

Perceptions of Staff Regarding the Implementation of the Performance Management System in the Botswana Public Service Between 1999 and 2014

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ABSTRACT

The Botswana Public Service was confronted with several challenges when implementing the performance management system. Against this background, this research was undertaken to determine the perceptions of staff regarding the implementation of the programme in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation between 1999 and 2014. A mixed methods research design was employed using a case study, evaluation research and a survey as well as the model of social programmes. A sample of 90 was selected using purposive sampling and yielded a response rate of 54%. Data sources included a literature review, document analysis, questionnaires and interviews. The study found, *inter alia*, that implementation was problematic because of unclear foreign policy goals and objectives, thus recommending setting specific foreign policy objectives. The study findings highlight some of the major factors that affect the implementation of performance management. By identifying these factors through empirical study, this study generated new knowledge to the extant literature on implementation of performance management

systems. This is an applied social research study that addresses the practical and theoretical issues of performance management which is of critical importance and interest to the Botswana public service because of the need to improve public service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Performance management is an issue of critical concern to political leaders, citizens and public servants because of the need to improve public service delivery (Dzimhiri 2008:47). Consequently, African countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa are implementing performance management systems to make certain public servants and public services are performing optimally and delivering quality services to the citizenry. The Botswana government uses the performance management system “as an instrument to enable government ministries and independent departments to conscientiously work towards optimum delivery of public services to the nation” (Republic of Botswana 2002:2). In this regard, it is mandatory under Sections 6(1) a and 6(1) c of the Botswana Public Service Act of 2008, Chapter 26:01 (Act Number 30 of 2008) for all public service employees to “provide effective and efficient service to the public and to Government” and to “continuously improve their performance in delivering services.”

The implementation of the performance management system in the Botswana Public Service gained national attention following the pronouncement by the President of Botswana, Lieutenant General S K I Khama on 18 October 2009 that public service delivery would be one of the major priorities of his administration. The main priorities of president Khama’s administration are the five “Ds” namely democracy, development, dignity, discipline and delivery. Effective and efficient public service delivery is critical to promote and sustain national development, economic diversification, global competitiveness and to improve living standards and dignity of citizens (Letsebe 2009:2).

However, during the past decade the failure rate of change initiatives, including the performance management systems, was estimated to be as high as 70%, worst performers being developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Hacker and Washington 2004:52; Washington and Hacker 2005:401). A study conducted by De Waal and Counet (2009:367) found that the failure rate of implementation of performance management systems had decreased from 70 to 56%. However, another study by Hope and Player (2012:1) found that the failure rate was still at 70%. These percentages are an indication

that performance management is poorly managed and its implementation is disappointing.

Globally, there are a few success stories of performance management which include countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In Africa, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa are listed as success stories of performance management (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010:92). Comparatively, implementation of performance management systems has fared better in countries where the implementation of the programme was internally initiated or driven and funded, government top priority and adequate financial and human resources were allocated; highest-level support and commitment from the political and administrative leadership; effective communication to build a business case for change; continuous employee and leadership training and development; detailed plans and guidelines as well as institutional structures and agencies to support programme implementation (Nyamunga 2006:18; Dzimbiri 2008:55–56).

There is limited literature investigating the implementation of performance management systems in the global environment from a public service perspective, particularly in ministries of affairs (Rana 2011:349; Botlhale 2015:8). The available studies focus mainly on private sector companies, especially multinational corporations. Consequently, the factors that affect the implementation of performance management systems in public service institutions operating in the global environment are less known. This study attempts to fill this void. The study identified only two articles that investigated the implementation of performance management systems in the ministries of foreign affairs, one by K S Rana (2004) entitled "Performance Management in Foreign Ministries," and another by M Mwagiru (2006) titled "Issues, Problems, and Prospects in Managing the Diplomatic Services in Small States." Similarly, only two books were found that discussed performance management in the ministries of foreign affairs written by the same author K S Rana (2005 and 2011) titled *The 21st Century Ambassador: Plenipotentiary to Chief Executive* and *21st Century Diplomacy: A Practitioner's Guide*.

Furthermore, no study was found that investigated the implementation of the programme in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Botswana Public Service. The study findings and recommendations may assist to improve the implementation of the programme and other future interventions. Given the high failure rate of implementation of performance management systems in Africa and the fact that no study has previously been done on this topic in the case study institution, this study investigated the following research problem: "What are the factors that affected the implementation of the performance management system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Botswana Public Service between 1999 and 2014?"

In light of the above, the research questions for this study were the following:

- What is the meaning of performance management?
- What are the origins of the concept of performance management?
- What analytical framework was used to answer the research problem? Why was this framework chosen?
- Which research design and methodology was used to investigate the research problem?
- What were the findings and interpretations, conclusions, limitations and recommendations?
- What contribution did the study make to the field of (P)public (A) administration?

This article is structured into four main parts. Firstly, it reviews the literature on performance management. The subsequent two sections discuss the research design and methodology, findings and interpretations. Lastly, it discusses limitations, areas for future research, recommendations and conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The literature review is divided into three components: definition, origin of performance management and analytical framework.

Definition of performance management

Definitions of performance management differ noticeably because the concept is a generic and multi-dimensional phenomenon which is always evolving and is defined differently in each country or administrative system. On the one hand, Bukh and Mouritsen (2014:3) defined performance management as an unending formal process that institutions use to improve, measure and manage individual, group and institutional performance in order to achieve the strategic intent or objectives. On the other hand, Armstrong and Baron (1998:7) portrayed performance management as a “strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organisations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors.” In turn, Armstrong (2015:9) described performance management as a “continuous process of improving performance by setting individual and team goals which are aligned to the strategic goals of the organisation, planning performance to achieve the goals, reviewing and assessing progress, and developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of people.”

Despite these differences, most authors, however, are in agreement that performance management can be defined as a strategic, integrated and holistic approach to the management of individuals, teams and institutional performance. It encompasses a broad array of issues dealing with the measurement, management and improvement of performance such as objective-setting, performance planning, development of performance standards, performance review and feedback, performance monitoring and reporting, employee development, and recognition and reward of performance.

Origin of performance management

The concept “performance management” was first used by Beer and Ruh in 1976 in their study of the performance management system at Corning Glass Works of the United States of America entitled “Employee growth through performance management” (Armstrong and Baron 1998:43). However, its historical antecedents go as far back as Biblical times and the Chinese dynasties of the 221–206 BC. The Bible refers to performance evaluation in Exodus 35 in approximately 1350 BC wherein the Lord commanded the people of Israel to devote six days of the week to build the Tabernacle. The quest for measurements of performance and quality is traced to around 2500 BC when ancient Egyptians started constructing pyramids (Brudan 2009: online internet source).

Historical accounts further show that Chinese dynasties such as Han and Wei used a type of performance management system. The Han dynasty that ruled from 206 BC– 220 AD reportedly used the merit principle by conducting examinations to recruit and promote those who served the emperor. Similarly, the Wei dynasty that ruled from 221–265 AD reputedly used an Imperial Rater for performance evaluation of the official family members (Armstrong and Baron 1998: 29). The above analyses show that performance management has a long history and is not a new concept.

Performance management was widely used by governments in the 1980s and 1990s to respond to pressures from globalisation and to improve public sector performance. In most developing countries, the performance management systems were introduced as part of the structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, mainly to support stabilisation in these areas. They were introduced in African, Asian and Latin American ministries of foreign affairs around 2000 (Rana 2011:173). The United Kingdom was the pioneer of the performance management system in the ministries of foreign affairs in the late 1980s and Australia, France and New Zealand followed suit (Rana 2004:385). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Botswana public service pioneered the performance management system in Africa in 1999.

This study used the model of social programmes as an analytical framework.

Analytical framework: Model of social programmes

In the human resource management context there has always been widespread debate about the best way to measure the performance outputs of people. The effect of the difficulty in defining measurement methodologies resulted in the development of different analytical frameworks to look at a particular phenomenon. An analytical framework is an orientation or general way of looking at the phenomenon under consideration. It provides assumptions, concepts and forms of explanation (Neuman 2006:74). The model of social programmes is a multi-dimensional analytical framework that is used to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of social interventions or programmes, policies, systems and schemes using eight main dimensions that characterise all social interventions (Babbie and Mouton 2001:335–336). The eight main dimensions are: (1) programme goals and objectives; (2) target group; (3) outcome measures; (4) programme components; (5) programme infrastructure; (6) human resource base; (7) programme stakeholders; and (8) programme context. The eight dimensions are important for this study because they highlight the factors that are critical to programme conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The model of social programmes was selected because of the following reasons:

- It provides a holistic and comprehensive framework for understanding and analysing the research problem by identifying concepts and theories that are pertinent to describe and explain the studied phenomenon (Babbie and Mouton 2001:366).
- It is a multi-dimensional analytical framework that synthesises several frameworks that deal, *inter alia*, with theories of programme implementation, institutional change and employee motivation (Christensen and Gazley 2008:267).
- Comparatively, it covers many (eight) dimensions which makes it more comprehensive thereby giving it more predictive, explanatory and analytical power. For example, the performance management model proposed by Bento and White (2006:53) covers only three dimensions, while the model proposed by Hacker and Washington (2004:53) to measure large-scale organisational change covers only six dimensions.
- It was used to structure the study in a logical manner and to guide data collection, analysis, interpretation, and drawing conclusions (Babbie and Mouton 2001:366).

The second part of this article covers the research design and methodology, population, sampling and sampling method, data collection instruments, pilot testing, data analysis, ethical considerations, and storing and disposing of data.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods research design which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, methodologies, techniques and paradigms in a single study in order to have an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011:4–5). The researcher used a case study method, applied social research and the survey method. The selection of these methodologies was based on the type and purpose of study, nature of the research problem, and research questions. A case study method and applied social research were selected because this study deals with the practical problem of implementing the performance management system. The two methodologies are best suited to study the research problem in its natural setting, to obtain textual or descriptive data and contextual understanding of the studied phenomenon. Survey research was used to obtain perceptions of staff regarding the implementation of the performance management system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Botswana public service. The study used the post-positivism paradigm which is suitable for studies that use qualitative research methodologies such as case study method and applied social research and subjective interpretations of respondents (Bhattacharjee 2012:20).

This study was undertaken for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory purposes. This was an exploratory study which was undertaken to contribute to the limited literature that investigates the implementation of performance management systems in the global environment from a public service perspective. The study was also descriptive because it makes systematic observations and detailed descriptions of the implementation of the performance management system. Moreover, it was explanatory because it identified and explained the factors that affected the implementation of the performance management system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Population, sampling and sampling method

In this study the population consisted of 526 employees ($N = 526$), which was the total number of staff members in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation headquarters and the 21 Botswana diplomatic missions abroad. These diplomatic missions are located in different countries: (1) Canberra, Australia; (2) Brussels, Belgium; (3) Brasilia, Brazil; (4) Beijing, China; (5) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; (6) New Delhi, India; (7) Tokyo, Japan; (8) Nairobi, Kenya; (9) Kuwait City, Kuwait; (10) Maputo, Mozambique; (11) Windhoek, Namibia; (12) Abuja, Nigeria; (13) Johannesburg, South Africa; (14) Pretoria, South Africa; (15) Stockholm, Sweden; (16) Geneva, Switzerland; (17) London, United Kingdom;

(18) New York, United States of America; (19) Washington DC, United States of America; (20) Lusaka, Zambia; and (21) Harare, Zimbabwe.

The sample group comprised of 90 respondents (n = 90) representing 27 respondents from the Ministry headquarters and 63 from diplomatic missions. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling which refers to a sampling method in which the selection of respondents is intentional or judgemental rather than random (Morgan and Sklar 2012:73). Responses were obtained from 49 respondents, which imply that the response rate was 54%. The sample included staff from senior, middle and junior management to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness and to obtain multiple perspectives on the studied phenomenon.

Data collection instruments

This study utilised four data collection instruments, namely a literature review, document analysis, self-administered questionnaires and follow-up personal interviews. Questionnaires and follow-up personal interviews were used to collect primary data. Firstly, the researcher collected primary data using questionnaires. 90 questionnaires were distributed to staff representing all three levels of management to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sample. Thereafter three follow-up personal interviews were conducted with individuals with a thorough understanding of performance management to clarify certain data or issues that were unclear or lacked clear-cut answers from the questionnaire responses. Only three personal interviews were conducted because most of the research questions were adequately answered through the questionnaires. A sample of three to six participants is considered adequate for qualitative research (Morgan and Sklar 2012:74). The literature review and document analysis were used to collect secondary data and to validate the data obtained through questionnaires and personal interviews. Document analysis is a qualitative data collection method that involves analysing and interpreting documents into themes and patterns similar to questionnaire and interview transcripts (Neuman 2006:44; Bhattacharjee 2012:115).

Pilot testing

The questionnaire was piloted at the Botswana diplomatic missions in Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa and the Department of Protocol and Consular Services at the Ministry headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana, mainly to determine if the questionnaire instructions and layout and question wording and ordering were appropriate. It was also scrutinised by three practitioners who have extensive knowledge of the performance management

system of the Botswana public service from the National Strategy Office, and the Public Service Reforms Unit. One of the improvements that emanated from the pilot study was the suggestion to develop a questionnaire for each level of management.

Data analysis

De Vos and Fouché (1998:203) defined data analysis as the categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising of data to provide answers to research questions. It entails three steps, namely data reduction, display and verification. According to these authors, data reduction involves reducing data “to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relations of research problems can be studied, tested and conclusions drawn.” As already stated, the response rate for this study was 54%. A response rate of 50% is considered as adequate for data analysis and reporting, 60% as good and 70% as excellent (Babbie and Mouton 2001:261).

Data verification refers to checking the accuracy or reliability and validity of data collected (Babbie and Mouton 2001:290). Data collected from questionnaires and interviews was compared with data obtained from the literature review, document analysis and from government official records such as national development plans; organisation and methods review reports; and consultancy studies.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct this study and collect data was granted by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Ethics clearance was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Public Administration and Management of the University of South Africa and was granted. The respondents who participated in this study completed informed consent forms which outlined their rights such as the right to participate or non-participation in the study, and the right to withdraw from it at any time without any harm or risks to them.

Storing and disposing of data

All data and information will be stored in a high security safe in the Principal Researcher’s office and this safe will only be accessible to him. Data stored on the researcher’s computer is protected by password. Data and information will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value. This is projected to be five years from the date of publication of this study. Records stored on a computer hard drive will be erased using commercial software designed to

remove all data from the storage device. The universal serial bus (USB) drive will be physically destroyed. A record, stating what records were destroyed, when and how the researcher did so, will also be kept.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The findings and interpretations are discussed using the eight dimensions of the model of social programmes, namely programme goals and objectives; target group; outcome measures; programme components; programme infrastructure; human resource base; programme stakeholders; and programme context.

Dimension 1: Programme goals and objectives

The first dimension is programme goals and objectives. Armstrong and Baron (1998:155) defined an objective as a task to be accomplished by a given date or period. To successfully implement the performance management system, it is essential that objectives are clearly defined and understood (Hacker and Washington 2004:53). Clarity of foreign policy goals and objectives is considered as one of the success factors of the implementation of the performance management system in the ministries of foreign affairs (Rana 2011:15). Good and effective goals and objectives are applied to the following acronym: SMART which stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound (De Waal 2007:78). The majority of the respondents (29 = 59.2%) stated that the foreign policy goals and objectives did not meet the SMART checklist. This was attributed to the difficulty to define and develop appropriate performance measures for diplomatic work, and the difficulty to achieve the performance outputs and outcomes within an annual performance plan. The following two prominent responses from respondents demonstrate this lack of synchronisation between the goals and objectives and the SMART checklist:

- “The nature of the Ministry’s work is such that measurement is not always possible, at least within the time periods stipulated.”
- “The timeframe of measuring success is not the conventional one. You have to observe over a longer period of time.”

These findings support the observation by Rana (2011:185) that the dictum “if it cannot be measured, it should not be done” is irrelevant to ministries of foreign affairs because the bulk of diplomatic work is unquantifiable. Historical records showed that the Ministry started to systemically define and document foreign policy goals and objectives in February 1987. Previously, there was no record of foreign policy goals and objectives, and general awareness, knowledge and

clarity of foreign policy goals and objectives was generally blurred (Republic of Botswana 1994:16).

Dimension 2: Target group

The second dimension of the model of social programmes is the target group. In the public service, the target group for the performance management system are public servants (Armstrong and Baron 1998:362). 43 (87.8%) respondents stated that the Ministry's performance management system targeted all categories of staff. Dzimbiri (2008:53) confirmed that the performance management system of the Botswana public service targets all categories of staff. This finding supports the observation by Armstrong and Baron (1998:362) that new versions of the programme target all categories of staff unlike the old versions that targeted only managers or professional and technical staff.

To successfully implement the performance management system, the target group should embrace the programme (Dzimbiri 2008:53). Overall most of the respondents (38 = 77.6%) indicated that the implementation of the programme in the Ministry was not welcomed enthusiastically. They attributed the reluctance to implement the programme to the use of cascading approach, inadequate knowledge and understanding of the programme and its benefits and widespread feeling that it was ill-suited. The following account from respondents illustrates this lack of enthusiasm:

There was no sense of ownership due to the use of top-down approach.... Officers in leadership and management positions appeared to have understood and appreciated reasons behind the introduction of the performance management system. However, most officers below management level were not taken on board when the performance management system was introduced, hence some of them do not understand its benefits...Some officers felt there was no benefit from implementing the programme. It was not clear how the programme was an improvement to business as usual....There was a feeling that the programme would not work for the Ministry...Change makes people uncomfortable, especially when sanctions are involved.

These findings substantiate the conclusion by Rana (2011:350) that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Botswana, India and Kenya were pushed into implementing the programme. Similarly, Dzimbiri (2008:53) confirmed that there was reluctance to implement the programme in the Botswana public service due to entrenched paradigms, mindsets and work ethics; reform fatigue; inadequate understanding; anxiety and resistance to change.

Dimension 3: Outcome measures

The third dimension of the model of social programmes is explicit outcome measures which emphasises that programme goals and objectives should be quantified into measurable outcomes. Globally, public services use different performance measurement systems such as total quality management and the balanced scorecard to measure institutional performance (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010:5). The balanced scorecard was introduced in the Botswana public service in 2005 to assist with strategic planning, performance measurement and reporting. The findings (38 = 77.6%) indicated that the Ministry is indeed using the balanced scorecard as a performance measurement instrument.

Generally, the balanced scorecard is not easily transferable to the public service as it was originally designed for the private sector and it is still a relatively new management tool in developing countries (De Waal 2007:70). The findings (26 = 53.1%) revealed that the balanced scorecard used in the Ministry was complex and technical. Respondents attributed its complexity to lack of customisation; qualitative nature of diplomatic work which makes it difficult to develop quantifiable performance measures, targets, and standards; cascading by novices and inadequate training. This is evident in qualitative responses such as the following:

A new performance measurement system such as the balanced scorecard required a qualified expert in the field to cascade it to the rest of the Ministry staff. The Ministry should have at least nominated one person from each department to go for extensive training on the system....Actually in all the seminars, performance measurements are given minimal attention.... The qualitative nature of the Ministry's work makes it difficult to develop quantitative measures and targets for most performance objectives.

These findings corroborate the conclusion by Rana (2011:172) that ministries of foreign affairs often encountered challenges to adapt performance measurement systems to their specific contexts. In sum, it is evident that the outcome measure dimension is problematic because of the underlying complexities of the diplomatic work environment.

Dimension 4: Programme components

The fourth dimension of the model of social programmes is programme components. These refer to resources or inputs and activities required to successfully implement the social intervention programme such as human and financial resources; time; and effort. The implementation of a performance

management system requires considerable time, sustained efforts, resources and effective leadership over extended periods (De Waal and Counet 2009:368). The majority of respondents (65.3% and above) indicated that the time, financial and human resources allocated for the implementation of the programme were inadequate. They stated that the roll-out of the programme was a challenge because of the geographical dispersion of the Ministry headquarters and diplomatic missions, costly expenses for organising workshops, travel, accommodation and subsistence, frequent change of management and shortage of financial and human resources. This is evident from the following explanation received from respondents:

Owing to the fact that the Ministry's offices and Missions are scattered or spread around the world, it was logistically difficult for the leadership to make adequate time to cover all within a short period. Human resources were initially a challenge in that one Performance Improvement Coordinator could not sufficiently cover all Missions, more especially with all the travelling involved; workshops on the programme in all parts of the world; time difference. Unlike other government ministries, excursions or seminars proved more expensive since they involved continental or inter-continental travel; accommodation and subsistence expenses as well...The Ministry has experienced frequent changes in leadership in the past six or so years. Frequent change of leadership does not augur well for the Ministry because instead of moving forward the Ministry was always moving backwards since the different leadership had different views on the implementation of the performance management system.

The performance management system of the Botswana Public Service had a five-year implementation plan which started in July 1999 and ended on 31 March 2004. However, its implementation was rushed in 2003/2004 to comply with the presidential directive deadline of 31 March 2004. Consequently, government ministries and independent departments had inadequate time to teach, assimilate and internalise performance management system concepts (Institute of Development Management Consortium 2006:10). Moreover, the approved performance management system budget for the Botswana public service which amounted to 27 million pula, an equivalent to 5.5 million United States of America dollars, was inadequate to complete the programme design and to provide implementation support (Bashe and Jongman 2006:24; Dzimbiri 2008:54).

Specifically, management's time, effort and attention were distracted by the computerisation of the Ministry headquarters and implementation of the Computerised Missions Accounting System at diplomatic missions from 1997

to 2000/2001 and organisational reviews and restructuring of the Ministry in 1998/99, 2007 and 2009 (Dogra 2009:2). To summarise, the analyses clearly reflect that the implementation of the programme in the Ministry was affected by factors such as rushed implementation, frequent change of management, restructuring and inadequate financial and human resources.

Dimension 5: Programme infrastructure

The fifth dimension of the model of social programmes is the programme infrastructure. This dimension is ideal for performance management because it includes critical components such as a vision, mission and values; and performance appraisal; performance contract; performance based budgeting; performance reporting; monitoring and evaluation; and recognition and reward systems (Dzimhiri 2008:55). The findings (49 = 100%) showed that the Ministry has a vision, mission and value statements. The majority of the respondents (42 = 85.7%) stated that the Ministry used the performance agreement system and the performance based reward system as performance appraisal systems as well as recognition and reward systems. Additionally, nine (81.8%) respondents in senior management indicated that the performance agreement system was also used as the performance contract system. 41 (83.7%) respondents stated that the Ministry lacked a performance based budgeting system, whilst 39 (79.6%) specified that the Ministry used the balanced scorecard as a performance reporting system and 27 (55.1%) indicated that the Ministry has monitoring and evaluation systems.

37 (75.5%) respondents stated that the existing supporting systems were ineffective because they were designed as parallel systems with conflicting purposes, lacked customisation and were implemented piecemeal. 36 (73.5%) respondents indicated that these systems were implemented using cascading approach which is prone to problems of lack of buy-in and ownership because it often entrenches command and control, stifles creativity and innovation and excludes the views of end-users (Hope and Player 2012:ix).

Document analyses revealed that the first generation vision, mission and value statements; strategic plans; annual performance plans; performance agreements and performance and development plans were poorly formulated and implemented. This was attributed to poor strategic planning, shortage of strategy skills; lack of well-defined strategic objectives with appropriate measures and targets; misalignment of individual objectives with ministerial and departmental annual performance plans, strategic plans, national development plans and budgets; the difficulty of cascading strategic objectives to lower levels of staff and limited stakeholder participation (Nyamunga 2006:7; Washington and Hacker 2009:15).

The performance agreement system for executive officers and the performance based reward system for non-executive officers were introduced on 1 April 2004 (Bashe and Jongman 2006: 27). These appraisal systems have not totally eliminated subjectivity in performance evaluations because of assessment of personal attributes (Institute of Development Management Consortium 2006:33). Overall, the findings show that the recognition and reward systems used by the Ministry were inadequate because of limited promotion opportunities, low salaries and Foreign Service Allowances (Dogra 2009:3). The performance contract, integrated results based budgeting, performance reporting, and monitoring and evaluation systems used by the Ministry are still at infancy stage (Nyamunga 2006:19; Rana 2011:182). Finally, the implementation of these systems concurrently or in rapid succession created reform fatigue and confusion in the Botswana Public Service (Washington and Hacker 2009:7).

Dimension 6: The human resource base

The sixth dimension of the model of social programmes is the human resource base which refers to the people who are responsible for implementing and managing the social intervention programme. It is important that the programme implementers and managers have the necessary experience, expertise and competencies to implement and manage the programme (Dzimhiri 2008: 48). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation has only one Ministry Performance Improvement Co-ordinator, seven Department Performance Improvement Coordinators and twenty-one Mission Performance Improvement Coordinators. 39 (79.6%) respondents indicated that these officers were somewhat competent to perform their roles, while seven (14.3%) stated that they were not well-trained and skilled, and three (6.1%) said they were well-trained and skilled.

Performance Improvement Co-ordinators were first appointed in the Botswana Public Service in 1999 (Institute of Development Management Consortium 2006:41). Document analyses further disclosed that the Ministry Performance Improvement Coordinator provided inadequate support in strategic management functions such as strategic planning, balanced scorecard, performance appraisal and business process re-engineering (Republic of Botswana 2009:34).

At the time when the performance management system was implemented, the Botswana public service and local management consultants who were contracted lacked the expertise to implement it. The literature lends credence to the view that staff of the Public Service Reforms Unit, which was established in 1998 to spearhead the implementation of the programme, was entirely

inexperienced and understaffed to provide professional support to Performance Improvement Co-ordinators (Dzimhiri 2008:54). Similarly, the Botswana National Productivity Centre which was awarded a five-year contract to roll-out the programme in the Botswana public service was amateurish. Against this background, external management consultants from the American consultancy group called The Performance Centre were engaged to assist with the roll-out of the programme (Institute of Development Management Consortium 2006:72). Performance Improvement Coordinators and executive officers were sent to institutions in the United States of America for training in Change Agent Training and Leadership Strategies (CATALYST), Focused Leadership Experience (FLEX), Creating Alignment for Maximum Performance (CAMP), and Transformational Coaching Certification Programme. The purpose of these training interventions was to change attitudes, introduce benchmarking and to develop the requisite skills to manage the programme (Washington and Hacker 2009:11).

Furthermore, the findings provided some valuable insights into the effectiveness of institutional structures facilitating the implementation of the programme such as Ministerial and Departmental Performance Improvement Committees. The findings showed that 31 (88.6%) respondents felt that these committees worked only occasionally, while four (11.4%) stated that they were effective. It is noteworthy that the Department and Mission Performance Improvement Coordinators were often unable to devote their time and efforts to these committees because they have their normal jobs to perform and additional performance management responsibilities create a burden on them.

Dimension 7: Programme stakeholders

The seventh dimension of the model of social programmes is the programme stakeholders. This dimension stresses the importance of involving key programme stakeholders such as sponsors of the programme, staff members, trade unions, political leaders and the general public during the conceptualisation, design and implementation of a social intervention programme such as a performance management system (Armstrong and Baron 1998:379; Babbie and Mouton 2001: 344). 34 (69.4%) respondents revealed that they were consulted during the implementation phase through staff meetings, performance management workshops and seminars, retreats, strategy development and review meetings.

27 (55.1%) respondents stated that trade unions and political leaders were consulted by the employer (Directorate of Public Service Management). The then two major public service trade unions, namely Botswana Civil Servants Association and Manual Workers Union were consulted through the National Joint Industrial Coordinating Committee, which was a consultative forum between the trade unions and the employer (Institute of Development Management Consortium

2006:59). Political leaders were consulted through performance management workshops and seminars that targeted the Botswana Cabinet and members of Parliament (Dzimbiri 2008:49). The general public was consulted through radio phone-in programmes such as “Talking Heads” and “*Tokafatso Maduo*” (which literally means improving performance results) and commemorative events such as Public Service Convention and Productivity Week (Nyamunga 2006:15–16).

Dimension 8: Programme context

The eighth and last dimension of the model of social programmes is the programme context. Institutional factors such as centralised or decentralised management authority, management style and institutional culture may affect the implementation of the performance management system (Armstrong and Baron 1998:358). 29 (59.2%) respondents indicated that the Ministry has centralised management authority. The literature showed that management functions related to finances, procurement and supplies, project planning and human resources were centralised by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board; and Directorate of Public Service Management. It often takes an average of three months to get approval or service from these institutions because of capacity constraints and poor work processes (Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2006:176).

31 (63.3%) respondents were of the opinion that the Ministry headquarters and diplomatic missions promoted a democratic management style through the formation of committees such as Visa; Procurement; and Corruption Prevention to promote participative leadership and to ensure that decision-making processes were transparent and key decisions were not made by an individual to curb corruption and abuse of office. Further, 26 (53.1%) respondents were of the view that the performance management culture was new in the Ministry and still has to be instilled. According to the Institute of Development Management Consortium (2006:34), Botswana Public Service managers were often reluctant to confront supervisees openly about performance issues out of fear that they would be viewed as harsh and unfair, and thus becoming unpopular. 36 (73.5%) respondents stated that the Ministry promoted a risk-averse culture due to the sensitivity of its responsibilities. There is often lack of delegation by some senior and experienced officers out of fear that any inappropriate decision made can have adverse consequences on the relations with co-operating partners (Republic of Botswana 1994:16–17).

The political and administrative systems may affect the implementation of the performance management system. Modern information and communications technology infrastructure is required to implement the programme (De Waal

and Counet 2009:369). 37 (75.5%) respondents indicated that the political and administrative systems were favourable because of the adequate support provided by the highest political and administrative leadership. It is notable that the decision to implement the performance management system in the Botswana public service was made by Permanent Secretaries in April 1997 and subsequently endorsed by the Botswana Cabinet in February 1999 (Dzimhiri 2008:49). Political stability, continuity, commitment and visionary leadership from both the political and administrative leadership ensured that the implementation of the programme did not lose momentum or waver (Nyamunga 2006:18).

28 (57.1%) respondents disclosed that the information and communications technology infrastructure used by the Ministry was unfavourable because it was old; poor connectivity to the Government Data Network; power disruptions; slow Internet access and low bandwidth which slows down communication between the Ministry headquarters and diplomatic missions. Recently, computerised systems were introduced to improve service delivery. In August 2011, the Border Control System and the Immigration and Citizenship System were introduced in diplomatic missions to issue machine readable passports, visas, residence and work permits. The Government Accounting and Budgeting System was introduced in 2013/2014 to replace the outdated accounting and budgeting system that was installed in the 1970s.

The last part of this article discusses the overall aim, findings and limitations of the study, recommendations and possible areas for future research.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to uncover the perceptions of staff regarding the implementation of the performance management system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation between 1999 and 2014. The researcher focused on foreign policy goals and objectives; broad-based support and critical mass of champions of the programme; easiness of the performance measurement system used; time, efforts, financial and human resources allocated; supporting systems; institutional capacity; involvement of key stakeholders and information and communications technology infrastructure.

The overall findings revealed that the respondents were generally negative about the implementation of the programme in the Ministry. The findings showed that foreign policy goals and objectives did not meet the SMART checklist. Programme implementation lacked broad-based support and critical mass of champions. The Ministry encountered problems to adapt the balanced scorecard to its specific context. Inadequate time, financial and human resources were allocated for programme implementation. The existing supporting systems such

as monitoring and evaluation systems were ineffective. The Ministry lacked institutional capacity to implement the programme. Key stakeholders such as staff members and trade unions were consulted during the implementation phase. Finally, the Ministry had inadequate information and communications technology infrastructure to support service delivery.

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings:

- Response bias may have occurred because of the low response rates for both junior and senior management which was 42.9% compared to the high response rate of 81% for middle management. However, the response rates of 42.9% exceeded the 15 to 20% which is common in surveys (Bhattacharjee 2012:81).
- Self-reporting bias may have occurred because this study was based on perceptions by respondents. Some respondents may have felt uncomfortable with giving true responses to an inside-researcher.
- Recall bias may have occurred because this research was undertaken after 14 years of implementation of the programme and some respondents may not have remembered everything that had happened in the past.
- Methodological weakness: This study was based on the experience of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, hence its findings cannot be generalised to other government ministries or other ministries of foreign affairs.

In light of the above findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the implementation of the programme in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation:

- The Ministry's objectives should be clearly defined and formulated in consultation with the diplomatic missions, relevant government ministries and independent departments because they are overarching of all government policies.
- The Ministry and diplomatic missions should allocate sufficient time for formulation of strategic plans; annual performance plans; performance agreements; and performance and development plans.
- The Ministry should create a critical mass of champions of the performance management system among its staff. This may be done by holding Directors, Ambassadors and High Commissioners accountable for its effective implementation.
- The Ministry should strengthen accountability and responsibility mechanisms to make the implementation of the programme the responsibility of all employees rather than of the Performance Improvement Coordinators only.
- The Ministry should establish an Institute to train its cadre and appoint Performance Improvement Coordinators based on merit and demonstrated competence to entrench meritocracy.

- The Ministry should strengthen institutional structures that facilitate effective implementation of the programme such as Ministerial and Departmental Performance Improvement Committees by ensuring that these committees meet regularly and produce minutes.
- The Ministry should upgrade its information and communications technology infrastructure to facilitate the usage of computerised systems, web-based technology solutions and electronic government.

Since this was a pioneering study, future research is needed to assess the entire effect of the programme on the quality of service delivery in the Ministry. A comparative study is also required to identify the common challenges experienced in implementing the programme in ministries of foreign affairs. This is an applied social research study that addresses the practical and theoretical issues of performance management which is of critical importance and interest to the Botswana Public Service because of the need to improve public service delivery.

NOTE

- 1 This article is based on the doctoral manuscript of Mr E. Sisa entitled *Implementation of the performance management system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Botswana public service* submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Public Administration at the University of South Africa.

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