

Factors affecting effective implementation of performance management system in South African Municipalities

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Abstract: The institutional framework for implementing performance management system in the Gauteng Province's Johannesburg and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities is covered in Chapter Three. Chapter 7 of the Constitution of 1996 establishes three categories for local government, specifically, local municipalities (Category B), districts (Category C), and metropolitan areas (Category A). Provincial municipalities, also known as metropolitans in each region, have sole jurisdiction over local government and legislation, according to the 2017 reports of the Statistics South Africa. They are found in significant, densely populated regions with stable, intricate, and varied economies. It is argued that the district municipalities are responsible for planning and allocating resources among the local municipalities and cooperating with other branches of government. The study used a literature and document review to compile information on performance management systems in South African municipalities. The study used secondary data to compile information. No interviews and questionnaires form part of the study, hence there was no human interaction recorded. This statement meets the requirements of research ethics as information is compiled from the sources available in public domain. The information was assessed through document analysis. The aim of the study is to explain what are the factors that may hamper the effective implementation of performance management system at local governance level. The study identifies various challenges linking to performance management such as training, commitment from higher management, awareness, cultural change, to state a few. Based on the findings, the article suggests various interventions to improve the implementation status quo of performance management systems.

Keywords: Municipalities, performance management, qualitative, South Africa.

Introduction

Viedge and Conidaris (2011:44) state that performance is an action with process-associated perception before it; there is a purpose to such an action or activity. Performance of the organisation depends on proper utilisation of the available resources including human resources. Performance is defined as what workers say and do. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:108) define performance management as a system of connected pieces meant to produce the best possible outcomes. Armstrong (2004 in Mello 2020:128) is of the view that for the system to function, planning, goal setting, monitoring, feedback, performance evaluation, review, underperformance strategies, and coaching are all required. Elizabeth (2016:234) defines a performance management system as a holistic approach to improving organisational performance and productivity. It is premised on the assumption that the employees in an organisation, regardless of position or decision-making level, can come to understand how they contribute to organisational goals and that all activities within organisations can be analysed to determine how they either contribute to or detract from the achievements of organisational ends. According to Selden, Ingraham, and Jacobson (2001, in Elizabeth (2016:234), it is also important to consider that the performance appraisals of an individual, workgroup, or department would serve as separate components of a performance management system.

Performance management provides the following benefits in the public sector due to its achievements in the private sector: Greater understanding regarding roles and goals, support and encouragement for achieving goals, direction and help for maximising potential, an independent and unbiased basis for monitoring performance, and the ability to participate in the process with advanced knowledge and preparation time (Demirkol 2013:28). These advantages motivate public servants to improve service availability further, thereby advancing public welfare (Armstrong, 2004:29).

Multiple approaches advocate how improving government performance might be accomplished. The new public management (NPM) paradigm evolved in the 1980s as a consequence of limitations related to finances, accountability, and government reform (Cloete 2014:14). Performance measurement is a significant instrument for government management, and NPM highlights this (Bouckaert & Van Dooren 2003:127).

As opposed to the other theories of public administration, NPM places a higher value on effectiveness and outcomes through smarter public budget management. It is stated to be done by introducing competition, as it is known in the private sector, to public sector organisations, focusing on economic and leadership principles. With citizens acting as shareholders, NPM recognises those who receive public services as clients (Cloete 2014:14).

In the years that followed, NPM came under scrutiny for failing to adequately manage the complexity of problems, limiting the role of citizens to that of a consumerist and individual, and not connecting plans and policies among agencies and sectors in addition to internal goals (Bovaird & Löffler 2002:15). However, the goal of NPM has widened to include modernising or changing public sector procedures to render them more economical, efficient, or market related. Accurate performance data is advisable to facilitate the application of management tools intended to improve organisational performance, as recommended by the NPM method Hatry (1999 in Bouckaert & Van Dooren 2003:128).

Since it highlights regular events that are widely acknowledged as public sector changes, NPM is recognised as an academic viewpoint in public administration. It is further seen as a paradigm change from the previous model of public administration to a new method of providing services to the public sector. Even if public governance has replaced NPM as a model, NPM has brought performance management to the public sector (Robinson 2015:7).

However, according to Cameron (2009:912) performance management is still in place. It aims to promote responsible public governance. It is a unique group of concepts that can be categorised mainly into groups, using market processes, privatisation, and private-public partnerships, along with private management. Levy (2010:234) suggests that NPM has ruled public administration theory and practice for the past 20 years.

According to Robinson (2015:7) the concept of NPM describes several innovative strategies that surfaced in public management and administration in the 1980s in various organisation for economic cooperation and development (OECD) member nations. He adds that the incapacity of traditional public administration to adapt to the needs of a market economy with competition gave rise to NPM. Molokwane (2019:49) adds that Sub-Saharan African nations implemented the NPM programmes later as part of their public sector reform in the 1990s.

These initiatives sought to modernise and boost the public sector's effectiveness and competitiveness. Scholars largely agree that the NPM has the strategic possibility to improve public sector performance substantially. However, many differ on what the NPM suggests establishing in the public sector (Newman 2008:100).

As a result, and for this study, the primary theoretical basis of performance management in the public sector has been established in NPM.

Materials and Methods

In most studies, scholars are responsible for posing thought-provoking questions that help their search and offer potential solutions to the research topic they are addressing. Consequently, this results in developing a primary research question and subsequent secondary questions that stem from it (George Mason University Writing Center 2018: Internet Source). The main question that form part of the study is "What are the challenges facing performance management in South African municipalities?" The qualitative research approach is used in the study to gather relevant information. When understood thoroughly, qualitative research is a systematic scientific study that aims to create a thorough, mainly narrative description (Astalin 2013:118). This study utilised a qualitative (exploratory) research approach to obtain sufficient information to realise its outcomes. This is exclusively due to the study's goal of comprehending the performance management system in the organisational performance plans of South African municipalities. Exploratory data was applied to explore new concepts, and descriptive research was conducted to strengthen the findings. While descriptive research focuses on collecting information that characterises a problem

early in the research process, exploratory research is conducted to define and clarify the problem (Manerikar & Manerikar 2014:1). This study used an exploratory research design to explore an effective and efficient performance management system that can foster organisational improvement in South African municipalities.

The study employed literature review to compile information. According to Greyling (2014:49) a great literature review cultivates critical thinking and creates a theoretical framework for the planned study by bringing the reader into the conversation with the academic papers and discussions on the topic. Additionally, the study used several institutional and organisational papers as information sources. The textual data was used and to mitigate the internal bias, diverse sources of information were considered to compile information. In line with this, Bowen (2009:7) defines a document review, as a type of qualitative research where the researcher interprets documents to provide context and voice for an evaluation issue. Document analysis, which is the assessment of documents pertinent to the subject under investigation (Bowen 2009:27) was used in this study. Validity and reliability are both significant in qualitative research. Validity refers to the sincerity and acceptability of the methods and the accuracy with which study outcomes portray the data. Reliability represents the consistency of the analytical techniques used (Long & Johnson 2000:30). While qualitative validity argues that the researcher follows specific processes to ensure the findings are accurate, qualitative reliability demonstrates that the researcher's technique is consistent across multiple researchers and projects (Gibbs 2007 in Creswell 2009:190).

Results and Discussion

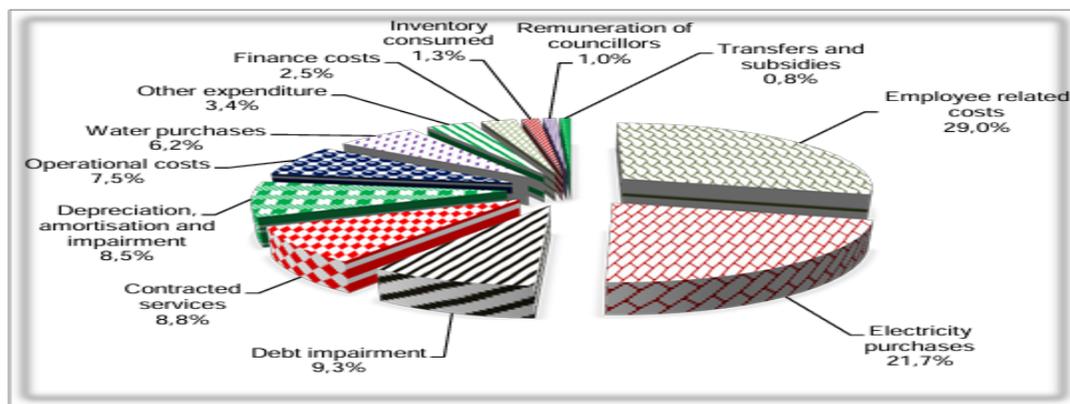
The literature compiled in this section explores the following: the conceptual framework of performance management; and challenges hampering the effective implementation of performance management system. Policymakers and strategic role-players can find value in the article's recommendations for implementing a well-executed performance management system in government departments, organisations, and local government entities.

Conceptual framework of performance management

According to Weiss and Hartle (1997:124) performance management measures how workers are doing, and these lead to discussions that invigorate employees and produce innovative thoughts that will assist the organisation's advancement. Managers who use effective performance management guidance on areas where employees can grow will enable employees to realise their full potential.

However, it is also related to the manner municipalities are generating revenue to run the affairs of the local authorities, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Municipal operating expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2021¹



¹The sum of percentages might not add up to 100% due to rounding off of figures

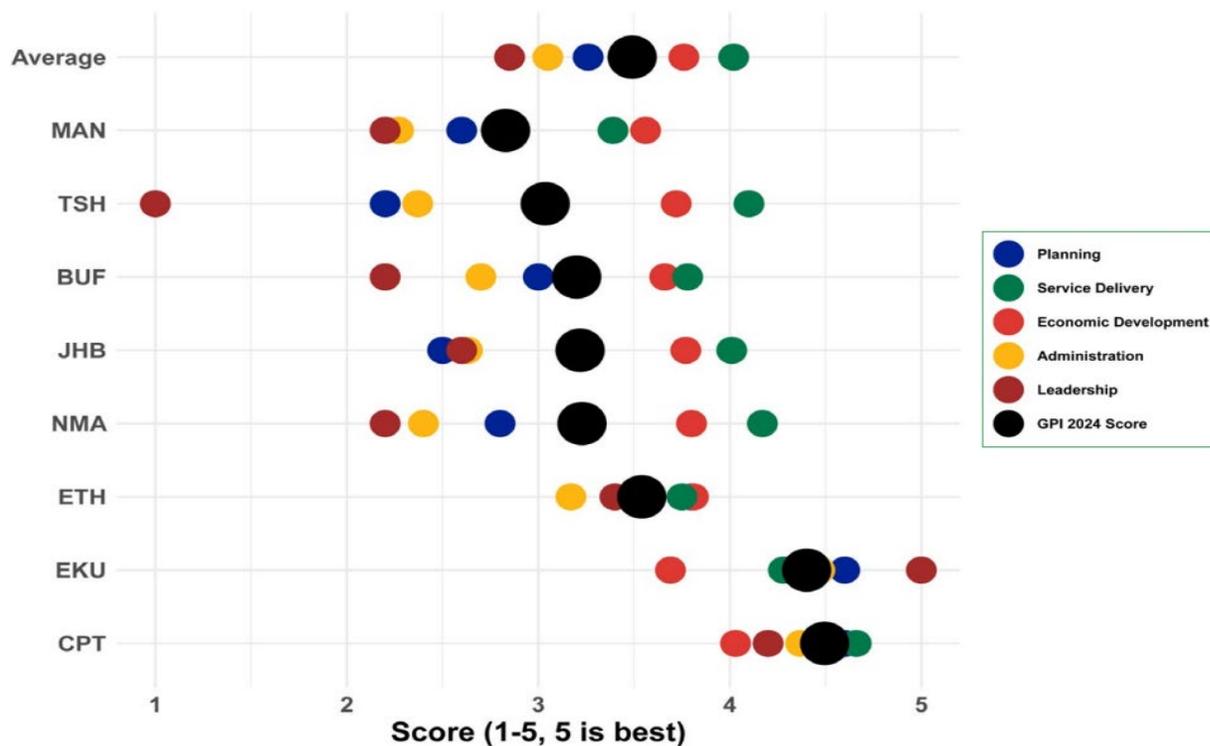
Source: Statistics South Africa. 2022:5.

Effective personnel are therefore encouraged to be professional and disciplined in all areas, with financial management being the most important. Businesses conform to recent trends in the international business sector, and management structures perform specific duties that encourage advancements in organisation (Campbell & Stanley 1983:76).

However, Rossi and Freeman (1985:19) state that enhancing individual employee performance and, as a result, the whole organisation's growth is the primary goal of performance management. When performance management is used properly, employees' faults will be discovered, solutions will be offered, and workers' successes will be recognised. Giving employees suggestions about their roles within the organisation will have a direct impact on their performance and an indirect impact on the organisation. The organisation will have a better future because of research and performance management, which oversees current issues and takes precautionary steps against new ones.

In this regard, the Figure 2 shows the various tasks a metropolitan municipality performs, and the performance level recorded for all in 2024.

Figure 2: Metropolitan municipality Governance Performance Index (GPI) 2024 scores



MAN: Mangaung

TSH: City of Tshwane

BUF: Buffalo City

JHB: City of Johannesburg

NMA: Nelson Mandela Bay

ETH: City of eThekweni

ECU: City of Ekurhuleni

CPT: City of Cape Town

Source: Good Governance Africa (GGA) 2024:13.

The services can be delivered efficiently, and performance can be recorded at a satisfactory level, when the personnel performing these tasks are skilled. Any organisation should frequently aspire to grow its employees since they join to improve their line of work, and the organisation has a responsibility to mentor and support these individuals as they become more skilled and effective. This is best accomplished when an organisation has well-executed performance

management, and all employee inefficiencies have been identified and suitably addressed. Performance management is, therefore, a crucial component of effective organisational planning (Rose & Kumar 2006:22).

Figure 2 shows that the City of Johannesburg (case-study used in this article) is struggling particularly in the categories of Administration & Governance, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Leadership & Management (GGA 2024:13).

Performance management is regarded as an essential communication technique that assists managers in establishing an environment that inspires employees to develop and meet high-performance standards (City of Johannesburg (CoJ) 2007:4). The CoJ has an IDP with goals, objectives, indicators, and targets that are in line with a system for performance management that is appropriate for the situation and available resources as per the Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000 (CoJ, 2007:4). It must encourage performance management within its political institutions, among its administration, political office holders, and council members (CoJ 2007:4).

The principal elements of this performance management system (CoJ 2007:4) are establishing quantifiable performance goals, selecting relevant KPIs, tracking performance, evaluating and assessing performance at least once a year, and implementing a routine reporting procedure.

According to the CoJ (2007:4), in its pursuit of realising its goal of being a world-class city in 2030, with the aim of enhancing the quality of services provided to its residents and optimising performance, it has put several systems and procedures in place. The city's performance management system, which was first created in June 2001, is one example of such a system. The Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000, the Municipal Structures Act, No. 117 of 1998, and the Municipal Structures Amendment Act of 2000 are among the relevant legislation that set forth the standards for this system at the time (CoJ 2007:4).

A couple of important performance management principles serve as the bedrock for the implementation of CoJ's performance management system. As per the CoJ (2007:5), the performance management system's conception and implementation are guided by the subsequent principles for effective performance management: setting clear goals, encouraging achievement with constructive criticism, emphasising coaching and growth, and guaranteeing delivery. Every employee is responsible for attaining service delivery excellence by consistently enhancing their performance and teamwork. The performance management process involves everyone being accountable for it; it is not just a way to allocate points. Those who perform well will be rewarded and acknowledged, and those who do not will face consequences (CoJ 2007:5).

Performance management in the CoJ involves planning, monitoring, and assessing organisational staff member performance. It is a layered process that commences with an overarching strategy (Weinbren 2013:18).

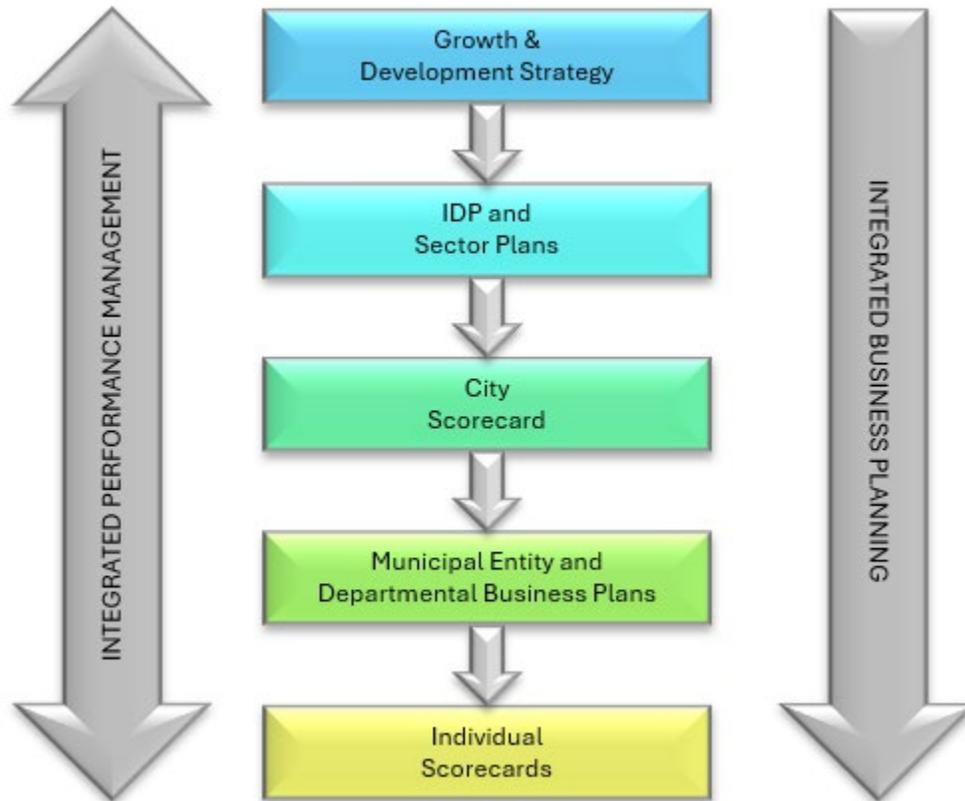
According to the CoJ (2007:5), several benefits of this multilevel approach are stated, such as individual, departmental, organisational, and citywide performance, all working cooperatively to make the city successful in providing for its citizens.

The implementation of an integrated strategy ensures that the city's overall performance priorities are communicated to all employees, enabling them to recognise their specific and significant role in supporting the CoJ in realising its strategic goals (CoJ 2007:5).

The system's structure is designed so that the organisational scorecard gathers the important performance areas and performance indicators from the citywide scorecard (for example, departmental and municipal scorecards), which then implies that it is ensured that there is a suitable alignment between individual and organisational performance by including it in the individual scorecard (CoJ 2007:5).

Within the CoJ, performance management is an aspect of a strategic management approach that seeks to guarantee that the organisation is led by strategy and that critical processes like budgeting, business planning, and performance management are linked. With this strategy, the CoJ can more effectively monitor and assess performance, plan, and budget more efficiently, and report on accomplishments clearly and compellingly (CoJ 2007:5).

Further, it outlines the IDP process and the three-tiered performance management approach, as outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Three-tiered approach to performance management

Source: City of Johannesburg, 2007:6

Furthermore, according to the CoJ (2007:6), the strategic planning procedure that establishes performance goals for the City of Johannesburg Group using information from the growth and development strategy, mayoral priorities, and the IDP is referred to as citywide performance management. Performance objectives are then tracked and measured using the city scorecard (CoJ 2007:6).

Organisational performance management is the process by which the city's performance objectives, as stated in the city scorecard, are reflected in the business plans of various departments and municipal bodies. Both the departmental business plan and the executive director scorecard serve to track departmental performance; however, not all departmental business plan information is on the executive director scorecard (CoJ, 2007:6). It would be helpful to include components of the business strategy in the various director scorecards from that department. The performance of municipal bodies is monitored through service delivery agreements and business plans (CoJ 2007:6).

Employee performance management is the process that enables planning, observing, reviewing, and rewarding of performance as well as improving personal growth at the level of each employee by removing the departmental goals as stated in scorecards at the departmental level within the city into individual scorecards (CoJ 2006:7).

The municipal entities are responsible for regulating their employees' performance, which is not covered by this policy (CoJ 2006:7).

Challenges hampering the effective implementation of performance management system

Poor service delivery in the CoJ results from the performance management system's improper design and inadequate execution (CoJ IDP 2004/2005:314).

Employees claim that because the system prioritises money awards and the organisation is unable to manage performance-related pay, non-financial benefits are not being investigated (Radebe et. al. 2015:95). These factors compromise the effectiveness of the BSC.

According to Radebe et al. (2015:96) the AG's audit results for the 2013/2014 fiscal year show improvement (on the implementation of the PFMA 2013/2014). Effective implementation strategies and improved management by the municipality's political and managerial leaders may be responsible for the improvement.

Radebe et al. (2015:96) further indicate that, however, the AG also raised concerns about the following matters:

- Not reviewing annual performance plans.
- The performance reports are not reliable.
- Unsatisfactory internal audit assessment of financial and performance information.
- Inability to follow the framework of the National Treasury.
- The cabinet-approved information technology governance framework is not being implemented with enough speed.
- An absence of performance management for employees except for senior management.

It is further argued in the IDP that the CoJ launched the balanced scorecard in the 2003/2004 fiscal year to strengthen its operating procedures and enhance service delivery (IDP 2004/2005:314).

Regrettably, the CoJ now employs the balanced scorecard without adequately incorporating essential processes like planning, incentivising, and nurturing human capital, which is essential for an efficient performance management system (IDP 2004/2005:314). There are issues in performance management systems implemented in business that are not recorded in the organisation (De Waal 2007:73).

Put differently, the literature on the execution of balanced scorecards and performance management systems in municipalities is limited (Manville 2007:62). The fact that behavioural performance characteristics that might hinder the effective operation of the performance system are far too frequently underestimated, which is a significant contributing factor to the poor success rate of adoption (Manville 2007:162).

An organisation's performance has to be examined in order for the performance management system to improve the quality of services provided. For instance, it has been reported that the CoJ, due to the inefficient use of a balanced scorecard and the performance management system, has only reduced the number of reported potholes by 65%, below the target of 75% (CoJ 2008:3).

The city must monitor the performance management system, given how performance management is changing. Changes to the current policy are part of the review process, which aims to guarantee comprehensive legal compliance and coordination of performance management throughout the city.

Result and discussion

Several challenges affect performance management. These include commitments from management and leadership, which are essential when implementing performance management system in an organisation. Senior management's involvement facilitates organisational restructuring and speeds up the organisation's change management process (Barrett, Balloun & Weinstein 2007:22).

Training and awareness remain another challenge associated with implementing good performance management systems because not all employees accept workplace-related changes. This means that effective communication between managers and their subordinates is essential for the organisation to fulfil its intended purpose. To this end, awareness and training are critical to successfully implementing performance management systems within an organisation (Johnson & Swisher 2003:251).

The challenges of performance management systems also incorporate cultural change. Customer contentment is the primary goal of every organisation, and one key component of that contentment is an understanding of work processes. As such, performance management implementation must be done in a manner that tracks employees' wants and needs (Hensley & Dobie 2005:7).

Another noteworthy challenge of performance management system is managing poor performance. The management of weak performance is usually a reactive action. It is often postponed, and it becomes challenging to have a relevant conversation as a result. The absence of accurate measurements and the failure to gather the necessary supporting documentation and measurement data are other reasons why poor performance is not promptly regulated (Mabe, Mello & Makamu 2023:250).

A comprehensive approach that ensures alignment, planning, and good management of performance systems can provide solutions to these performance management system challenges (Mabe et. al. 2023:250). Municipalities need to consider essential components that must be considered for performance management to be properly implemented, such as training. Fletcher (1997:92) states that the emphasis on training significantly impacts the effectiveness of performance management. Through performance training, people, in general, will have a greater comprehension of the goal and architecture of the system in addition to its reasoning.

It is further indicated that performance management training makes explaining the various forms easier. The facilitator should introduce each component by outlining the benefits of a performance management system and why it is a crucial activity (Fletcher 2008:92).

Latham, Almost, Mann & Moore (2005:79) state that performance management training should not be limited to staff members. Maintaining objectivity and accuracy should also be a part of management training. Managerial training demonstrates a strong level of system commitment. Supervisor and subordinate training are discussed below.

Supervisor training: Fletcher (2008:101) observes that the dimensions on which the appraisees are to be evaluated should be represented in the training, tasks should be provided to assist in accurately identifying and evaluating the behaviour pertinent to each dimension for course participants, and the primary evaluation/rating problems should be listed. In support, Decenzo and Robbins (2010:25) highlight that providing supervisors with training reduces frequent mistakes like leniency, inaccuracy, and inconsistency. Jorm and Agere (2000:6) add that the information used in the training should cover subject matter such as creating a work plan, completing and using forms correctly, developing skills, handling and improving poor performance, conducting appraisal interviews, and the rewards and principles of performance management for the intended outcome to be achieved.

Subordinate training: A study by Ravhura (2006:34) reveals that it is imperative that subordinates undergo performance management training. Employees who are aware of the system's potential to enhance service delivery increase the probability that its implementation will be successful. The training materials must include information on handling criticism and the same content as the supervisor training (Fletcher 2008:103). Based on the information above, it is immediately apparent that employees require training to significantly contribute to successfully deploying a performance management system.

The study's contribution is that it tackles the call for additional research within the performance management system literature, which aims to enhance the system's design and implementation by taking a systematic and holistic approach and determining how the relationships between different performance management mechanisms affect the effectiveness of the system (Simons 2010:97).

From a theoretical point of view, this study's findings contribute to applying a systematic model of a performance management system and clarifying the holistic performance mechanism's (positive, negative, or neutral) contributions to the overall success of the control system. Even though the concepts and elements of performance management are widely recognised in the field of management control, this perspective offers a creative approach to its design and implementation (Neuman 2011:143).

Conclusion

This article addressed the purpose of local government and its constitutional mandate. Within their sphere of influence, municipalities have an important influence on the growth of the communities within their districts. Additionally, the frameworks for performance management and policies for the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Metropolitan Municipality was identified in this chapter. The municipality should assemble a performance management system for all employees and management. This study also addressed each policy's goal and role in achieving the municipalities' ultimate performance management system. Employers and employees are responsible for ineffective performance management systems in their respective municipalities. The municipalities must, therefore, provide training and education programmes for both managers and employees on the principles and practices of performance management. Significantly, senior management in municipalities should ensure everyone understands their tasks and roles within the performance management system. This can be achieved by offering modified or customised training to employees' specific needs and roles to improve overall organisational performance management. For example, junior employees may require a different level of detail compared to managers or supervisors. There were several barriers to overcome when the research study was prepared. The inadequate sources associated with the focus area of the study were a challenge. The study used documents as secondary sources, and access to them is sometimes restricted. This is a result of the two municipalities' current protocol measures. A few critical websites are inaccessible to guest visitors, meaning

reports and other helpful administrative documents could not be obtained from them. The study objectives and research questions were adhered to, and publicly available documents were used.

The textual data for the study was compiled using multiple sources of information to mitigate internal bias. The information was assessed through document analysis. The information reviewed and analysed was further summarised as key findings, stated under the section 'Results and Discussions'. The conclusion of findings resulted into the understanding that municipalities need to understand performance management as a system. Setting performance objectives that align with the department's strategic objectives, tracking and evaluating performance in the context of these goals, and identifying areas for improvement, which may include offering interventions such as training and rewarding employees who excel, are all common components of performance management. The conclusion drawn from secondary textual sources may assist municipal authorities to implement the proposed suggestions in their respective contexts ensuring to improve performance management system.

The research may be extended to include a comprehensive analysis in which the subsequent domains can be explored: the role of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) in improving performance management systems in South African municipalities. A more accurate assessment of the impact of digital developments would be possible due to the sophisticated nature of this research that aligns with the 4IR performance management systems at the municipal level.

Note

This article is based on an unpublished MA Minor Dissertation titled Machete, R. 2024- Assessment of the performance management system in South African municipalities at UJ under the supervision of Prof S Vyas-Doorgapersad. Unpublished Minor Dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

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