

# Implementation Gaps in Human Resource Performance Management Practices in the Ministry of Health and Child Care, Zimbabwe

<https://doi.org/10.36369/2616-9045/2021/v10i2a2>

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## Abstract

Any performance management (PM) practice implemented by an organisation has a direct impact on organisational performance and development; this paper therefore discusses challenges based on primary and secondary research findings, with the aim to explore how these findings correlate with how the successful implementation of PM practices is perceived and applied in the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research approach was used to collect data. The findings confirm that the implementation of PM has been marred by various challenges, which have, in turn, greatly affected performance results. Challenges identified by this study were, and continue to be, experienced at different levels of PM implementation strategies (e.g., at the formulation stage versus the implementation stage), and hence may hinder the effective implementation of PM practices in the MOHCC. The paper offers recommendations for consideration at political, policy, organisational, departmental, individual, and stakeholder levels.

**Keywords:** Ministry of Health and Child Care, performance management, policy formulation, policy implementation, Zimbabwe



## Introduction

Performance management (PM) emerged in the mid-1980s as a critical component of effective human resource management (HRM) within and outside the public sector. The growing understanding of the role of human capital in organisational success has led to the increasing importance of PM as managers, both in the public and private sectors, are constantly under pressure to improve organisational performance (Holloway, Francis, & Hinton, 1999, p. 351). In the context of the public service, performance includes elements related to achievement and benefit. In terms of public management, performance is the result of organisational expectations. PM therefore focuses on measuring an organisation's effective outputs on various levels to achieve its goals, whereas, in the area of managing economic activity, performance refers to the results and effects of managing socio-economic activities. In the area of HRM, it refers to the ratio of input and output from the perspective of employee behaviour or results (Setlhare, 2019, p. 1). In terms of measuring the effect of government activities in the public sector, performance focuses on multiple goals (Li & Gao, 2008, in Setlhare, 2019, p. 2). It is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted concept, as it enhances the overall effectiveness and efficiency of government. Both individuals and organisations are paramount to successful governance. In pursuit of development and successful public service delivery, notwithstanding the responsible usage of public and economic resources, performance in government is an important phenomenon (Setlhare, 2019, p. 1). In broad terms, PM can be defined as identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and teams and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organisation (Brown & O'Kane, 2019, p. 48). Setlhare (2019, p.3) states that "if employees are central to achieving optimal performance within the public service, then it is equally important to improve employees' performance". While performance relates to both teams and individuals, individuals need to perform within a team context. Deb (2008, in Setlhare, 2019, p. 3) concludes that the effective management of individual performance is critical to the implementation of strategy, as well as the organisation's ability to achieve its strategic objectives. Deb (2008, in Setlhare, 2019, p. 3) adds that it cannot be expected that performance will improve naturally despite employees' natural desire to perform and be rewarded. With regard to the development of PM, there is an emerging call for integrated approaches to managing and rewarding performance, which can be attributed to paradigm shifts to promote entrepreneurial governance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 354). In recent years, paradigm shifts have been necessitated by the new approach to public sector management, known as New Public Management (NPM), which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For Toppo and Prusty (2012, p. 5), the development of PM in the public domain was influenced by NPM's focus on drawing lessons from successful private sector management practices to increase public sector performance and efficiency. This view is supported by Hughes (2003, p. 6), who states that "the new approach to public management emphasises results,



a focus on clients, outputs, outcomes, the use of management by objectives, performance measurement as well as the use of market-type mechanisms”.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the first phase of PM in Zimbabwe’s public sector was aimed at determining whether the practice of Africanisation was successfully implemented. As the name suggests, Africanisation aims to improve the number of black African people working in the public sector. Zinyama, Nhema, and Mutandwa (2015, p. 8) highlight that in the early 1980s, Zimbabwe started to focus on the Africanisation of the civil service and aligning it with socialist principles. This new socialist developmental trajectory was guided by the Growth with Equity Policy of 1981. This policy, according to Mutenga (2020, p. 6), manifested the government’s desire to develop the country in terms of socialist and democratic principles in the allocation and distribution of resources and social benefits. Adedeji (1981, p. 14) notes that African governments pursued the Africanisation agenda in the civil service immediately after their independence in order to better serve the interests of the newly independent states. Zinyama et al. (2015, p. 8) note that the government of Zimbabwe at that stage could not develop and implement its own new policies, due to the previous era’s imposed structures and shortages of specialist skills in sectors such as education, health, and engineering. Several recommendations were therefore made by the Public Service Review Commission that led to the adoption and implementation of a formal PM system in 1995 for Zimbabwe’s public sector. However, the era of HRM since the 1980s (especially in terms of the Africanisation agenda after Zimbabwe’s independence), and the PM system that followed in 1995, had shortcomings, which are discussed in this paper.

## Research Methodology

The research question addressed by this research is: “What are the challenges and factors that hinder the effective implementation of human resource performance management (HRPM) practices in the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) in Zimbabwe?” The research utilised a qualitative research approach. As stated by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017, p. 145), qualitative research (a phenomenological enquiry) seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. A qualitative research design was used as it “is useful for practitioners and policymakers” (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 24), since it can help stakeholders become “more appreciative of other view-points” (Hammersely, 2007, p. 290). Patton (2002, p. 256) also indicates that “[c]ertain data collection methods have also been identified with qualitative research, such as observational methods, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documentary evidence”. To gain rich data regarding PM, data-collection and -analysis methods such as in-depth interviews and literature and document reviews were deemed best suited for this study. The principal researcher was thus justified in selecting the qualitative approach as the study’s philosophical frame of reference.



For the purposes of this study, the principal researcher applied a qualitative research design and conducted a naturalistic enquiry in a real-world setting. As emphasised by Moxham (2012, in McInnes, Peters, Bonney, & Halcomb, 2017, p. 40), “[n]aturalistic inquiry provided the scope to examine subjective and complex human experiences in the context and natural setting within which they occurred”. This particular approach assisted the principal researcher to adopt purposive sampling and to approach respondents within their places of work to gain insights into the various aspects of HRPM within their environment. The principal researcher was thus the primary instrument of data collection. The sampling of the respondents is indicated in Table 1.



**Table 1: Sampling of respondents**

Sample and organisation	Pseudonyms and year
Two Public Administration lecturers from the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Zimbabwe	UZ1-2 (2017)
Three employees from the Office of the President and Cabinet	OPC1 (2017); OPC2-3 (2018)
Four employees from the Ministry Head Office	MHO1 (2017); MOH2-4 (2018)
Three employees from the Public Service Commission	PSC1 (2017); PSC2-3 (2018)
Five managers each from Chitungwiza Hospital and Harare Hospital	CH1-5 (2018) and HH1-5 (2018)

Source: Authors' compilation

Varied aspects of PM and performance appraisal were discussed with the respondents that cannot be presented in one paper. Only a few significant aspects and responses are discussed in this paper. Others may form part of future publications.

The next sections discuss the empirical findings based on responses that were obtained from the respondents during primary data collection through interviews. Secondary data, such as literature and document reviews, were used to supplement the findings from the primary sources. The empirical findings related to PM in the MOHCC during the first era are firstly discussed with emphasis on Africanisation and its impact on the performance of Zimbabwe's newly independent public service because the Africanisation of the public service started before PM was adopted in practice. Africanisation was, however, later given impetus when the government adopted the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act of 2007.

### **Challenges Related to Performance Management (PM) in the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC): Discussion and Findings**

According to Armstrong and Baron (1998, p. 51), a PM system is a system developed to create a performance culture, appraise employee performance, achieve sustainable improvements in individual and institutional performance, assess performance against set objectives, align individual and institutional objectives, improve the management of resources, develop a motivated and committed workforce, and bring about change in the culture and ethos of the organisation. There are many barriers, challenges, and problems related to implementing PM conducive to the above ideals. According to Ohemeng (2009, p. 112), these barriers include suppressing and manipulating negative data and institutional and capacity problems, such as a negative organisational culture, institutional fragmentation, (poor) public support, and inept leadership. These challenges can cause some organisations to "shun performance management despite it being considered the key to the modernisation process of the public sector" (Bouckaert & Peters, 2002, p. 359). The next section discusses the challenges related to Africanisation and its impact on the public sector.

## Challenges Related to Africanisation and Its Impact on the Performance of the Public Sector

Since their independence, most postcolonial African states have been characterised by expatriates occupying most administrative and professional posts. In turn, Africans were confined largely to clerical and “messengerial” posts because of their lack of expertise due to being marginalised during colonialism. According to Adedeji (1981, p. 14), African governments pursued the Africanisation of their civil services immediately after independence to serve the interests of the newly independent states. Adedeji (1981, p. 14) adds that, since the dawn of Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, the country has implemented many reform measures to improve the competence and efficiency of the bureaucrats, to enhance service delivery, and to align governance to the development needs of the citizens. Adedeji (1981, p. 14) further notes that the measures adopted by the Zimbabwean government include the Africanisation of the public service that was implemented soon after the country’s independence in 1980. According to Musingafi (2013, p. 22), Africanisation can also be regarded as “blackenisation”, which, in the Zimbabwean context, meant to improve the performance of the civil service. The “blackenisation” of the public service can be viewed as the massive recruitment of black people to fill posts formerly occupied by the minority white population.

Due to “blackenisation”, many black people became holders of high-level posts for which they had little or no credentials. In addition, Dzimbiri (2008, p. 43) emphasises that until the 1970s, some capitalist countries in Western Europe and the United States of America (USA), as well as the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, expanded their activities in emulation of the socialist ideology pursued by the Soviet Union during the communist period. A preliminary evaluation of Africanisation in Zimbabwe suggests that the process aimed to fulfil a socialist transformation, since Zimbabwe supports a pro-Russian ideology. Alwi and Siti-Nabiha (2009, p. 243) argue that the mostly “ceremonial” adoption of a PM system may have been due to isomorphic pressure to mimic other organisations in the same environment.

It should be noted that, between 1958 and 1968, Africanisation led to the hasty training of between 100 000 and 200 000 people for expatriate-held posts, which led to the fall of standards, performance levels, and efficiency in Africa as a whole (Adedeji, 1981, p. 30). Furthermore, Musingafi (2013, p. 22) states that posts in the Zimbabwean public service grew from 10 570 in 1980 to 19 300 in 1994. By 1987, the economic situation in the country had deteriorated significantly, which was exacerbated by inappropriate policies and excessive public spending (Mutizwa-Mangizha, 1998, p. 1). During Zimbabwe’s early years of independence, little was done to manage public service performance apart from some “window dressing” performance appraisals that employees did not understand. In reality,



the focus was on expanding job opportunities for the black populace to honour liberation promises at the expense of effective management and quality.

UZ1 (2017) confirmed Adedeji's (1981) assumption. UZ2 (2017) added that *"Africanisation of the public service in Zimbabwe happened in 1981, soon after the country's independence, after the then prime minister issued a directive to Africanise the public service"*.

Alwi and Siti-Nabiha's (2009, p. 243) argument that the new PM system may have been adopted due to isomorphic pressure to mimic other organisations in the same environment may lead to a ceremonial adoption of the practice. UZ2 (2017) similarly stated that *"Africanisation was done by all African governments soon after independence. It was like a wave done by countries like Zambia and Malawi, that was informed by the colonial injustices. There is no way Zimbabwe would have been found wanting"*. Zimbabwe was thus expected to Africanise (in this regard Africanisation is equated to "blackenisation") as practised by all the newly independent states on the continent, and simply followed the other African states.

"Blackenisation" specifically considered the need to increase the number of black people operating in the public sector. Novak (2012, p. 1) notes that although segregation tended to exist in a less formal capacity in the former Southern Rhodesia than in its neighbour, the South African apartheid state, during the colonial period, segregation policies were, nonetheless, invasive in some areas. UZ1 (2017) similarly stated that *"Africanisation aimed at empowering black people by giving them important positions in which they were neglected for a long period because whites did not want blacks to occupy those positions in the colonial period"*.

In support of this view and the political endeavour to promote Africanisation, OPC1 (2017) noted: *"Africanisation only concentrated on system functioning and not on anything else."* These sentiments were further echoed by UZ1 (2017), who emphasised that *"Africanisation sacrificed PM, as addressing colonial injustices meant that promotion, rewarding, and compensation was not done on the grounds of performance but by race. At institutions of higher learning lecturers were promoted to professors without [possessing] PhDs"*. PSC3 (2018) further explained: *"Africanisation was a deliberate move, aimed to make sure that blacks were employed at different levels in the public service for security reasons. The government felt that if the whites remained in positions of power, they might think of regaining their authority from the blacks. The major problem is that in most cases fulfilling security agendas do not have any relationship with the fulfilment of the performance agenda."* Based on the presented information, it could be asserted that the fastest way for African governments to address segregation, which was followed by Zimbabwe soon after independence, inadvertently led to a bloated civil service that underperformed. In order to redress this flaw, amendments were made; for example, the practice of promoting lecturers to professors without them holding the necessary PhD

qualifications was later reversed to require that professors must have obtained a PhD degree. Dzenga (2019, p. 1), writing for *The Herald* on 1 April 2019, highlights that the “[g]overnment has adopted a stance of lenience towards university lecturers who do not hold doctorates”. Dzenga (2019, p. 1) further states that academic research is central to Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030, which emphasises academia as being the answer to the country’s problems. Hence, there is a move towards ensuring that the PhD requirement is met in Zimbabwe.

The decision regarding promoting academic research came into effect after evidence of incompetence surfaced in the public service in general and in academia in particular. UZ2 (2017) argued that *“although Africanisation was good in its own right to address colonial imbalances, the major challenge is how it was implemented. It had no consideration of performance issues. The relationship between incompetence and job performance never cropped up in the minds of government during the implementation of Africanisation. This is why government later requested all professors that were promoted during the Africanisation period to complete their PhDs. Serious problems of incompetence had been experienced”*.

According to Armah (1972, Malisa & Missedja, 2019, p. 2), *“colonial governments made education available to African children, from eight years and older. However, there were very few schools for African children, and, as such, only a small section of the population attended formal schooling”*. Therefore, soon after independence, most black people were not fit to hold office, as they lacked both the necessary education and experience. OPC1 (2017) stated that *“Africanisation was driven by populist policies, thereby leading to appointments and promotions of individuals who had no credentials. Blacks who were promoted to higher offices did not have the required credentials. The colonial masters segregated blacks from acquiring better education, which was the preserve of the white minority. Lack of education meant lack of skills to the blacks who were now expected to manage government offices”*.

In an attempt to bridge the gap caused by the lack of education, the government of Zimbabwe issued certificates for black people based on their language competence only. This statement is supported by Musingafi (2013, p. 22), who notes that most black people found themselves in professional and management posts with neither the appropriate qualifications nor the experience. PSC2 (2018) highlighted that in order *“to cater for the skills gap; [the] government issued certificates for people who went to war, depending on their fluency in spoken English. This had nothing to do with an individual’s skills but rather how eloquent one was in English. After receiving certificates, individuals were supposed to continue learning at their allocated levels. In principle, the certificate owners were supposed to further their education. As opposed to that, most of the people just joined the civil service using the allocated certificates. The result was a poorly performing public service because the civil servants lacked education, as well as experience. In most cases*





*work was performed on a trial-and-error basis. Thus, resources and time were lost*". Musingafi (2013, p. 22) indicates that such a combination of personnel was a sure recipe for failure.

One of the major reasons for the war of liberation was to free black people from colonial rule in Zimbabwe. According to Zinyama et al. (2015, p. 10), liberation forces utilised propaganda that was focused on the fight for freedom. As a result, for the majority of black people in the country, "freedom" meant that independence would have been established across all spheres (e.g., that colonial rule would not have an impact on policy decisions). According to PSC1 (2017), *"independence was misconstrued to mean no management in the civil service. Independence from the colonial masters meant employees were no longer under management supervision. Managers were reminding the civil servants of the white minority rule. Working under instructions from managers was synonymous with colonial rule. Managers were viewed as the new version of colonialism. The only route to liberate employees from such a type of rule was through resentment to instructions"*.

Musingafi (2013, p. 22) argues that Africanisation destroyed the existing formal systems in such a manner that when PM came to the fore in the 1990s, people had already started talking about the need to make the civil service more formal and professional. The destruction of formal systems, in turn, resulted in an ungovernable civil service, where everyone believed themselves to be their own manager. Some managers even, ultimately, found themselves in trouble for instructing subordinates to carry out their daily duties, as highlighted by OPC2 (2018), who narrated how a matron at one of the hospitals where he worked met with difficulties after instructing a sweeper to redo her work. This incident was supported by OPC3 (2018), who added: *"I received a report of a matron who had instructed a cleaner in her ward to redo her cleaning as there was evidence of poor performance; for example, the window sills had dust on them. The cleaner phoned her relative, who was a top government official, to complain about the matron, who the cleaner accused of emulating the colonial masters. A few hours later, the matron received a phone call from the top official warning her against such practices as they can bring her into trouble."*

This narrative indicates how a poor understanding of political freedom contributed to the changing performance of workers. OPC2 (2018) further noted that *"[f]earing to be labelled as being part of the colonial masters and even losing her job, the matron never asked the cleaner again. Absenteeism, coming late, and even dismissals became the order of the day, especially for those who had relatives in top government positions"*. In support of OPC2 (2018), CH2 (2018) noted that *"most managers in the MOHCC and the public sector at large feared for their lives and they just watched while employees were not performing as expected. The major problem in Zimbabwe is that politics supersedes performance and it is better to stay alive than to be critical"*. It is clear that the matron had to change her performance in order to allow poor performance from others. The poor performance was

not always evident but the change in regime led to poor performance occurring, and it was allowed to continue due to the fear of victimisation.

The idea that politics supersedes performance was the basis of different reporting structures and crippled the functioning of the public sector. For instance, OPC1 (2017) stated: *“Today Zimbabwe’s public service is dealt with different centres of power that has negatively affected service delivery. Africanisation is the root cause of such problems. Instead of following directives from their immediate managers, employees sought reprieve from people who were neither their bosses nor had any knowledge of how those departments functioned. Such interferences not only slowed service delivery but killed management confidence.”* UZ1 (2017) agreed by commenting: *“It is now accepted that the PSC lost control of the situation as the merit system was relegated to the political wilderness with those in high political office recommending their own preferred candidates. Given the highly charged political environment at that time, the appointments tended to favour those that aligned themselves with the ruling party. All the gains (in terms of public service delivery) from pre-independence Zimbabwe were wiped out by side-lining appointments based on merit.”*

Section 104 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) empowers the president to appoint ministers and to assign them functions, including the administration of any Act of Parliament. Such appointments are the prerogative of the president – as long as those appointed are senators or members of the National Assembly. Up to five members may be chosen from outside parliament in terms of their professional skills and competences. OPC3 (2018) indicated that *“the appointment of most ministers during the time and even today was based on the principle, the higher you go, the more political it becomes. At times the appointment is based on how well one is versed with political slogans, political affiliation, and their role in the liberation struggle”*. OPC2 (2018) also highlighted that *“Africanisation was not a bad idea. It was aimed at improving appointments for blacks to serve in the public sector and had no intention to improve performance”*.

These statements support the notion that there is a need for African governments to move from dictatorships to more democratic systems of governance (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2011, p. 238) by incorporating developmental agendas, Africanisation, nation building, and managing change (Otenyo, 2006, in Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2011, p.238). According to the PSC (2009), PM is often employed to denote the means by which managers ensure that employee activities and outputs are in line with set, planned, and desired goals, objectives, and standards.

## **Challenges Related to PM Practices at the Formulation Stage**

The primary challenge related to Africanisation at the formulation stage is that Africanisation is not “home grown” since it was a generalised blueprint that was adopted



from other states in Africa once they became independent. As such, Africanisation lacked stakeholder involvement at the policy formulation stage in Zimbabwe. This aspect is discussed in the following subsections.

### **Africanisation Is Not Home Grown**

The adoption of a new PM system in Zimbabwe, according to Alwi and Siti-Nabiha (2009, p. 243), may have been due to isomorphic pressure to mimic other organisations in the same environment, which may have led to a ceremonial adoption of the practice. Alwi and Siti-Nabiha (2009, p. 243) further contended that conformity pressures exerted by the institutional environment may make organisations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient. Africanisation did not originate in Zimbabwe; rather, conformity pressures to follow the example of other African states led to its implementation. The need to conform to other African nations seemingly led to the abandonment of an extant performance system that (better) suited the MOHCC. As Mutizwa-Mangizha (1998, p. 14) noted, Zimbabwe abandoned the PM system, which was reflective of the performance of, for example, the healthcare system, and the seriousness of the performance appraisal report was greatly eroded by government officials after independence. As a result, the PM system “that evolved from an analysis of the health profession was replaced by a one size fit all performance management system” (Africanisation) (Mutizwa-Mangizha, 1998, p. 14). Appraisal was affected by changes in the PM system adopted through the process of Africanisation, and doctors started to treat the healthcare system with scepticism. HH3 (2018) noted that *“pre-independence PA was liked and greatly used by our learned friends [by “learned friends” the respondent meant doctors]. The initiative that was later used [post-independence] does not reflect the real performance of employees”*. Based on HH3’s (2018) assertion, it could be claimed that doctors did not like Africanisation, and they started losing interest in the appraisal system.

### **Africanisation Lacked Stakeholder Involvement at the Formulation Stage**

The Africanisation agenda’s design was based on technocratic blueprint or textbook solutions that were by and large formulaic and mechanistic in their approach (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2010, p. 153). As indicated by UZ2 (2017), *“Africanisation’s agenda was to settle colonial injustices for newly independent states, and the document was there before Zimbabwe got independence. It was drafted by African leaders well before independence”*. Since blueprints (including that of Africanisation) tend to be formulaic and mechanistic in their approaches, there is little to no room for stakeholder involvement at the formulation stage. As a result, formulation tends to be undertaken outside of the domain of stakeholders. According to UZ2 (2017), *“issues of suitability or stakeholder involvement were of no importance; what mattered most was following the footsteps of other newly independent countries”*. Similarly, PSC1 (2017) asserted that *“the major challenge with PM practices in Zimbabwe is that they come as political decisions, not as HR policies. Issues of performance have no relationship with politics; hence they have to emanate from the HR*



*department and not from politicians. The HR department have the technical expertise to craft and implement performance practices. Politicians must come in to support a given policy”.*

## **PM Challenges in the MOHCC**

PM challenges in the MOHCC entail that PM was donor driven and lacked stakeholder involvement. These challenges are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

### **PM Was Donor Driven**

According to the PSC (1997, p. 5), PM in all the government ministries and departments was undertaken in order to correct the negative perceptions that the public had of service delivery by the government through the public servants in Zimbabwe. Balogun (2003, in Musingafi, 2013, p. 22) further states that failure to implement changes in Africa were and are still mainly due to the dependence of reform initiatives on externally driven inspiration. According to Pollitt (1986, p. 168), the image of the public sector is critical to attract donor funding, and senior politicians and senior officials often exclude the general public from designing a PM system because of the uncertainty and time-consuming untidiness of direct consultation. This exclusion, in turn, often “leads to the performance management practices being imposed upon staff members by politicians” (Bouckaert & Peters, 2002, p. 361). The PM reforms in Zimbabwe were hurriedly adopted, as established in Moyo’s (1997, in Musingafi & Dumbu, 2013, p. 22) research findings, which indicated that “[s]ome of the reforms had been driven more by donor concerns than by the government’s perceived needs”. PSC2 (2018) also noted: “*The Kavran Commission had reported the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the public sector but the speed at which the reforms were done is a clear sign that some forces were behind it. Donors are selective in their approach, they want some systems to be in place so as to give funding.*” In addition, Mutizwa-Mangizha (1988, p. 30) established that civil servants felt that the full implications of these reforms were not clear even to the architects of the policy and they found it difficult to support them. According to Zigora and Chigwamba (2000, p. 1), the government decided to implement PM despite public servants not being ready for the new system.

### **Lack of Stakeholder Involvement During Policy Formulation**

A good PM system, according to Aguinis (2013, p. 7), needs effective employee engagement that results in employees feeling involved, committed, passionate, and empowered. Aguinis (2013, p. 7) further notes that engagement is a good predictor of organisational performance and success and is an important contributor to a good PM system. Based on Aguinis’ (2013) findings, data collected from the MOHCC for this study indicated that the failure of the different implemented PM practices in Zimbabwe is indicative of how the systems are not adequate, as they did not, and continue to fail to, permit employee engagement at the policy design level. This understanding is supported



by Zigora and Chigwamba (2000, p. 1), who argue that PM was introduced without adequate consultation and commitment by stakeholders; hence there was no ownership of the programme by affected parties. The PSC (1997, p. 6) previously recorded that there is a lack of stakeholder commitment that leads to implementation challenges. It should be noted that PM was initially adopted as a management tool to bring about the desired changes in the public sector. However, implementing the system required change and the success of the implementation of these changes depended on the readiness of the organisation, as argued by Fletcher and Williams (1996, p. 171). Employee involvement is a motivating factor and important to enhance commitment towards achieving organisational goals and higher levels of performance at the individual level. Yet, this is not the case in Zimbabwe, as highlighted by PSC2 (2018), who stressed that the failure of PM was a result of *“public servants [being] unaware of the reasons for the origin of PM and they sabotaged its implementation. The reason why the new system was introduced was not understood by civil servants, who were the major stakeholders since its implementation”*. PSC2 (2018) added that the *“[g]overnment did not awaken public servants to address the negative comments received from the public concerning their style of service delivery”*. The government should have instituted workshops aimed at informing its workers of these public grievances. Workshops of this kind could have sensitised civil servants to the need for change; thereby gaining their buy-in. When asked about the origin of PM, most civil servants who participated in this study showed ignorance; there was a lack of explanation regarding the origin of, as well as the rationale behind, PM, which ultimately led to employees rejecting it, as revealed by the respondents. Both CH5 (2018) and HH3 (2018) referred to a letter written by nurses explaining their shock in terms of how their employer had tabled a PM system to parliament without any input from them. Part of this letter reads as follows: *“The nurses expressed shock and concern for the manner you have handled the health sector reform policy. It was a shock to learn that the document was put before parliament before nurses had the opportunity to make comments on it. The nurses want to know why they were not consulted on this”* (Zimbabwe Nurses Association, 2021, in Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1998, p. 19).

## **Challenges of PM Practices at the Implementation Stage**

At the policy implementation stage, the Africanisation policy had challenges, which entailed a lack of commitment from beneficiaries to follow instructions, implementation without the necessary skills development, and the destruction of existing formal structures upon implementation. These challenges are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

### **Lack of Commitment**

An analysis of how Africanisation was implemented shows that politicians found joy in neutralising the public service without paying attention to the outcomes of such decisions

(e.g., how performance practices might be affected). Waldman (1997, p. 267) warned that “managers who are against designing performance management systems with little or no input from users will be resisted”. Furthermore, the initial adopters of the Africanisation policy did not commit themselves to its success, as they were not part of the drafting process in Zimbabwe. As UZ1 (2017) noted: *“Africanisation required those that were awarded certificates based on eloquence in English to further their education, but the beneficiaries did the opposite [they joined the public service with no expertise]. There was no engagement with the beneficiaries during the policy formulation stage; hence there was no support at policy implementation stage as well.”* Adopters also did not see the benefits of continuing with the education that was expected by the formulators; instead, they focused on getting workers to join the public service and start working, which meant immediate benefits for their own portfolios. UZ2 (2017) further explained the negative consequences of the non-involvement of employees during the formulation stage of Africanisation as follows: *“It led to an under-performing civil service as the experienced whites were angered by government’s decision to employ non-experienced blacks and either resigned or migrated to other countries. Expertise of the few left [remaining] experienced civil servants was diluted by the inexperienced staff. Experienced staff wasted their time inducting the new employees.”* OPC2 (2018) added that *“most of the beneficiaries did not proceed with their education and rather became civil servants who possessed no educational and professional qualifications. This had negative consequences on the performance of the public service”*.

### **Implementation Without Skills Development**

In most cases, when the PM system is implemented, some PM skills were either not yet developed or have not been tested in practice, according to Armstrong and Baron (1998, p. 374). With reference to Africanisation, the process was hurriedly implemented without first ensuring that employees had the necessary general skills required to join the civil service. MHO3 (2018) stated that *“soon after independence, the government, as an African state, was under pressure to blackenise the public sector and nobody ever thought of the availability of skills. Independence euphoria engulfed the nation”*. Most black people found themselves in professional and management posts with neither appropriate qualifications nor experience (Musingafi, 2013, p. 22). It was further noted by Musingafi (2013, p. 22) that dubious reasons like war credentials, relationships with powerful political figures, and being generous with titles enabled one to be employed in the civil service, and such a combination of personnel was a sure recipe for failure. As a result, performance and productivity suffered (Musingafi, 2013, p. 22). Before the implementation of Africanisation, the training of individuals was supposed to have been the top priority, since colonialism had negated education for black people due to racial segregation.



## **Destruction of Existing Formal Structures to Establish Different Centres of Power**

Soon after independence in 1980, PM practices (i.e., Africanisation) could not be adhered to as Zimbabweans' excitement about independence from colonial rule was misconstrued as independence from workplace management as well. This was triggered by staff members' poor understanding of the reasons for implementing the PM system (De Waal & Counet, 2009, p. 369). Africanisation was, in essence, also misconstrued as independence from workplace managers. OPC2 (2018) echoed this sentiment by stating that *"poor understanding of the rationale for Africanisation led to the emergency of different centres of power as employees could report anywhere"*. This differentiation of power centres resulted in agencies or units (i.e., immediate supervisors in the case of the MOHCC) being *"charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate, monitor and manage the implementation of the performance management system often lacking authority to enforce compliance"* (Firman, 2008, p. 280). The reciprocal requirement imposed by employee contractual agreements was also destroyed. Squelch (1999, p. 11) states that a contractual agreement includes the fact that an employee must provide and render the services agreed to, fulfil tasks with reasonable competence and efficiency, act in good faith, carry out the lawful instructions of the employer, and be respectful and obedient. OPC3 (2018) further noted that *"due to different centres of power, the MOHCC employees were no longer obedient to management, did not respect superiors, and no longer carried out lawful instructions from supervisors. Lack of adequate employee management led to the deterioration of standards"*. Similarly, HH5 (2018) reiterated that *"stakeholder participation before Africanisation would have meant employees received education on the meaning of and differences between colonialism and workplace management"*. It can thus be asserted that a lack of stakeholder engagement at the onset of Africanisation resulted in the increase in unprofessional public servants evidenced in today's sector. Conversely, the initial involvement of workers would likely have meant the induction of MOHCC employees to important management principles, which are the foundation of effective public sector performance.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The study offers the following recommendations at different levels:

### **Political Level: Development of a PM Ideology, Long-Term Commitment, and Stakeholder Support**

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) is the primary political party; it is therefore responsible for determining the policies that govern the MOHCC. In order to adopt a PM model for the MOHCC, it should either originate from, or be strongly supported at, the political level. The main reason why PM implementation does not complete its cycle is a lack of political commitment to the process. ZANU-PF thus

needs to change its ideology towards performance and effective PM systems, and should clearly pronounce its stance regarding these aspects. The party's leader, who is the president of Zimbabwe, should also continuously declare dedication to improved public service performance. Such commitment from the top in government could effectively put pressure on ministers to demand performance results from their ministries and departments, including the MOHCC.

### **Policy Level: Crafting a Home-Grown PM Policy**

The MOHCC should establish a deeper appreciation of and need for well-implemented PM practices as a panacea for performance gaps to assist the minister in arguing for a PM system for the MOHCC in cabinet. The development of a PM system can only be effective when all ministers understand the rationale behind the system and how it contributes to the good performance of public service employees. The philosophy of the MOHCC's general PM system should form a direct link between individual performance and the ministry's performance. The outcome of the PM system should also be clearly outlined from the onset. Managers would therefore require adequate training and understanding of the PM system before implementation.

### **Organisational Level: Incorporation of a PM Policy**

The MOHCC should incorporate a PM policy, and employees should be informed thereof. The leadership at this level should also be skilled enough to practically implement the PM policy. Additionally, implementing organisational change that is embraced and owned by departments and individuals is among the critical roles of leadership at this level.

### **Departmental Level: Formulate Clear Objectives for the Department**

The departmental level should set objectives that are in line with the organisational vision in order to allow for both vertical and horizontal integration.

### **Individual Level: Take Own Responsibility of the PM System**

Employees should be required to sign a performance contract with their supervisors, which would serve as a formal agreement between line managers and employees regarding the employees' key performance areas that should be achieved. A performance contract should be agreed upon between employees and supervisors during the first month of the employees' work year. In cases of staff movement during the contracting period, the new manager will be responsible for the performance contract, in consultation with the previous manager.

### **Stakeholder Level: Involvement of the Ministry of Finance**

The MOHCC requires continued stakeholder meetings with the government; in particular, with the Ministry of Finance. Such meetings should involve support for a continued budgetary allocation for the performance programme.





Weak institutional frameworks imply that ministries that do not effectively implement PM practices are not forced to do so by law and, consequently, suffer no consequences for non-compliance. Since the top leadership continues to change in Zimbabwe, internalising PM practices means that such practices should continue beyond the tenure of any one leader or governing entity. The findings of this study may aid in the development of a policy that leads to the institutionalisation of PM practices in the MOHCC. Such institutionalisation may also spread to other public sector organisations across Zimbabwe. This study could thus contribute to current knowledge, not only in terms of PM within the MOHCC, but in relation to PM as a professional and applied discipline.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Some PM practices lacked documented information that would be necessary for the purposes of authoring an article. For example, Africanisation and PM related to HRPM have been poorly documented to date. The MOHCC also lacked documented data specific to its HRPM practices that have been implemented since 1980. The MOHCC currently lacks experts in the field of HRPM, which contributed to some managers' reluctance to participate in the study.

### **Scope for Future Studies**

The participants indicated that cadres within the MOHCC tend to lack training, which culminates in poor understanding of PM practices. Due to work overload and a lack of commitment on the part of management, performance practices have often not been implemented properly. PM implementation has also been marred by a lack of budget allocation for training. In addition, performance information currently has no link to the MOHCC's rewards system, which leaves employees sceptical of whether or not the practices have any real value. Low salaries, cash shortages, a lack of medicine and medical equipment, strikes, inadequate transport, and insufficient uniform allowances were also highlighted as being among the factors that hinder performance. All these aspects will form part of future publications. Due to shortcomings in PM, the government of Zimbabwe issued the Results Based Management (RBM) policy guidance circular in May 2005. The analysis of the RBM in the MOHCC will also form part of future research.

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