

Examining the Role of Results Based Management as a Performance Management Tool in Education: A Focus on Views and Perceptions of Teachers in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The evolution in management and leadership styles within organisations is meant to improve organisational performance and goal attainment. As such, management approaches have evolved over the years from human relations management approaches to scientific management approaches and to a combination of both approaches. The changes in management approaches were aimed at improving organisational behaviour and performance results. With this in mind different organisations have come up with different performance management practices. This has resulted in service organisations such as education borrowing performance management practices from other fields such as commerce and industry. Within this context the Public Service Commission in Zimbabwe adopted the performance appraisal system in education and other sectors that fall under its jurisdiction in 1995. The performance appraisal system was meant to evaluate and improve the performance of teachers within the education system in Zimbabwe. Performance appraisal within the Ministry of Education was used as a strategy to review and evaluate the performance of school teachers, school heads and other education officers within the ministry. It was also used for the purpose of promotion and the award of bonuses within the public service in Zimbabwe. Apart from improving performance within the civil service, the system was meant to increase accountability as it placed emphasis on outcomes. From the performance appraisal system introduced in the 1990s, the Public Service Commission introduced Results Based Management (RBM) in education and other sectors in 2005. The paper aimed at establishing the extent to which RBM had been used in performance management in education. It aimed at exploring the extent to which RBM could be used as a management tool in the civil service, with particular reference to the education sector in Zimbabwe as it sought to answer the question: To what extent has RBM contributed to an improvement in performance and service delivery in the civil service? The paper relied on different indicators of performance, and the views expressed by teachers who were studying with the Zimbabwe Open University at the time of the study. The study used the mixed methodology and the descriptive survey design. Data was generated from one hundred teachers in schools in Harare who responded to structured questionnaires and open-ended questionnaires. Data was quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. A number of challenges that impacted negatively on the attitudes of teachers on RBM were identified. The paper made conclusions and recommendations on the applicability of RBM as a management tool.

Keywords: Performance management; Performance appraisal; Results Based Management; Organisation.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Different management tools have been used in performance management. These include performance appraisal and Results Based Management (RBM). One of the areas that have seen a massive expansion in Zimbabwe since 1980 is education. This has culminated in the increase of schools and pupils enrolment. Such increases in the number of schools and enrolment had to be matched by an increase in the number of teachers and supervisors. Such needs had to be addressed as a matter of urgency so as not to compromise the quality of education. Such phenomenal growth was most likely

to impact on the management practices adopted from 1980. There had to be an evolution in the management practices in Zimbabwe in order to accommodate the new dispensation in education and management practices in education. The history of supervision and management in education has been characterised by the role of inspectors who were viewed as fault finders within the education institution. Such supervision and management involved information gathering, telling and directing teachers on what they were expected to do in relation to the statutory requirements. The advent of independence brought with it changes in management

practices in education. The posts of inspectors and schools managers were abolished soon after independence and Education Officers and District Education Officers took up the responsibilities of supervising and managing schools. Within the same context, in the 1990s performance appraisal was introduced as a performance management tool in the Public Service including education. Performance appraisal involved teachers and school heads observing and measuring performance and linking these with objectives and expected outcomes within the school set up.

Performance appraisal carried out with it tenets of democratic practices in education. This was in respect of how the manager and subordinates plan together, set objectives, and identify resources to achieve objectives. In addition to planning together the manager is expected to identify training needs and come up with capacity building strategies to help in the professional development of the subordinates. The use of new performance management tools meant that there was need to train teachers and school heads in the use of performance appraisal as a performance management tool. Efforts were made to train teachers and school heads in the operations of performance appraisal in education.

Statement of the Problem

Performance management is very critical in organisations. The importance of performance management has seen the Public Service in various countries adopt different performance management tools. These include Performance Appraisal system, Management by Objectives and Results Based Management among others. The major question is whether the adoption of these performance management tools has contributed to an improvement in the delivery of services in organisations such as education. If this has been the case complaints by clients and consumers could have been reduced to a minimal. The statement of the problem can therefore be expressed in question form: How do teachers view the role of Results Based Management as a performance management tool in education?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the views and perceptions of teachers on the role of Results Based Management (RBM) as a performance management tool in education.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To assess the main areas in performance management tools used in schools
- To determine the extent to which Results Based Management has improved the management of performance in education

- To examine the views and perceptions of teachers towards Results Based Management as a performance management tool
- To identify the challenges faced in the implementation of Results Based Management in schools

Research Questions

To find answers to the main research question, the researchers raised four research questions:

- What are the performance management tools used in schools?
- To what extent has Results Based Management improved the management of performance in education?
- What are the views and perceptions of teachers towards Results Based Management as a performance management tool in schools?
- What are the challenges encountered in the implementation of Results Based Management in schools?

Significance of the Study

Performance management remains crucial if an organisation is to achieve its intended goals regardless of whether it is a public or private organisation. The study contributes to the improvement of performance management systems in education. The issues that are raised can be of benefit to both policy makers and policy implementers.

Assumptions

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- That all teachers in registered schools in Zimbabwe had completed Results Based Management forms in their schools.
- That Results Based Management had not achieved its intended goals in schools.

Delimitations

The study focused on teachers in Harare who were studying with the Zimbabwe Open University, Harare/Chitungwiza Regional campus at the time of the study (January to June 2016 semester). It focused on the different requirements of Results Based Management and how school heads and teachers played their roles. It also focuses on the views and perceptions of teachers on Results Based Management in education.

Limitations

There were limitations of time and resources and as such the researchers had to use a research design that was cost effective. Respondents had to collect questionnaires when they had visited the Regional campus. As such not all prospective respondents were able to collect the questionnaires. The findings do not necessarily represent the views and perceptions of

teachers in Harare, but refer specifically to those who were able to collect and complete questionnaires.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework: Performance Management

Performance management is concerned with how people work together in order to attain organisational goals. It should be born in mind that regardless of whether the organisation is formal or informal it has goals, as all organisations are established to achieve specific goals. Performance management developed from the adoption of the Scientific Management model. The role of the leader within the context of performance management is to define the vision of the organisation, inspire others, and motivating subordinates in turning the shared vision into reality. Performance management deals with the human resource element in an organisation. The integration between the activities (processes) and people elements within an organisation makes a difference between achievement of organisational goals and failure of organisations to attain set goals. In this regard the role of the manager, who within a school set up is the school head, is very critical. The school head has to a number of tasks which include setting targets for the school, communicating with all stakeholders who include teachers, parents and students. The school head as a manager has to encourage development within the school as an organisation and at the same time provide feedback to teachers and students. Such feedback has a motivational effect on the performance of the teachers and students at the school.

Performance management can be viewed within the context of two key elements. These are its focus on goal attainment and secondly the view that performance management is an organisational strategy. As an organisational strategy, the manager as a leader becomes central to the achievement of organisational goals. This is important as the climate that the manager creates within the organisation has an effect on performance. Furthermore, performance management can be viewed as a process and like any process; it follows through a number of stages. These stages are at times referred to as performance management cycle. The main stages in performance management process are planning, monitoring, assessment, review. What is important to note in the performance management process is the roles that the manager and the employee are expected to play. They are expected to set and agree on the objectives to be achieved and the activities that have to be performed to accomplish these agreed objectives. Key Result Areas (KRA) have to be agreed by both the manager and the employee as they form the basis of monitoring and assessment of performance. Another critical aspect in performance management is the role of feedback. Feedback in performance helps both the manager and the employee as it contributes to the professional development of the employee. On the

other hand, it helps the manager to identify training needs within the organisation. As noted by Armstrong [1] the performance management process serves a number of functions. These include how managers and employees share ideas which clarify issues; plays a motivational role; and evaluation to establish strengths and weaknesses.

Within the same context, Mabey [2] views performance management within the context of a cycle. Mabey [2] identifies five elements that are critical in performance management. This is a performance model that places emphasis on communication of a vision, strategy and plans; identifying and agreeing on individuals and the resources to be used; coaching and team processes; reviewing and feedback; and appraising and assessing consistently. The focus of performance management is very much linked to balancing resources and aims of the organisation. As noted by Armstrong [3] the basic idea of performance management in operations is to balance resources and targets on one hand and efficiency and quality so as to ensure that the desired results are cost efficiently achieved. In that regard performance management as a system aims at addressing a number of issues within an organisation. The major issues that stand out in performance management are the aims and purpose of performance management. As noted above, these include the desire to provide resources that contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, improving efficiency of the system, the culture of the organisation, and the quality of the product. Armstrong (1994) further note that performance management has to reduce or eliminate complaints of inefficient or ineffective services, wasted resources or lack of responsiveness to the demands of the consumers of the organisation's products.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal has been adopted as one of the performance management tools. Like other performance tools, performance appraisal attempts to address issues of fairness to both the employer and employee as pay increases are related to performance. However, the biggest challenge in service industries such as the civil services is how to measure performance. There are arguments to the effect that performance appraisal is necessary in all organisations regardless of the products or services they provide. Performance appraisal has to address how best to improve performance and the development of the goal oriented culture within an organisation. Armstrong [3] in attempt to explain the importance of performance appraisal identifies a number of advantages that accrue to the organisation and its members. Some of the advantages include professional development, an increase in the motivation and commitment levels of employees. It has to be noted that as the manager and the employees discuss the different aspects of performance appraisal, they development an

understanding of one another. Such an understanding contributes to developing an open relationship between the manager and the employee. Other benefits include an objective assessment of activities and the importance of identifying training needs. As such, performance appraisal identifies both strengths and weaknesses with the view of improving the competencies of the employee. Performance appraisal serves a variety of purposes. Castetter [4] among other purposes identifies the following as key in performance appraisal: career development, compensation, human resources planning, and motivation.

However, a number of concerns have been raised in relation to performance appraisal as a performance management tool. Performance appraisal can be done formally or informally. Whatever form it takes, performance appraisal can be conducted by different people within the organisation. It can be conducted by the manager, by peers, subordinates, assessors from outside the organisation and the self. The differences in the strategies can be found in the models. Some of the models of performance appraisal include the common law model, the goal-setting model, product models, clinical supervision models and artistic models. The weaknesses of performance appraisal have been found to lie in the nature of the appraisal. Some of the challenges are related to lack of validity and reliability in some of the appraisal instruments, lack of assessment skills on the part of the assessor, the influence of the organisational culture, and the problems of focusing on the negatives which may destroy instead of building the subordinate. The relationship that is developed between the manager and subordinate might have negative consequences if it is not well managed. Performance appraisal as a performance management tool fails to address issues of bias and subjectivity. At times, it does not follow performance management ethics. Sullivan [5] observes that challenges in performance appraisal can be categorised into at least four groups. These are process related problems; instrument related problems; manager/execution problems; employee/subject problems; and issues that are related to time. The categories as given by Sullivan [5] appear to summarise the major problems that are associated with performance appraisal. Some of the highlights of the problems as noted by Sullivan [5] include lack of accountability; lack of comprehensive team assessment; lack of reliability and validity; the instrument does not address diversity; inconsistent ratings on the same form; managers who are not trained in performance appraisal and as such they avoid tough decisions; communication tends to be one way and it is time consuming.

Results Based Management

Some organisations have moved from the use of performance appraisal as a performance management tool to the use of Results Based Management (RBM).

Others continue to use both as tools of managing performance in organisations. Results Based Management is viewed as a reform approach that places emphasis on the results. Such a focus has been found helpful in planning future development programmes. The main elements in RBM are monitoring of organisational processes, the products and the services provided by the organisation. All these activities are guided by the intended outputs and outcomes of the organisation. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) views Results Based Management as a management approach in which stakeholders work towards ensuring that organisational process, products and services contribute to the achievement of intended results. All these have to be identified by the different actors in the organisation and information derived from such actions has to be used for decision making purposed for the development of the organisation. Within the context of a school as an organisation the school head and teachers have to collectively work and agree on the inputs (learners and resources to support learning), processes (the activities of teaching and learning) and the results. The results include the outputs, outcomes or impact. A focus on these results at school level presents a number of challenges in education. The major questions are on how we can measure impact or outcome during the learners schooling years. The impact of teaching and learning should result in a change in behaviour that is observable. At times there is a tendency to measure performance using examination results as measures of performance. Confining results in education to pass rates in examination may be misleading if Results Based Management is to achieve the desired goals. Education has to focus on developing the total person and as such any assessment and measurement of performance have to be holistic in approach. The United Nations Development Group [6] identifies through major features of Results Based Management as a performance management tool. These are planning, monitoring and evaluation.

The key components of the performance work plan and appraisal form used in the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe is divided into sections that indicate the different areas of focus in the planning, monitoring and evaluation process. These sections include the following: Personal Details and Service Particulars; Performance Plan and Assessment; Training and Development Needs; Performance Progress Reviews; Final Performance Assessment and Rating and a section on Personal Dimensions. According to the performance work plan and appraisal form, reviews have to be done quarterly and they have to assess the competency levels of the employee and suggested interventions that could help the employee. The school head and the teacher have to agree on the rating scores.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the mixed methodology. This was found necessary as the data had to be quantitatively and qualitatively so as to gain a deeper understanding of the views and attitudes of teachers over Results Based Management as a performance management tool. The study used the descriptive survey design. It collected data from teachers in Harare who were studying with the Zimbabwe Open University in the January to June 2016 semester.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study used both structured questionnaires and open ended questionnaires. These were administered to the respondents. In cases where respondents had the time, the researchers interviewed them as well. Since this was a descriptive survey, there was no set criterion that was used to come up with the sample, except that they had to be practising teachers within Harare. The questionnaires were collected from the researchers' offices by those who were willing to participate in the study. The questionnaires were returned within a week of collection. The collection period ran from February 2016 to May 2016.

Sample

The nature of the sample was purposively determined. All the respondents had to be practising teachers in Harare. In order to be able to manage the process effectively, the sample comprised teachers who were studying with the Zimbabwe Open University, Harare/Chitungwiza Regional campus. In the end, the researchers came up with a sample of one hundred respondents. The composition of the sample was about ten percent of the number of teachers studying the Zimbabwe Open University Harare/Chitungwiza Regional campus. It comprised sixty females and forty males.

Findings

All the respondents had at least a Diploma in Education. Others had Bachelor of Education degree and were studying towards the Master of Education in Educational Management. The respondents who were studying for the Bachelor of Education degree constituted 80% and 20% were studying for the Master of Education degree. Such qualifications formed a sound understanding of the expectations and requirements of performance management in education. At the same time it is generally believed that the level of education affects people's perceptions. When it came to work experience, 40% of the respondents had been in the teaching services for less than ten years and 60% had been in the service for more than ten years. This demonstrated that the respondents had been exposed to the different performance practices that had been instituted in education over the years. Such experiences assisted the respondents to highlight the challenges

encountered in the implementation of performance management.

The respondents were asked to indicate the performance management tools used in schools. These were tools used in both primary and secondary schools. The sample comprised both primary and secondary school teachers. They were also asked to identify the main key result areas they focused on in schools. The key performance management tools that emerged from the responses were lesson observation, regular meetings, book inspection, annual reviews, Results Based Management (RBM) and Key Result Areas (KRA). The areas of focus in performance management identified included Record Keeping, Teaching and Learning, Co-curricular, Scheming and Planning, and Class/Classroom Management. All other performance tools have traditionally been used in education. However, Results Based Management approaches are a new development that has taken centre stage.

Respondents were asked to explain their understanding of performance management within the context of Results Based Management. In response to this question 40% of the respondents indicated that they were not very sure of the concept of Results Based Management within the context of education, 45% noted that they did not fully understand the performance management cycle in Results Based Management, and only 15% agreed that they had some understanding of performance management. Such misunderstandings of performance management were most likely to affect the implementation process. Most of the respondents noted that school heads and teachers who had been trained by the public service commission did not fully demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of the concept of Results Based Management. Other issues that could have contributed to the lack of appreciation and understanding of the concept of Results Based Management could be attributable to the short period of training that the trainers were exposed to.

The respondents also identified some of the aspects of Results Based Management in schools. Some of the most important aspects that emerged from the responses were the setting of standards, agreement of work plans, reviews, and the rating process. Apart from the challenges of handling paper work, most respondents indicated that the rating process was the most demanding stage in the performance management process. The challenge associated with the rating process is very much related to the assessment instruments that are used. These are influenced by a number of factors that include the biases of the assessor and other related environmental influences. At the same time there are other issues at stake in the assessment process since performance assessment tends to be personal issues between the school head and the teacher. Such personal issues also relate to the desire by

the two parties to maintain a good relationship. This can be done at the expense of the actual performance.

Respondents were asked to indicate the performance rating that they had received in the last assessment cycle in 2015. The ratings ranged from 1 up to 5. In that respect 96% of the respondents indicated that they had a performance rating of 4, while 2% had a performance rating of 3, and another 2% had a rating of 5. There are a number of questions that can be raised in response to the ratings above. One of the questions could be whether this was indeed a true reflection of the performance of the teachers in the different schools or the assessors were only playing it safe. At the same time the respondents noted that Results Based Management as an assessment tool served a number of purposes within the education system. Among the noted roles that performance management served in schools were an improvement in the school pass rate, promotion, remuneration, improvement in the management of school resources and improvement of relations between the school head and the teacher.

Respondents also indicated challenges that they had encountered in the implementation of Results Based Management. Some of the challenges that featured most in the responses were that Results Based Management involved too much writing on the part of the teacher, inadequate training, time consuming, poorly structured, lack of remuneration and lack of feedback. It has to be noted that teachers have to scheme, plan and keep different records for their classes. It was also noted that agreeing on work plans and the quarterly reviews were time consuming, at the same time stole learners' learning time since they were done during working hours. The writing of the different Key Result Areas, the performance targets and the processes and activities to achieve the desired results appeared to be adding a burden on the part of the teacher who in most cases had overcrowded classes. The respondents also noted that they had not been remunerated based on the performance ratings, but they were only considered when they applied for promotion. However, most of the teachers noted that they were not interested in promotion as in most cases promotion vacancies were in the remotest parts of the country. These areas often problems related to transport and communication. Other respondents noted that the salary gap between one who is in a promotion grade and a class teacher was negligible. As such most respondents noted that performance management ratings were not that helpful in that regard.

CONCLUSIONS

The study came up with the following conclusions on the role of Results Based Management as a performance management tool in schools:

- The Key Result Areas that teachers focus on are generally similar because of the nature of

their job. However most teachers still lack a clear understanding of Results Based Management as a management tool in performance. This came about as a result of lack of proper training of the trainers.

- The introduction of Results Based Management as a performance management tool has not benefited most of the teachers. Although they were of the benefits that were supposed to accrue, they had not received any remuneration based on their performance ratings.
- The teachers' attitudes towards Results Based Management were somehow mixed. Some credited it with improvement of pass rates and improvement of relations between school heads and teachers. Others viewed it as an unnecessary burden that only increased their workload.
- The implementation of Results Based Management as a performance management tool has been characterised by a number of challenges. These include inadequate training on the part of the school head and the teacher, lack of feedback, time consuming, poorly structured and lack of clear benefits to the teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above conclusions the study makes the following recommendations:

- Intensive training programmes are required if Results Based Management is to achieve its desired results as a performance management tool. Such training should also improve performance ratings so that they are a true reflection of the teachers' performance.
- Results Based Management should have clear benefits that accrue to teachers. For example high performers should be rewarded for their effort in the form of upgrading their salaries.
- Large classes that teachers manage are impacting negatively on the implementation of Results Based Management as a performance management tool. There is need to reduce class sizes.
- Considering the importance of managing performance in organisations, there is need for a broader study using a different research design to establish the role of Results Based Management as a management tool in education at national level.

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