

IMPLEMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PMS) IN SCHOOLS: SUCCESS FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

The study interrogated the implementation of a performance management system in Gaborone secondary schools in Botswana which the aim of suggesting factors that could contribute to its successful implementation. The study adopted a qualitative approach using one on one interviews and observations for data collection targeting members of the staff development committee in the thirteen (13) junior secondary schools in Gaborone. Snowball sampling was used to select participants and in all, thirty four (34) teachers were interviewed. Before coding, the data collected was subjected to interpretive validity by sharing interpretations with participants.

To ensure intra researcher reliability, data was coded twice realizing a high consistency between the two codings. The coded data was then divided into meaningful units. Relationships between units were extracted to come up with meaningful conclusive themes that described success factor for implementation of PMS in Gaborone secondary schools. The study revealed that design and implementation, effective communication and feedback, motivation and clear assessment strategy are essential for the success of PMS.

KEYWORDS: Implementation, Performance Management System, Success Factors

INTRODUCTION

Performance Management System (PMS) is a system used to enhance employees productivity through managing their performance (Poister, 2003). The system was implemented in Botswana public service from 1999 as a result of recommendations from the evaluations of other performance improvement initiatives that failed to yield the desired results. The main aim of PMS is to improve service delivery within the public service. Specifically, PMS intends to improve accountability, performance, communication, efficiency and productivity among civil servants. It was introduced with the conviction that it will resolve problems in the different ministries and departments some of which were; inadequate planning and management of projects resulting in unforeseen costs, resource wastage and inconsideration to the public's needs.

In schools, teachers and their supervisors begin the PMS process by entering into annual performance agreements, referred to as performance development plans (PDP), with set goals and targets to achieve. During the course of the year, supervisors assesses the progress of the teachers three times. The PMS system is also supported by a Performance Based Reward System (PBRS) which sets to provide incentives for good performance (<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/AAPAM/UNPAN031850.pdf> Retrieved 17/10/2012).

Despite PMS, performance in schools continues to decline. The President of Botswana lamented on the decline during his 2011 state of the nation address, “I must candidly report that the exams performance of pupils in our public schools continues to disappoint. There was a slight decline in the 2010 Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) when compared to 2009; performance at the Junior Certificate level remained virtually the same, at the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) level, results declined for the fifth year in a row.” (<http://www.gov.bw/en/News/State-of-the-Nation-Address-to-the-3rd-Session-of-the-10th-Parliament>). This study is therefore an attempt to come up with factors that can lead to the success of PMS as perceived by teachers in Gaborone junior secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mothusi (2008) conducted a qualitative cased study to develop an understanding of PMS in Botswana and factors that supported and hindered its implementation. The study targeted public servants in the Ministries of Local Government and Lands and Housing. The study revealed that PMS improved the planning capacity of the two ministries employees, enabling them to monitor and account for their performance. In- service training was singled out as a factor that contributed to the success of PMS, especially in the Ministry of Lands and Housing.

Though PMS enabled the majority of public servants to plan, monitor and account for their performance, organizational culture affected the implementation of PMS negatively as some of the leaders did not understand the system and thus were not able to guide their subordinates towards realizing the goals of the system. In addition, the study observed that some supervisors use PMS as a punitive tool and deserving employees were not fully rewarded, something that demotivates employees.

Similarly, Monyatsi (2009) analyzed mechanisms and procedures that facilitate effective teacher appraisal in Botswana schools. PMS mechanisms and procedures in place were seen to be inadequate for effective management and implementation of the system. Both the appraisees and appraisers lacked adequate training on the appraisal process. A strong appraisal process serve as a feedback platform for both PMS and PBRS hence the teacher and the supervisor must be well trained on the process. Lack of mutual understanding of the appraisal process can lead to disagreements between the teacher and supervisor, leading to unproductivity in the work place.

In another related study, Aksal, Atamtürk, Atamtürk, Zehra and Gazi (2011) evaluated performance management system in state schools in Cyprus. The purpose of the study was to assess perceptions of teachers and headmasters regarding quality control of schools through performance management. Analysis of the results revealed that teachers in the schools with PMS needed to go through a participatory planning process to set their goals in terms of each school's individual and cultural structure. Continuous feedback, in-service training, employees commitment and motivation were also singled out as critical to the success of PMS. Recognition, feedback, supervisor training and participation in planning and performance review meetings by teachers could also enhance the success of a PMS system for teachers (Aslam, Noor, Rasheed and Yousaf, 2011)

The rigidity and universality of the PMS system make it less suitable to an education setting. Performance targets are agreed and sealed at the start of a performance year and teachers are expected to implement their performance plan with little or no room for flexibility and innovativeness. Marobela and Andrae-Marobela (2013) in their study on Neo-liberation of education, argue that academic work cannot be standardized and quantified.

The PMS system is also viewed as discouraging innovativeness as it has little or no room for unplanned/unintended results (Marobela and Mawere, 2011). An evaluation of the Department of Tribal Administration PMS system in Botswana attributed PMS failure to lack of feedback, poor leadership and difficulties in implementing the system (Monnaesi, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

The study implored a qualitative design and targeted teachers in the staff development committees from thirteen (13) junior secondary schools in Gaborone. Snowball sampling was used to select study participants. Snowballing is a form of purposive sampling that uses non-probability techniques to select participants (Campbell and Holland, 2005). With snowballing, one information rich participant is identified and requested to identify others to partake in the study. For the study, the chairpersons of the staff development committees in each school were identified who then identified other participants from the committee. In all, thirty four (34) teachers participated in the study and all of them had more than a year experience as members of staff development committee and over four years of teaching experience.

Data was collected through one on one interviews with the aid of an audio tape. To ensure interpretive validity, data interpretations were shared with participants. In qualitative research, interpretive validity is concerned with the accuracy of presenting meanings as portrayed by participants. At the end of the interviews, data was coded into meaningful themes. The data was coded twice and a high consistency between the two codings was realized, ensuring reliability of the codes obtained. Data was then divided into meaningful units. Relationships between units were then extracted to come up with meaningful themes that described success factor for implementation of PMS in Gaborone junior secondary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Study findings points to four main success factors for PMS being, design and implementation, effective communication and feedback, motivation and a clear assessment strategy. These factors are interrelated and are not stated or discussed in particular order of importance.

Design and Implementation

Almost all teachers interviewed felt that PMS is poorly designed and implemented in schools. Many were of the view that professions differ hence government should not adopt an assimilative approach for PMS. The feeling was that the system should be customized to the teaching profession. This is supported by Reid, (2010), who urged that PMS is not one size fits all; a performance management system designed for a business entity is different from that suitable for a school. Teachers interviewed felt that implementation and monitoring of PMS including continuous capacity building of teachers on the system, requires a full time staff member. Currently, teachers responsible for PMS also do day to day teaching hence they divide their time between teaching and PMS. This part time teaching and PMS coordination by PMS coordinators makes them ineffective in both sphere (teaching and PMS coordination). Government also changes PMS from time to time within short intervals. This changes affect implementation as when teachers are about to master one version of the system, a new one is introduced hence the system remains forever new to teachers.

Effective Communication and Feedback

Timely and regular feedback is crucial for any performance management system. It is very important for the supervisor and the supervisee to regularly discuss PMS issues outside the stipulated three times a year review period.

The meeting could be teacher or supervisor initiated. Dzimbiri (2008) urges that constant and effective communication vertically and horizontally are crucial for ensuring productivity. It is important for supervisor to conduct thorough performance reviews during a performance year. However, given the high teacher supervisor ration, the reviews are done in a hurry and in some instance, done only once. The review must be followed by immediate constructive feedback that will help the teacher to improve. Teacher feel that review feedback is not communicated on time and most of it is not construction but rather punitive. It is centered on communicating weakness of the teachers without suggesting remedies. Respondents stated that occasional visits from the regional and ministerial staff responsible for PMS would be welcome to provide feedback on the progress being made by schools and to have a face to face interaction with teachers. The visits would present a platform for teachers to directly voice any concerns or seek clarifications about the PMS.

Motivation

Teachers expect to be recognized for their hard work as promises through PBRs. The reward system acts as a motivator to perform. Though most teachers would appreciate a monetary reward, a non-monetary reward in the form of trophies, certificates, letters of appreciation and outings could also be appreciated. Respondents feel that PMS ignores the overall welfare of teachers. Teachers are already demotivated as a result of issues related to accommodation, salaries, lack of teaching resources and hours of operation. They feel that the extent of the general welfare of teacher contributes significantly to students results hence for PMS to succeed; issues related to teacher welfare should be addressed. Resources should also be availed for PMS related activities like trainings. For an initiative like PMS which is not fully supported by teachers, for motivation purposes, trainings ought to be taken to a different refreshing environment not like the current setup where such as held in school libraries.

Clear Assessment Strategy

Teacher who participated in the study urged that students are in themselves human beings and not easily controllable subjects. Their performance is influenced by multiple variables some of which are outside the control of a teacher. Teachers are also assessed on personal attributes and interpretation of such differs across supervisors and schools. Teachers feel that PMS component on teachers attributes is very subjective and some supervisors use it to settle personal scores. They recommended more training of supervisors on the assessment of personal attributes. Some attributed the assessment subjectivity to poor leadership hence the feeling is that leadership training must be mainstreamed into PMS. Luckheenarain (2009) also urges that lack of assessor training can lead to subjective assessment which could pose a challenge to effective implementation of a performance management system. The final assessment score is sent to the regional office with supporting documents and is used by the regional office when promoting teachers. Due to bias and subjective assessment, some non-performing teachers end up being promoted at the expense of performing ones.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though PMS is faced with implementation challenges, teachers interviewed appreciated the need for a system like PMS that could be used to measure their performance. However, the feeling is that the system should be redesigned to suit the school environment and not the current one size fit all approach. For better implementation and monitoring, teachers responsible of PMS should not do day to day teaching as combining PMS coordination with teaching compromises its effective implementation.

Effective communication and timely feedback are also important success factors for a performance management system like PMS as they are formative and help teachers to continuously improve their processes towards achieved their set objectives. Working conditions for teachers should be improved as this can motivate them to produce more. The assessment approach should be balanced and objective taking into account that teachers do perform or are assigned other duties during the course of the year which would not be part of the performance plans. Based on the views expressed by the respondents, the study recommends the following:

- Government should consider redesigning PMS to suit the teaching profession
- A PMS communication and feedback strategy should be developed
- PMS reward system should be implemented fully as a motivation strategy
- PMS good practices should be documented to serve as a reference teachers.
- To curb assessment bias, teachers the regional office staff should make regular monitoring visits to school to verify the PMS scores sent to them against supporting documents.
- PMS assessment should be standard across assessors and school hence training of supervisors on assessment and quality assurance should be scaled up
- The assessment rubric should be improved to assess teaching in totality and reward unplanned teaching milestones.
- The formative assessment aspect of PMS must be improved as that has a bearing on summative assessment

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