

Assessment of Performance Management and Development System in Selected National Government Departments in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in the South African public service has become a thorny issue. Performance assessment in particular, is an area that attracts more grievances. Any institution, which does not address the root causes of employee grievances risks the lowering of morale and productivity. The objectives of the study were to assess perceptions of employees in five national government departments in South Africa regarding the implementation of PMDS and to make recommendations aimed at the improvement of the current system. A survey design was adopted to achieve objectives outlined above. Main findings of the study are that the PMDS is effective, however, its implementation is not satisfactory, supervisors and their subordinates need refresher courses to improve their knowledge and further hone their skills relating to PMDS.

INTRODUCTION

The current PMDS faces the risk of losing credibility after more than 2,299 grievances were lodged in the year 2013-2014 financial year (Public Service Commission 2014 a and b). The number of grievances lodged over this financial year has triggered this probe into what might be the problem with the implementation of the PMDS. South Africa is home to approximately 54 million citizens (Statistics South Africa 2015) who must be served by over 1.3 million public servants. At the national level, the public service comprises 47 government departments and nine provincial administrations, which are subdivided into departments that differ in terms of shapes and sizes across the nine South African provinces. The focus of this paper is on South African national government departments.

A study conducted by Hanif et al. (2016) identify lack of transparency, objectivity and ineffective communication of adverse remarks as some of factors, which may lead to the demise of a performance management and development system. Trivedi (2017) believes that for a performance management system to work properly, simplicity must override complexity. Furthermore, Grossi et al. (2016) state that performance measurement strengthens the ability of seniors to

hold subordinates accountable, promote rewards, sanctions as well as motivation.

Government systems should evolve over time to satisfy the real needs for which they were designed. The performance management and development system is no exception to this "rule". The PMDS in South Africa has evolved in line with the needs of employees and the public service as the employer. An evolving system such as PMDS needs to be regularly assessed to establish its strengths and weaknesses. It is through research of this nature that policy-makers can be made aware of loopholes, which exist and may need attention. This paper probes the implementation of PMDS in selected national government departments in South Africa. To achieve the objective of this study, this paper outlines the research approach and explains the population and sample of the study. Furthermore, this paper presents the data, its analysis and lastly discusses the findings of the study.

The Research Approach

The research was undertaken in five national government departments in South Africa. The five departments constitute 10.6 percent of the 47 national government departments. The names of the departments included in the study are the

Department of Public Service and Administration, Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Public Service Commission, National Department of Tourism, and Department of Arts and Culture. In social science, researchers adopt three main research approaches. These approaches are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. In this study, the quantitative approach was mainly applied to collect data and to analyze it. Quantitative research is, according to Welman et al. (2005) an essential descriptive design, which is used in investigations among individuals or groups within given community, group or organizations. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) argue that in a quantitative approach, the researchers allocate numbers to observations and then measure such observations to produce data. The survey design was followed in this study. The primary data was collected by means questionnaires. A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire had 27 questions. Employees who were sampled in this study included only staff members between salary levels 3 and 12.

The total number of questionnaires distributed to respondents in all the five (5) departments was 301. According to the sample, the National Department of Tourism was allocated 80 questionnaires, Department of Public Service and Administration was allocated 65 questionnaires, Office of the Public Service Commission was allocated 41 questionnaires, Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation was allocated 36 questionnaires and the Department of Arts and Culture was allocated 79 questionnaires. Fifteen percent from the total post establishment of each department was used as a sample for the questionnaires. Of the 301 questionnaires distributed, 213 questionnaires were returned. Amongst the 213 returned questionnaires, not all questions were answered.

RESULTS

This section of the paper presents the results of the study. The questionnaire as stated earlier, consisted of 27 questions. The responses to these questions are presented and analyzed below.

Table 1 reflects gender differences amongst respondents. The results show that females at 53.9 percent dominate males who constitute 46.1 percent of the sample.

Table 1: Gender

<i>Gender</i>	
<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Male	46.1
Female	53.9

Results presented in Table 2 show that 86.3 percent of respondents were African American, 7.1 percent were Caucasian, 3.3 percent colored, followed by 2.7 percent Indian, and minority were others at 0.5 percent.

Table 2: Racial composition of respondents

<i>Race</i>	
<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Black	86.3
White	7.1
Coloured	3.3
Indian	2.7
Other	0.6

Table 3 reflects contract type differences. The majority of the respondents were working on permanent basis with 90.7 percent, followed by workers who are on the fixed term contract with 6.6 percent and the minority were trainees on contract with 0.5 percent.

Table 3: Contract type

<i>Contract type</i>	
<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Fixed term	6.6
Permanent	90.7
Internship	2.2
Trainee	0.5

Table 4 reflects that majority (30.2%) of the employees are between 9 and 10 salary levels, followed by employees who are between 7 and 8 salary levels with 26.3 percent, and minority are between 3 and 4 salary levels with 5.6 percent.

Table 4: Salary levels

<i>Salary level</i>	
<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
3 to 4	5.6
5 to 6	17.9
7 to 8	26.3
9 to 10	30.2
Other	20

Table 5 reveals that 60.2 percent (6.6% and 53.6%) of the respondents agreed that the performance management and development system is effective and it is yielding its desired results, while 32.7 percent (26.1% and 6.6%) of respondents disagree with the provided statement. 7.1 percent of the respondents indicated that they do not know if the above statement is true.

Table 5: The performance management and development system is effective in this department and it is yielding its desired results

Topics	Percentages
Agree	7.1
Strongly agree	53.6
Disagree	26.1
Strongly disagree	6.6
Do not know	6.6

According to Table 6, 74.1 percent (21.3% and 52.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there are many challenges associated with the management and implementation of the performance management and development system, while on the other hand, 19.8 percent (17.9% and 1.9%) disagree that there are challenges with regards to the implementation and management of the current performance management and development system. 6.1 percent respondents indicated that they do not know if there are challenges in the implementation of this system.

Table 6: There are many challenges associated with the management and implementation of the performance management and development system

Topics	Percentages
Agree	21.3
Strongly agree	52.8
Disagree	1.9
Strongly disagree	17.9
Do not know	6.1

Table 7 reveals that sixty-one percent (7.5% and 53.5%) of the respondents agreed that managers and supervisors fully support the implementation of the performance management and development system in their departments, while on the other hand, 27.6 percent (22.1% and 5.6%) disagree. 11.3 percent of respondents indicated that they do not know if managers and supervisors are supportive during the implementation of this system.

Table 7: Management and supervisor fully support the implementation of the performance management and development system in this department

Topics	Percentages
Agree	7.5
Strongly agree	53.5
Disagree	22.1
Strongly disagree	5.6
Do not know	11.3

It is evident from Table 8 that 64.2 percent (18.4% and 45.8%) of the respondents agreed that training and orientation on performance management and development system is always provided to newly appointed and old staff members in order to improve their performance, while 22.1 percent (14.6% and 7.5%) of respondents disagree with the claim, and lastly those who indicated that they do not know constituted 13.7 percent.

Table 8: Training and orientation on performance management and development system is always provided to newly appointment and old staff members in order to improve their performance

Topics	Percentages
Agree	18.4
Strongly agree	45.8
Disagree	14.6
Strongly disagree	7.5
Do not know	13.7

Data presented in Table 9 reveals that at least 32.6 percent (25% and 7.6%) of the respondents disagree that middle management services and senior management services do their performance management contracting on time each financial year, while only 33.3 percent (28.4% and 5.3%) agree that management are doing so and those who indicated that they do not know constitute 33.7 percent.

Table 9: Middle management services and senior services do their performance management contracting on time each financial year

Topics	Percentages
Agree	5.3
Strongly agree	28.4
Disagree	25
Strongly disagree	7.6
Do not know	33.7

According to Table 10, the study reveals that 51 percent (15.6% and 35.4%) of the respondents agreed that there are many grievance cases, which employees lodged due to the management and the implementation of the system in their departments. 19.3 percent (13.2% and 6.1%) of respondents disagree that there are grievances lodged against the way in which the system is being implemented, mostly during the assessment or reviewing processes. Lastly, 29.7 percent of respondents indicated that they do not know if there are such kinds of challenges in the departments.

Table 10: There are many grievance cases which employees lodge due to the management and the implementation of the system in this department; some include reviewing challenges and training and development

Topics	Percentages
Agree	15.6
Strongly agree	35.4
Disagree	13.2
Strongly disagree	6.1
Do not know	29.7

Table 11 shows that 74.2 percent (18.3% and 55%) of the respondents strongly agreed that responsible units such as human resource development, labor relations and human resource management provides full support during the implementation of the performance management and development system, while only 17.3 percent disagree with the claimed statement. 8.5 percent of respondents indicated that they do not know whether support is being provided by these units.

Table 11: Responsible unit such as, Human Resource Development, Labour Relations, Human Resource Management provide full support during the implementation of the PMDS

Topics	Percentages
Agree	18.3
Strongly agree	55.9
Disagree	11.7
Strongly disagree	5.6
Do not know	8.5

Table 12 reveals that only 40.1 percent (5.7% and 34.4%) of the respondents agreed that their departments have supervisors who are experts in the management and implementation of the

performance management and development system, while on the other hand, 38.3 percent (27.8% and 10.5%) disagree that their departments have experts in the management and implementation of the system. 21.6 percent respondents indicated that they do not know if these departments have experts to manage the performance management and development system.

Table 12: This department has supervisors who are experts in the management and implementation of the performance management and development system

Topics	Percentages
Agree	5.7
Strongly agree	34.4
Disagree	10.5
Strongly disagree	27.8
Do not know	21.6

The data in Table 13 reveals that majority of respondents 72.5 percent (52.2% and 20.4%) strongly disagree that performance management and development system is time consuming and hinders the productivity of supervisors to perform other functions, which contribute to service delivery. Furthermore, 22.7 percent (17.5% and 5.2%) of respondents indicated that management and implementation of this system is time consuming and hinders the productivity of supervisors to perform functions, which contribute to service delivery. A smaller number (4.7%) of respondents indicated that they do not know if the system is time consuming.

Table 13: PMDS is time consuming and hinders the productivity of supervisors to perform other functions which contribute to service delivery

Topics	Percentages
Agree	5.2
Strongly agree	17.5
Disagree	20.4
Strongly disagree	52.2
Do not know	4.7

The study reveals that majority of respondents 55.9 percent (37.9% and 18%) disagreed that employees are happy with the management and implementation of the performance management and development system in their department, while those who agree constituted twenty-seven percent (23.2% and 3.8%), followed by those who do not know at 17.1 percent (Table 14).

Table 14: Employees are happy with the management and implementation of the performance management and development system in this department

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	3.8
Strongly agree	23.2
Disagree	37.9
Strongly Disagree	18
Do not know	17.1

The study reveals that 49.5 percent (16.5% and 33%) of the respondents agree that managers and supervisors are biased when reviewing or assessing an employee's performance, and as a result, employees lodge grievances against the management and implementation of the system. A further 27.7 percent (20.9% and 6.8%) of respondents disagreed that managers and supervisors are biased when reviewing employees' performance, followed by 22.8 percent of respondents who indicated that they do not know (Table 15).

Table 15: Managers and supervisor are biased when reviewing/assessing employees' performance

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	16.5
Strongly agree	33
Disagree	20.9
Strongly disagree	6.8
Do not know	22.8

Table 16 reveals that sixty-seven percent (12.9% and 54.1%) of the respondents agreed that the department has the intermediate review and departmental moderating committee which is responsible for reviewing the employees' performance against the department's performance at the end of each financial year, while a minority

Table 16: The department has an intermediate review and departmental moderating committee which is responsible for reviewing the employees' performance against the department's performance at the end of each financial year

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	12.9
Strongly agree	54.1
Disagree	3.8
Strongly disagree	2.4
Do not know	26.8

of 6.2 percent (2.4% and 3.8%) of respondents disagree that these committees exist. Those who indicated that they do not know constituted 26.8 percent.

Table 17 shows that 44.5 percent (7.7% and 36.8%) of the respondents agreed that appraising of employees using the current performance management and development system is a challenge due to lack of training and support from responsible units. Furthermore, 36.8 percent (33% and 3.8%) of respondents disagreed that using the current system to assess employee is a challenge due to lack of training, followed by those who indicated that they do not know at 18.7 percent.

Table 17: Appraisal of employees using the current PMDS is a challenge due to lack of training and support from the responsible units

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	7.7
Strongly agree	36.8
Disagree	33
Strongly disagree	3.8
Do not know	18.7

Table 18 reveals that 55.5 percent (10% and 45.5%) of the respondents agreed that in their departments, employees' performance is linked with the organizational performance, while on the other hand 29.8 percent (23.2% and 6.6%) disagree with the statement, followed by those who indicated that they do not know at 14.7 percent respondents.

Table 18: In this department, employees' performance is linked with the organisational performance

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	10
Strongly agree	45.5
Disagree	23.2
Strongly disagree	6.6
Do not know	14.7

Form the data in Table 19 it is evident that only 56.2 percent (10% and 46.2%) of the respondents agreed that the current performance management and development system helps employees improve their performance. 36.7 percent (24.8% and 11.9%) disagree followed by 7.1 percent who indicated that they do not know.

Table 19: The current performance management and development system helps employees improve their performance

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	10
Strongly agree	46.2
Disagree	24.8
Strongly Disagree	11.9
Do not know	7.1

Table 20 paints a picture that reveals that only 58.9 percent (9.9% and 49%) of the respondents agree that managers and supervisors are very supportive to subordinates with regards to their personal developmental plans (PDPs), while 37.7 percent (25.8% and 12.4%) of respondents disagree that support regarding their PDPs is given by managers and supervisors. A smaller number, 2.9 percent of respondents indicated that they do not know.

Table 20: Manager and supervisor are very supportive to their subordinate with regard to their personal developmental plans (PDP's)

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	49
Strongly agree	9.9
Disagree	25.8
Strongly disagree	12.4
Do not know	2.9

Table 21 reveals that eighty-one percent (26.7% and 54.3%) of the respondents agreed that their job description provides clear goals and outcomes expected from them by their supervisor regarding performance, while 18.1 percent (4.3% and 13.8%) of respondents disagree that their job description provides clear goals and outcomes, followed by those who indicated that they do not know at one percent.

Table 21: My job description provides clear goals and outcomes expected from me by my supervisor regarding performance

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	54.2
Strongly agree	26.7
Disagree	13.8
Strongly disagree	4.3
Do not know	1

From Table 22 it is evident that 67.3 percent (19.7% and 47.6%) of the respondents agreed

that the department is using the standard rating scale which is being used by all other national government departments in South Africa (recommended by the DPSA), followed by those who disagreed at 3.9 percent (1% and 2.9%) respondents and lastly, those who indicated that they do not know constituted 28.8 percent.

Table 22: The department is using the standard rating scale which is being used by all other national government departments in South Africa (recommended by the DPSA)

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	19.7
Strongly agree	47.6
Disagree	2.9
Strongly disagree	1
Do not know	28.8

The study shows in Table 23 that 54.1 percent of the respondents do not know whether the heads of human resources conduct audits on the implementation of the performance management and development system at the end of each financial year to evaluate its impact in their departments, followed by 16.9 percent (13.5% and 3.4%) of respondents who disagree that such a process takes place in their department.

Table 23: The Head of Human Resource conducts an audit on the implementation of the PMDS at the end of each financial year to evaluate its impact in the department

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	3.4
Strongly agree	25.6
Disagree	13.5
Strongly disagree	3.4
Do not know	54.1

Table 24 reveals that 59.1 percent (9.3% and 49.7%) of the respondents agreed that training

Table 24: Training and refresher courses on the procedure and processes to be followed during the implementation of this system are conducted every year

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	49.7
Strongly agree	9.3
Disagree	20.5
Strongly disagree	2.9
Do not know	17.6

and refresher courses on the procedure and processes to be followed during the implementation of this system are conducted every year, while 23.4 percent (20.5% and 2.9%) of the respondents disagree on the claimed statement, followed by those who indicated that they do not know with 17.60 percent.

The study reveals that 90.5 percent (25% and 65.5%) of the respondents agreed that managers and supervisors also need full support from their subordinates when managing and implementing the system in order to get better results for both individual employees and the organization as a whole, while 5.7 percent (4.3% and 1.4%) respondents disagreed that managers and supervisors need support from them. 3.8 percent respondents indicated that they do not know (Table 25).

Table 25: Managers and supervisors also need full support from their subordinate when managing and implementing the system in order to get better results for both individual employees and organisation as a whole

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	65.5
Strongly agree	25
Disagree	4.3
Strongly disagree	1.4
Do not know	3.8

According to Table 26, 66.5 percent (10% and 56.5%) of the respondents agreed that the main purpose of the performance management and development system adopted by their departments is for both decision-making purposes and developmental purpose, while those who disagreed constituted 13.9 percent (4.3% and 9.6%) and lastly, those who indicated that they do not know constituted 19.6 percent.

Table 26: The main purpose of the performance management and development system adopted by this department is for both decision making purposes and developmental purpose

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	10
Strongly agree	56.5
Disagree	9.6
Strongly disagree	4.3
Do not know	19.6

The last objective was to determine whether there is a need to re-design the current perfor-

mance management and development system in South Africa. The study reveals that seventy-three percent (30% and 43%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the current performance management and development system needs to be amended or re-designed in order to meet the organization's goals in today's rapidly changing environment. Those who disagreed constituted 17.3 percent (15.9% and 1.4%) and followed by those who indicated that they do not know who constituted 9.7 percent responses (Table 27).

Table 27: The current performance management and development system need to be amended or redesigned in order to meet the organisation's goals in today's rapidly changing environment

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Agree	43
Strongly agree	30
Disagree	15.9
Strongly disagree	1.4
Do not know	9.7

DISCUSSION

As indicated in the introduction and section on the research approach, the study focused on national government departments in South Africa. Provincial administrations and their respective departments were excluded due to resource constraints. This implies that the discussion of results cannot include provinces and generalizations cannot be made about provinces despite the fact that they are part of the South African Public Service. The discussion of results will mainly focus on areas that require the attention of policymakers in the public service.

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 are indicative of the demographics of the South African population. The 2015 Mid-year Population Estimates indicates that the composition of South Africa's population comprises: 80.6 percent black, 8.7 percent coloreds, 8.2 percent white, and 2.6 percent Indian (Statistics South Africa 2015). The majority of employees who participated in the study (90.7%) are permanent employees who are believed to have experienced the implementation of the PMDS first hand, and hence their responses are viewed as credible. A fraction of employees (7.1%) are on fixed term contracts as interns or trainees. This category of employees explains the "do not know" re-

sponses, which have been either below or way above 7.1 percent in Questions 5 to 27.

60.2 percent of employees believe that the PMDS is effective. The thirty-two percent who disagree in this and other questions cannot be dismissed as the minority. This percent of employees is significant enough to impact negatively on the morale, productivity, negative perception of the PMDS and the number of grievances lodged in the public service. Seventy-four percent employees included in the survey believe that there are many challenges in the implementation of the PMDS. Magoro (2016) believes that different understandings of PMDS, availability of resources and lack of awareness regarding the rationale of performance management may be some of the inherent reasons for the ineffectiveness of the system. Questions 7, 8, 11 and 20 (61%, 64.2%, 14.2%, 58.4% and 59.1%) reveal that various types of support is available in the public service to employees in management in the form of training and development, internal support from specialized units, and refresher courses. If seventy-four percent of employees believe that despite the support available, there are still challenges, the effectiveness of the existing support systems and structures may need to be assessed. Responses to Questions 9 and 10 show that employees are split 50/50 with regards to whether managers finalize performance contracts on time and the number of grievances lodged.

Responses to Question 12 reveal that only forty percent of employees agree that supervisors have the requisite expertise to implement PMDS. This finding suggests that there is a need for more capacity building amongst supervisors charged the implementation of PMDS. Seventy-two percent of employees who participated in the survey believe that time spent on PMDS is worth the investment. 55.9 percent of employees are not happy with the implementation of PMDS. The response to this question needs to be understood in the context of the 60.2 percent who believe that the system is effective. A distinction needs to be made between the system and its application. 55.9 percent employees are unhappy with the implementation and not necessarily the system itself. This further suggests that the human element may be a problem.

The study further shows that 49.5 percent employees believe that supervisors are biased in the assessment of their performance. It is the

researchers' belief that almost fifty percent of employees who believe that managers are biased may lead to the loss of credibility of the system if similar negative perceptions persist over time.

Response to Question 25 shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents (90.4%) believe that their supervisors need support in the implementation of PMDS. Furthermore, 66.5 percent of employees agree that PMDS is used for decision-making and their development. The last question in the survey sums it all. Seventy-three percent of the respondents to this question agree that the current PMDS needs to be improved. These sentiments support the earlier assertions that any system needs to be regularly reviewed to suit its intended purpose. The Thailand system for instance, evolved in four phases. It was in the fourth phase, which was implemented in 2009 that the individual assessments were introduced (Sutheewasinnon et al. 2016). The Thailand case proves that for any PMDS to be near perfection, it has to be reviewed regularly by institutions, which are the custodians of such a system. While the DPSA is the custodian of the policy on PMDS in South Africa, the review of the current system must include all employees, unions and departments at both national and provincial spheres.

CONCLUSION

It can be expected in any study that the response rate will not be one hundred percent of the intended sample. A response rate of 70.8 percent is not ideal, but provides a credible picture that researchers can use to generalize to the overall population. This paper reports the results of a quantitative study, which may need to be corroborated by a qualitative study and a broader sample, which includes the nine provinces in South Africa. Individual government departments may also have to consider conducting surveys similar to this study to establish perceptions of their employees regarding PMDS. The most important message that this paper conveys to policymakers is that PMDS need to be reviewed. A review that includes all stakeholders is likely to improve the confidence of employees in the system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in the light of the findings of the study:

- ♦ There is a need for regular review of PMDS systems despite positive feedback from employees regarding its effectiveness. The review must be comprehensive and include employees at all levels including unions.
- ♦ Refresher courses must be attended by supervisors and subordinates every three years.
- ♦ Feedback from PMDS assessments must be used for employee development.
- ♦ Government departments must conduct annual surveys to assess the effectiveness of PMDS. A standard tool for this purpose must be developed by the Department of Public Service and Administration.

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