Exploring the Effects of Performance Management on Service Delivery in Greater Tzaneen Municipality

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http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v6i6.1374

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how performance management affects service delivery, which has been a persistent problem in South African municipalities for decades. All municipalities have experienced protests due to underperformance, and the Greater Tzaneen Municipality is no exception. This municipality has struggled with poor service delivery due to various factors such as unethical behavior, mismanagement of public funds, and underperformance, resulting in continuous protests by community members. The study used a qualitative approach and thematic content analysis to analyze the data in line with the research objectives. The findings indicate that poor performance management has a negative impact on people's lives, and unrealistic performance goals set by the Greater Tzaneen Municipality have not been met. The issue of poor performance management is a significant concern in South African municipalities, leading to poor service delivery in the local government. To address this problem, the study recommends that all levels of employees should understand what performance management on service delivery entails. Additionally, the municipality executive managers should take responsibility for performance measurement and ensure that the performance of each employee is evaluated, monitored, and measured.

Keywords: Employees; Employers; Performance Management; Performance Management System; Service Delivery and Municipality

Introduction///General Introduction and Background

Performance management is a process that aims to ensure that an organization achieves its goals effectively and efficiently through a set of activities and outputs. This process can be applied to an entire organization, a department, an employee, or the processes in place to manage tasks (Puja, 2020). Originally, performance management emerged to justify income by calculating an employee's compensation based on their performance (Zvavahela, 2013; Dangol, 2021), and to encourage employee
performance behavior in the workplace (Radebe, 2015), mainly through financial incentives (Chauke, 1998; Jones, Murray, and Tapp, 2018). However, this system does not necessarily motivate personnel to learn and improve their abilities (Lange, 2012), and there is a disconnection between compensation motivation, skills, and capacity development in performance management practice (Chauke, 1998). Since the 1980s, there has been a need for a comprehensive method for supervising and satisfying employee performance (Chauke, 1998; Lange, 2012). Performance management was created much earlier and became popular in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States of America than in Australia (Armstrong and Williams, 2000). In South Africa, performance management was introduced in 1998 under the White Paper on Local Government to improve the performance of local government officials and ensure sustainable service delivery. The performance management system is necessary to evaluate local government employees' performance towards service delivery and to observe the efficiency and effectiveness of employees in service delivery approaches implemented by various Local Municipalities. This system also helps to ensure that rare resources are utilized proficiently, according to section 56 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) (Lange, 2012). In current times, managing people has become more dignified and specified, and previous performance evaluation practices have been combined into the idea of routine management that pursues to be a more detailed and general administration procedure (Lange, 2012).

**Problem Statement**

The Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality has been consistently criticized for poor service delivery, leading to ongoing community protests and conflict (Mamokhere, 2019; Mamokhere, 2020; Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022). Despite the hope for better living conditions following the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, the municipality has failed to adequately respond to the community's needs, leading to continued protests. The lack of adequate service delivery is caused by poor performance management, which remains a significant issue in the municipality. There is a need for training and development of individual employees to enhance the provision of essential services to citizens (Nama et al., 2022). Local government is crucial in South Africa as it is closest to the people and responsible for delivering services at the grassroots level. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the impact of performance management on service delivery.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate how performance management impacts service delivery, with a specific focus on the Greater Tzaneen Local municipality as a case study.

**Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature**

**Theoretical Frameworks on Performance Management**

Augustine (2018) emphasized that effective strategies for developing employees and enhancing institutional effectiveness include taking control and focusing on managing employees' performance. This can be achieved by managers who clarify institutional objectives and translate them into individual goals that are evaluated regularly. Performance management is thus a well-structured and effective management instrument for public service delivery. The study identifies two theories that support and encourage performance management. The first is the system theory, which suggests that assessing an individual's contribution within the institutional system is essential in achieving the best performance management. The second theory is the performance contract theory, which implies that performance management processes should be utilized to ensure that mutually agreed-upon performance expectations are evaluated.
regularly. Furthermore, Augustine (2018) highlights that developing employees' skills and knowledge is crucial to enhancing institutional development and meeting the learning needs of individual staff.

**Conceptualising and Contextualising Performance Management and Service Delivery**

According to Manyaka and Sebola (2012), managing employee performance is not a new concept and has long been recognized as necessary. However, Armstrong (2000) argues that the idea of "performance management" emerged to address the shortcomings of traditional performance evaluation methods.

Carrel et al. (2000) defines performance management as a set of control mechanisms, including performance appraisal, job design, training, management, and reward systems, that ensure the achievement of organizational performance goals. Armstrong (2000) emphasizes that performance management involves a systematic and integrated approach to achieving sustainable organizational success by assessing employee performance and developing individual and team contributions. In addition, performance management encompasses various activities such as performance evaluation, goal setting, expectation communication, monitoring, documentation, feedback provision, and talent development, as observed by Hartle (1997), Weise (2000), and Dixon (2004).

According to Carrel (2009), the concept of "performance management" involves a continuous process of effective communication and collaboration between managers and employees to achieve the organization's intended goals over time. Therefore, performance management is a broad and multifaceted concept that requires managers to engage with their employees properly to achieve organizational objectives.

**Effect of Performance Management in Municipalities**

According to Boakye et al (2014), providing pay raises and bonuses is a motivational tool that can lead to improved employee performance and better organizational outcomes. Naicker (2021) maintains that performance management enables superiors to identify areas of improvement for underperformers and address skills gaps in public institutions. Similarly, Ndewu and Muller (2018) found that transparent communication of performance management processes to employees can enhance staff performance across different positions. Mvuyisi and Ikechukwu (2022) contend that to enhance service delivery, performance management should not only apply to managerial positions but also to junior staff. Menemene (2015) suggests that for performance management to effectively support service delivery, it is crucial for public sector organizations to analyze the relationship between performance management and organizational productivity in municipalities.

**Challenges of Performance Management on Service Delivery**

Mvuyisi and Ikechukwu (2022), performance management in South African municipalities faces various challenges that affect service delivery. One significant challenge is the size of the workforce in these organizations, which makes the performance management system overwhelming and stressful for most supervisors and managers. Moreover, Macanda (2007) indicate that the staff's lack of understanding of the performance management system's contribution and poor communication further complicate the situation. Mvuyisi and Ikechukwu (2022:2) identified several other challenges, including staff dissatisfaction with a faulty performance management system, underperformers achieving more success than hardworking employees, and praising staff to a greater degree than necessary. These factors can lead to staff disappointment and loss of hope, making it difficult to achieve the organization's expectations. Additionally, Sehoa (2015) indicate that the lack of knowledge about the newly introduced performance management and enhancement system is another obstacle to performance management on service delivery. The National Municipal Audit General Report of 2021-2022 indicates that most South African
municipalities have not been performing well over the past six years, and there has been no positive change regarding the anticipated results of the transformation on service delivery.

Overall, Ndasana and Umejesi (2022) argue that the challenges of performance management in South African municipalities affect service delivery, making it difficult for these organizations to achieve their objectives effectively.

Advantages of Performance Management on Service Delivery

Mdluli (2015) has identified the following advantages of performance management on service delivery.

- It supports human resource planning requirements.
- Improved staff morale through feedback sessions.
- Assist organizations to meet their objects.
- Identifies individual’s strengths and areas of development.
- Improve customer satisfaction.
- Improve staff communication and performance.
- Employees with potential for advancements are identified.

Policies on Performance Management on Service Delivery

To improve the quality-of-service delivery to citizens, South Africa has implemented several policies aimed at ensuring that individual employees understand the standards of the Performance Management System (PMS) that need to be met. These policies include the Public Service Regulations of 2001, the White Paper on Human Resource Management of 1997, and the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997 (also known as the Batho Pele White Paper). The South African government established the Public Service Management Framework in 1998 and the Public Management and Development System Policy to promote a culture of employee performance and improve productivity in the public service. The PMS was introduced to monitor and evaluate performance, train and develop underperforming employees, promote accountability among staff, and manage instances of underperformance.

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 mandates performance management in the local sphere of government to ensure that tactics are fulfilled, and resources are used efficiently. Defining municipalities' performances is important since resources may be wasted if employees do not understand their accountability in achieving the institutional goals of the government. Employees in organizations must be aware of the organization's culture, goals, and targets to achieve the set goals effectively. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 provides for the effective performance of administrative functions. Performance management systems have been designed to monitor the performance of local spheres of government in meeting the developing demands within their capacities of dominion.

The White Paper on Local Government of 1998 recommends the introduction of a performance management system (PMS) to improve municipalities' performance and service delivery. The PMS has been accepted and established in all South African local governments for every public servant to familiarize themselves with. Integrated development planning, budgeting, and performance management are powerful tools that can assist municipalities in developing a united perspective on progress in their area.
**Research Design and Methodology**

In this study, a qualitative research method was utilized to investigate the impact of performance management on service delivery at The Greater Tzaneen local municipality in Limpopo province. According to Klenke et al (2016:6), qualitative research involves a naturalistic approach that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural context. Furthermore, Warren and Jansen (2020) contend that qualitative research entails the collection and analysis of data in the form of words, transcriptions, or recordings. To gather primary data, the researcher employed semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. The focus of this research was on individuals who played a crucial role in driving service delivery within the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, including senior managers, middle-level managers, lower-level employees, and ward committee members. Fourteen participants were selected from this target population based on their knowledge and experience in performance management related to service delivery in the municipality. The reason for this selection was to ensure a concentrated focus on individuals with relevant expertise in the field. According to Bless et al (2006:163), data analysis refers to a technique that enables a researcher to draw inferences from a small sample to a larger population. In this study, thematic analysis content (TAC) was utilized to scrutinize the data. This involved summarizing the interviewees' responses and organizing them into relevant categories based on the research objectives and thematic areas.

**Findings and Discussion**

The participant’s responded to the prepared research questions in this article, and the following thematic areas have occurred and presented as follows:

**Understanding of Performance Management**

It is crucial that municipal senior manager, middle manager and junior manager, and lower-level employees understand what performance management is. This is mainly because they cannot apply that if they don’t understand. Respondents were asked to define performance management as applied in the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality.

Majority of the respondents implied that;

“Performance management is the measuring of the performance of individuals and institution against set targets to be achieved and agreed”. While minority respondents answered slightly differently by stating performance management “is a tool utilised to assess the attachment of strategies, objectives and useful to bridge existing gaps in relation to performance”.

In this regard, it is clear that most of the respondents understand what is meant of performance management in the context of the municipality. Their understanding of performance management concurs with many scholars understanding. According to Sarker (2020:1), performance management is a comprehensive and participatory process that aims to supervise managers at work and align their goals with those of the organization. This definition implies that performance management involves a systematic approach to motivating and rewarding exceptional performance by managers and staff. Olibiyi-Olayiwola (2021) notes that performance management is a crucial issue that can potentially raise personal concerns between employees and managers when discussing organizational outcomes, objectives, or targeted goals. Managers may feel hesitant to provide negative feedback in order to maintain positive relationships with their employees. Sarker (2020:2) further explains that performance management assumes a shared accountability between managers and team members, as they work together to establish common goals and plans and monitor the outcomes.
State of Performance Management in the Municipality

It is important to understand the status quo of the municipality’s performance management. The respondents were asked to indicate the current state of performance management in the municipality.

In response to the question, majority of the respondents to this question indicated that;

“Currently employees are assessed annually in the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality. Performance management is the word that intimidates employees currently in the municipality, most of the employees as it is used to promote individuals from one level to another, yet the process is biased”.

Furthermore, the minority of the respondents indicated that;

“Performance management is implemented to director and managers and in the waste management division. The current state of performance management in the municipality lacks resources to perform the functions”.

Based on the above findings, it is clear that there is misbalance in the understanding of performance management. Ndasana and Umejesi (2022) argues that the state of performance management in the most South African Municipalities has been failing to realize its aims over continuous duties, reporting back, managing to enhance staff performance due to bias in the implementation of promotion.

Link between the Performance Management and Service Delivery

Linked to the previous question of the understanding of service delivery in the context of the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, respondents were asked as to whether performance management is supporting service delivery.

The respondent in this question answered that;

“Yes, PMS plays a vital role in assessing the key strategic objectives (targets) of the municipality with the work that is being performed in order to reach the fully potential of rendering or provision of service delivery, furthermore, it was indicated that the planning setting of the targets into service delivery is holding individuals accountable for the attained of good encourage continued service delivery. The respondents further indicated that performance management is linked to targets and to meet them, therefore officials must perform the actual work. If the municipality can have necessary resources and knowledgeable employees, this will enable officials to deliver the best service to the community and it support service delivery by ensuring that agreed performance targets are achieved and monitored continuously”.

In this regard, it is clear that there is a link between PM and service delivery as highlighted by the respondents. However, the link is often affect by many challenges. Ndasana and Umejesi (2022:2), stated that “there is a lot of available data on poor performance management within the public sector in South Africa reveal that challenges that resulted in the failure of performance management on service delivery included poor communication, lack of understanding of the PMS by the employees and lack of knowledge with regard to the integration of the performance management and development system”. The Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality is of the Municipalities that experiences the challenges of enhancing performance management that will support service delivery.
Effect of Monitoring Performance of Employees on Service Delivery

The respondents were asked if monitoring performance of employees has any effect on service delivery. Majority of the respondents agreed that monitoring performance of employees has positive effect on service delivery because if performance is not monitored, the municipality will experience poor performance which will result in poor service delivery and they also stated that monitoring employee’s performance ensures productive participation in our duties, and we can easily account for any decision taken.

The finding above concur with Dlamini, (2021:13) who describe monitoring performance of employees “as a continuous initiative to manage employee performance. It ensures that performance standards are set, and employee mentoring is conducted.” Aziz et al (2020) decree that performance monitoring and evaluation (ME) is a fundamental as it inspires the staff to perform better and assist to advance the institution with well-organized employees. Ogunode et al. (2020) stated that political bearers and political steadiness is one of the problems that do not promote the technique of monitoring employee’s performance.

Performance Management Promotion on Service Delivery

The respondents were asked if there is a current performance management promoting service delivery within the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality. The respondents answered this by indicating that;

“the current state of PM in the municipality lacks resources to perform the functions, furthermore, it was stated that performance management is implemented to directors and managers, has not been cascaded to lower levels except in waste management division, and the system does not promoting service delivery as it is only conducted for management. An effective performance management system should outer all employees as they strive towards a common goal. While on the other hand, other respondents indicated that the employees receive incentives for good or improved service provision and as a result performance improves service delivery”.

There are lot of mechanisms that can be used to for employees to promote the Local Municipalities service delivery. Thus, Nama et al. (2022) quantify that initiating appropriate municipal training activities and programs will assist the managers, supervisors and employee’s performance to promote service delivery. Kariuki and Reddy (2019) pointed out that one of the fundamental ways to promote service delivery through performance management is to develop performance agreements timeously and as well as to identify underperformers, training and development them to perform better from their poor performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of performance management on service delivery in the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality. The legislative and policy framework that regulating performance management in the Local Government must be followed and comply within the Greater Tzaneen Local municipality. It is very clear that the communities deserve better and basic service delivery. The challenges of local government in performance management must be attended and propose the solutions within the municipality. The critical issues that hamper quality of service delivery must be avoided and considering by the Greater Tzaneen Local municipality. The individual performance must be monitored, evaluated and measured for the municipality to identify gaps and help employees who are underperformers to improve their performance. Based on the findings, analysis and conclusion of this article, the following recommendations are made:
It is crucial that municipal senior manager, middle managers and junior managers, and lower-level employees understand what performance management is, this is mainly because they cannot apply that which they don’t understand.

The state of performance management in the municipality should not be biased. Municipality should conduct workshops for the employees on service delivery and, they must absorb qualified people so that they will be able to deliver the best services to the community. The municipality should conduct intervention sessions including training, conflict resolution, and work study. The municipal manager, middle managers, junior managers should be responsible for employee’s performance and ensure that the performance of the individual are evaluated, measured and monitored.

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