management.

Performance management is necessary in maintaining the vitality of the organisation. Armstrong (1996:209) regards performance management as a means of getting better results from the organisation, teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competence requirements.

Performance management is considered an important aspect of management. This critical organizational process provides the basis for an organization to assess how well it is progressing towards its planned and targeted objectives, helps to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and facilitate future initiatives aimed at improving organizational performance (Yasin and Gomes, 2010:229). It must be emphasis here that performance management potentially makes the most significant contribution to individual and organizational learning and helps to raise organizational efficiency and promote growth.

New Public Management and Performance Management: The Nexus

The past two decades have witnessed intensified debate about the role, scope and performance of the institutions and organisations within the public sector. In addition, private provision is often claimed to be more cost-efficient than public provision, although the efficiency gains are accused of being at the expense of the effectiveness. In connection with all the changes, management techniques adopted from the private sector called, 'New Public Management', were introduced in many public-sector organizations (Hood, 1995:107).

New public management set off a new wave of performance management efforts in government. Performance measurement and management is a main component of the New Public Management movement, but it has a long history in public administration and its focus has changed over time (Bouckaert and van Dooren, 2003:98; Sundström, 2004:5). Performance measurement is often taken to be fundamental to delivery of improved services as part of NPM. Emphasis on performance management for delivery of results is undoubtedly influenced by the basic assumption of performance management which lies in its professed ability to unite the attention of institution members on a common objective and galvanize them towards the attainment of this objective. It is this supposition of harmony of vision that underpins the New Public Management faith in leadership and its favourable inclination towards managerial empowerment, as seen in performance management principles (Obong'o, 2009:67; Balogun, 2003:7).

New Public Management that emerged in the 1980s came to dominate the thinking about Public Sector Reforms of 1990s. Perhaps the most central feature of these reforms has been the emphasis on improving performance and ensuring that government activities achieve desired results. NPM is a management philosophy and approach that focuses on achievement of results and outcomes rather than inputs and processes and emphasizes value for money. However, a lot still remains to be done to institutionalize NPM as the way to go in Public service delivery in Africa (Wachira, 2013:2). New public management denotes the failures and inadequacies of public sector performance over time, which is attributed to the nature and processes of public sector activity and public administration (Rauskala and Promberger, 2003:45). New public management argued for management flexibility in their judgements so that they become accountable for their performance. NPM calls for contracting out when the market fails to produce goods and services due to insufficient customers, so that enough is produced to accomplish the goals of the state (Zungura, 2014:251).

The philosophy of NPM is to instil market-type discipline and a culture of performance orientation within public sector organisations with a view to minimising the cost of service quality and augment the degree of accountability through motivational strategies. Dixon (1998) describes NPM or managerialism as a '*private sector prescription for public sector problems.*' They argue that, using 'results-oriented' market-type managerial approach is a universal therapy for the public sector's 'self-evident' inadequate performance. It is within this spirit that performance management theory has become one of the central pillars of NPM today.

One of the main doctrines of New Public Management is managerial discretion combined with transparent targets and ex-post control by result or performance (Hood and Bevan, 2004:89). Performance management allows a lot of autonomy and flexibility in the use of allocated resources and in choosing the means and measures. The NPM attempts to make the public sector lead by a notion of efficiency using the model of private sector management. Efficiency gains are assumed to be achieved through monitoring of performance, financial and professional auditing. Monitoring will require a system of performance management and the performance indicators can be used as basis for rewards and incentives of employees. Performance based management increases political accountability by making it easier for managers to match targets with political priorities. Politicians can hold public managers accountable for their performance, and also performance targets can make service provision more transparent to customers (Ferlie; Pettigrew; Ashburner, and Fitzgerald, 1996:73).

In pursuit of the goal of performance improvement within the public sector, New Public Management emphasizes on the adoption of private sector practices in public institutions. NPM models have therefore been invariably seen through the public service reform initiatives in many developing countries as the solution to reversing falling service delivery (Obong'o, 2009:66; Balogun, 2003:6). Introduction of New Public Management (NPM) models in Africa was influenced by challenges emanating by African countries trying to maintain a macro-economic stability, lowering inflation, reducing scope and cost of government and cutting deficit spending by deregulating public enterprises and ensuring they run as private sector business (World Bank, 1989). The force behind NPM reform wave is that greater cost efficiency will be realised when public service becomes more market oriented. Consequently most developing countries have implemented reforms that involve adoption of multiplicity of measures intended to improve service delivery (Kiragu and Mutahaba, 2005:201). Their immediate remedy has been fixing management and performance aspects, but rampant corruption and negative political influence have affected most of the agents' performance. Africa was forced into this wave of adapting private sector ethos into the management of public institutions to decipher its economic problems. This was administered in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes supervised by Breton Woods Institutions; hence, the argument that NPM was imposed by these institutions on Africa. African countries partially implemented NPM principles (Zungura, 2014:246). The idea of performance measurement in NPM is to formulate an envisaged performance of an entity and to indicate how this performance can be defined and measured. It implies a perspective of performance measurement that is broader than financial indicators.

Performance Management in the Public Sector: Context and Rationale

Public Sector occupies an important place both in developing and developed countries. It is a significant constituent of the service delivery mechanism, and research and development in the various economies. In most countries and especially in developing countries public sector administration is vital to the optimum performance and development of the economy (Lekorwe, 2010:3). The performance of public organizations according to Pollit and Bouckaert (2004:2) is one of the key topics in public administration research, and performance management has gradually become an integral part of modern governance arrangements. Performance of the public service is perceived in terms of its capacity for effective and efficient public service delivery to enable a wide range of actors in society to deliver the development goals and objectives of a country (Issa, 2010:2).

Public sector organizations have relied on action controls (rules and procedures) to control organizations; however, the past decade has witnessed various changes in management control of public sector organizations, including a shift towards output controls (Naser; Abolhassan and Mohammad, 2013:24). It is usually difficult to measure performance improvement and productivity in the public service because the outputs are also intangible. For example, the general welfare of the community, effectiveness and efficiency and the general satisfaction of the society by services provided are not easily measured (Van der Waldt, 2004:75).

The importance of performance management in the public service is echoed in Mandishona's (2003) argument that everything being equal, an organisation's success depends on how people are viewed and treated, and how they in turn view the organisation and behave towards it. Performance management is thus of great importance to public service. It is generally believed that performance management optimises the contribution of people to the service while at the same time meeting the individual needs of employees. The role of performance accountability in the public sector is more important than the private sector. The benefits of performance management to the public service include; clear work goals and responsibilities; greater commitment and motivation of staff at all levels; reliable method of measuring performance; focus on results; elimination of unnecessary activity; improved retention and attraction of staff; improved communications; greater managerial motivation through goal setting; more effective development of people; and can be linked with a variety of human resource systems like performance appraisal, performance related pay, training and development, transfer, promotion, demotion, *etc* (Public Service Commission, 1998:3).

Emphasis on performance management for delivery of results is undoubtedly influenced by the basic assumption of performance management which lies in its professed ability to unite the attention of institution members on a common objective and galvanize them towards the attainment of this objective (Balogun, 2003:21).

Performance Management and Productivity in Public Service: Exploring the Links

Every organization desires to be productive. In essence, high productivity is the major aim for the existence of any organization. But on the contrary, the bid to attain higher productivity has remained a wishful thinking for many public sector organizations in Africa. This was the main reason why Simon (1957:109) argued that the issue of productivity is the only reason for all the various reforms exercises that is being carried out in most public organizations so as to make them efficient. Productivity in public organization entails the attainment of predetermined goals with minimal expenditure of resources. Mali (1978:24) posited that productivity is the measure of how well resources of an organization are brought together and utilized for the accomplishment of a set of results. This means reaching the highest level of performance with the least expenditure of resources. By this therefore, it is not wrong for one to link productivity with performance management. Thus, performance management practices are linked to the productivity and performance. Performance measurement is an important tool to improve productivity and responsibility and almost all countries around the world have invested resources to implement this system.

Boyle (2006:6) described productivity as a measure of the amount of output generated per unit of input. In many countries, public sector productivity has been assumed to be zero in the national accounts. The output of the government sector has been measured as of value equal to the total value of inputs. Kalliola (2003:113) also argued that the legitimacy of public services is derived from the capacity to respond to the needs of citizens in an economically efficient way. That concise statement encapsulates the emerging consensus that, while public sector productivity involves efficiency and outputs, it also involves effectiveness and outcomes (Pritchard, 2003:33; Tolentino, 2004:3).

The productivity of the public sector is as important to the economic performance of a country as the productivity of the private sector. Thornhill (2006:3) identifies three main reasons why public sector productivity is important.

- **First,** the public sector is a major employer.
- **Second,** the public sector is a major provider of services in the economy, particularly business services (affecting costs of inputs) and social services (affecting labour quality).
- **Third,** the public sector is a consumer of tax resources.

Thus, changes in public sector productivity can have significant implications for the economy.

Public sector productivity measurement systems began by measuring efficiency – the ratio between quantity of output and quantity of input. Bouckaert (1990:6) relates the history of the public sector productivity "movements" to phases in prevailing models of public management, categorising the last century into four phases:

- "Government by the efficient," from 1900 to 1940, is the first phase when the important distinction between political and administrative roles were defined by Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson, and the approach to efficiency in public administration drew heavily upon the "scientific management" associated with the private sector with the work of Frederick Taylor, whose techniques set out to identify the single best way to carry out any particular function.
- "Government by administrators from 1940 to 1970 is the second phase and it marked a shift of focus from quality of government to control of expenditure.
- "Government by managers", is the third phase and this can be understood as a synthesis of the first two phases into a focus on getting "more bang for the public buck" (Bouckaert, 1990, cited in Green, 2004:11).
- The fourth phase, from 1980, "government by the private sector", can be seen in its turn as building on the third, not only by reinstating in modern form an idea that characterised the first (that private sector management techniques provide a model for the public sector), but also taking it a step further and actually transferring responsibility to the private sector or, failing that, restructuring the

public sector in ways that stimulate public managers to operate as though they were in the private sector.

The measurement of public sector productivity is clearly a challenging task. While there is a diversity of international experience to learn from, no simple solution to measuring public sector productivity has been found. In particular, the idea of deriving a single measure of productivity for the nation, a sector or an organisation is unrealistic. Any productivity measures developed need to be interpreted cautiously and combined with other information on performance to give a fuller picture (Boyle, 2006:32).

Performance Management and African Public Service: An Overview

The concept of performance management is somewhat new in the African public sector. Since the 1960s when many African countries attained independence, the preoccupation of governments has been the reform and revitalization of the public service. At least three broad reform tendencies are discernible. The first is represented by the comprehensive review undertaken between the 60s and 70s of organization structures, management practices, and incentive systems. The second wave of reform began in the late 1970s up to the 1980s with the implementation of belt-tightening structural adjustment measures (Balogun, 2011:2). According to him, a carefully articulated performance management strategy is indispensable to the success of efforts at sustaining the on-going democratisation process and turning the economy around. Fortunately, many African countries particularly, Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda are no strangers to strategic visioning.

African countries emerged from the Structural Adjustment Programmes SAPs era of the 1980s both strained and scorched by the several reforms in public sector management. Governments were encouraged to deregulate public enterprises and ensure that they are run like private sector business. The emphasis of this shift in public management was on maintaining a macro-economic stability, lowering inflation, cutting deficit spending and reducing the scope and cost of government (Therkildsen, 2001:2; World Bank, 1989:7). These challenges in the opinion Obong'o (2009:66) have led to introduction of New Public Management models in reform programmes of several, if not all public sector institutions in Africa.

Public service institutions are increasingly recognising that planning and enabling individual performance have a critical effect on institutional performance. It is therefore of paramount importance for institutions to remove outdated systems of performance appraisals and adopt the new performance management system which is able to help in linking institutional strategic objectives with individual performance targets. As a result, performance management has been introduced in the African public service with the intentions of monitoring, reviewing, assessing performance, developing underperformers, and recognising and rewarding good performance. Although performance management is relatively unknown in many African countries, the interest in such an improvement tool is growing among African organisations and in specific African countries (André, 2007:4). According to Bologun (2003:9), failure to implement the changes in Africa were and are still mainly due to dependence of reform initiatives on external push and inspiration; the disconnection between the reform programmes' performance, productivity, and efficiency thrusts, on the one hand, and the leaders' preoccupation with the capture and retention of power and authority, on the other; and failure to construct a performance and productivity management infrastructure to support and sustain reform efforts.

This article therefore gives a synopsis of performance management systems in some African countries and its impacts on productivity and effective service delivery in the continent.

In Egypt, there is a trend in many manufacturing organisations to combine financial and nonfinancial measures because there is growing awareness that sole reliance on financial data is no longer effective for an organisation. Despite this growing awareness, performance management systems are not widespread yet in Egypt, and many Egyptian public sector organisations are still using traditional financial measures like return on investment and return on assets (Abdel-Aziz; Dixon, and Ragheb, 2005:4).

In Nigeria a major component of the reform programme is the need to transform the Nigerian public service into a performance and results-oriented service. Some key features of the Nigerian performance management system include periodic ministerial press briefings at stakeholder fora to enable stakeholder assessment of the achievements of various ministries, and monitoring of project implementation and annual institutional performance reporting. Individual performance appraisal is considered to be subjective and focused on promotion rather than on measuring outcomes as it excludes performance assessment of Directors and Permanent Secretaries.

Performance Management in the Botswana Public Service is premised on Vision 2016, which recognises the importance of improving the performance of the public service in the implementation of policies as well as reforming the public service. A holistic performance management system was introduced around 1999 as an instrument to enable the whole of Government Ministries and Departments to work towards optimum delivery of services to the nation (Seychelles, 2009:17). In Zimbabwe, all government departments, local government institutions, and most private companies are using zero-based budgeting systems. Zimbabwe is trying its best to catch up with the rest of the world in the area of leading-edge performance management systems. The country has the advantage that it hosts many transnational companies which are already applying the latest performance management systems. These companies can serve as an example for Zimbabwean organisations (Nhemachena, 2004:8).

Performance management in Namibia was introduced soon after independence in 1990, with Merit Assessment used to evaluate the performance of junior officers and Efficiency Rating used to evaluate performance of senior officers. This was replaced by a Performance Appraisal System in 1996, which was suspended in 1998 due to lack of supporting organisational culture and insufficient training in the system. To ensure successful implementation of the new performance management system, between 2005 and 2007, the Government of Namibia trained senior managers, ministerial implementation teams and facilitators who were responsible for training the rest of public servants. The Government of South Africa sees performance management as an instrument for service delivery and for facilitating achievement of national development priorities. The need for fundamental change in the South African Public Service was identified at independence in 1994. As noted by Seychelles (2009:14), the major lessons learnt from the South African experience with performance management are:

- Performance by and large is linked to the behaviour and attitudes of the employee and the focus of any performance management system should be to change such attitudes and behaviours which do not enhance performance.
- The dominance of the monetary issue in performance management is viewed as one of the major contributing factors to the absence of strong performance culture.

- The introduction of foreign and complex performance management systems and tools like the Balanced Scorecard and other technology-driven systems have produced little in the way of outcome improvements. The development of appropriate home-grown methodologies which speak to the contextual factors of countries may provide the solution.
- Departments with strong leadership and management had stronger stability in staff retention and organisational culture and were also the ones doing well in performance management and the application of the Performance Management and Development System. It is therefore not the performance management system that improves performance but rather sound management practices and sound performance management that focuses on improving the application of skills and competencies as well as relevant behaviour and attitudes towards work.

It is important to note that performance management has been introduced in the South African public service with the intentions of monitoring, reviewing, assessing performance, developing underperformers, and recognising and rewarding good performance.

In Kenya, performance management was traditionally defined as the process of financial control, in which the mission and strategy are translated into budgets, and subsequently results are compared with budgets. Those organisations that have done so show much better performance than their "scorecardless" competitors (Malinga, 2004). The current performance management system for the Gambia is focusing more on staff appraisal using a tool that still requires improvement. The performance management has had limited success due to a number of challenges:

i. evaluation criteria given the absence of adequate performance baseline data resulting from non-existent job descriptions, terms of reference and certain schemes of service;

ii. lack of expertise;

iii. subjectivity – confidential nature of forms and lack of performance targets;

iv. the system was non-developmental;

v. lack of adequate funding;

vi. stiff resistance to the system from staff; and

vii. the Maslaha syndrome – a tendency to avoid alienating others – especially in the workplace, resulting in flat ratings for all employees (Seychelles, 2009:14).

Performance management in the Malawian public service involves a structured but flexible approach to improving the performance of employees and the organisation as a whole. However, the system had several limitations as it did not serve any useful purpose of improving individual, team and organisational performance. The Civil Service Review Commission of 1985, Civil Service Reform Programmes (1994-2001), the Public Sector Management Reform Programme (2002-2006) and the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy all pointed to the need for an objective and open performance management system. In Ethiopia, there are some developments for the benefit of performance management. More and more Ethiopian enterprises are expressing a strong interest in performance management techniques, their managers are starting to acknowledge the importance of regular formal and informal performance review meetings, communication about results is being improved by applying modern means of communication like the intranet, people are willing to train in the use of performance management, and government is fostering the improvement of performance (Tessema, 2005:49).

Olowu (2009:4) identified four key challenges of performance management in Africa as:

- lack of a common vision or lack of communication of a leadership vision;
- non-alignment of people strategies to organisational strategy;
- managers focusing on short-term issues rather than long-term issues; and
- failure of public sector organisations to link budgets to strategy.

It is important to note therefore that performance management systems in Africa are more or less obsolete; as a result, there is little or no accountability of staff with regard to their performance which makes it difficult to be able to measure the overall performance in relation to its strategic objectives. The challenges facing the Africa region on the socio-economic and political fronts clearly point to the need for sustained effort in the area of performance management. This is inevitable considering the growing popular dissatisfaction with government performance. It is now generally believed that government should work like a business and there should be proper accountability, that is, if government programmes are not working, we should get rid of them. Thus, there is a growing interest in "evidenced-based" government in developing countries, including Africa.

Conclusion

Performance management is a tool meant to improve performance and productivity in the public service. In Africa, performance management is yet to be fully institutionalized as the way of doing business in the public sector compared to what is obtainable in the West and other advanced countries like China. Though remarkable attempts have been made but a lot remains to be done to address Organizational, Technical and Behavioural factors that determine its success. Effective performance management in the public service requires specific tools and deliberate measures. Africa has not made significant achievement in recognizing the need to ensure that performance in the public service institutions is monitored and evaluated by using a number of management tools and installing them in all government departments. Much as installation of the performance management tools is important, it is also imperative to ensure that the performance management systems is continuously institutionalized in the public service in order to pave the way for creating and attaining a performance culture in the entire public service (Bana, 2009:16).

In keeping with the international best practice, most countries have adopted the New Public Management models. It can be concluded undoubtedly that performance management process has been institutionalised and mainstreamed in Public Service Institutions that is expected to establish greater accountability and commitment for results. The mere fact that NPM was imposed on Africa is adequate to justify its failure. Africa lacked political will to implement NPM principles; hence emphasis was given to some principles of NPM as compared to others depending on the implementing country. Attempts to improve performance have failed to yield results due to lack of funding, administrative incapacity and corruption among other reasons. Underfunding of government departments has also contributed to the departments' inability to implement NPM principles. African countries also lack technology as well as the administrative capacity to use the technology for monitoring of civil servants' performance (Zungura, 2014:252). Performance management must be viewed as an ongoing series of models, frameworks, guidelines, tools and most importantly, the mindset or inculcating a culture for institutional and individual performance to be assessed.

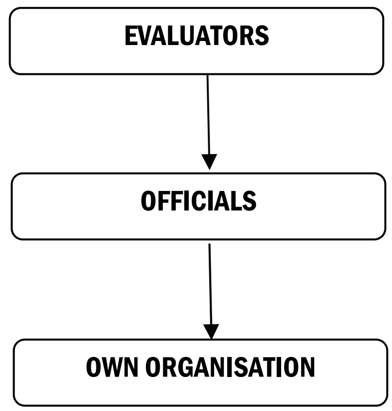
Suggestions for improvements

Having examined the performance management systems in Africa, its contexts, rationale and shortcomings in achieving productivity in the public sector. The article therefore recommends the following.

The weak performance of the public administrative systems in Africa was also due to increased dependency on donors for implementation of development plans. As regards performance of African public administration systems, it is evident that it leaves a lot to be desired in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, repositioning public administration is a crucial reform for governments in African countries. Although reforming public administration is a crucial aspect of post-conflict reconstruction, it is also one of the most complex and difficult aspects of restoring governance. The success of public sector reforms has been mixed, even in countries with legitimate, stable, and mature governments. Restructuring bureaucracies and reforming the civil service has usually been a politically contentious long-term process, frequently moving by fits and starts, achieving some objectives and failing at others. The African administrative system should operate like their counterparts in the developed world to provide technical advice and guidance to the political leadership regarding the most appropriate ways and means to address and contain crisis; and forge ahead with development related activities.

It is also important for African countries to embrace a change in emphasis by using performance management as a management tool for performance improvement. Government officials should look down to see how they can use performance measurement to improve productivity of their organizations.

Change in focus



In addition, the following research questions are germane in assessing the performance within the African context.

- How do senior government officials react to newly established central/federal government or party performance measurement?
- How do the lower levels of government react to these measures?
- Is there any variance in transparency of performances across policy areas/or jurisdiction?
- If yes, what explain this?

African public services need to put more emphasis on productivity. This can be done by adopting the enabling factors, and avoiding the inhibiting ones, in addition to adopting the recommendations made in this article.

It is important to note that if improvement activities in the area of performance management are not accompanied by the fostering of performance driven behaviour, which includes managers being a role model by regularly addressing performance management, public sector organisations in Africa will have a tough time fulfilling their potential. In this regard, public sector organisations in Africa can learn a lot from Western countries which have been wrestling with this issue for over two decades now. Productivity in African public service can be increased if deliberate attempts are made to address the issues bothering on performance amongst the workforce. Improving productivity of the public service in Africa is urgent because of serious weaknesses in the capacity of public administration either to carry out government policies or to deliver public services efficiently and effectively.

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