

Uncovering Themes in the Recent Literature on Performance Management in South African Local Government

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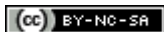
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Abstract: Performance management has been practiced in the South African local government sector since the dawn of democracy in 1994. Municipalities have the autonomy to design and implement a performance management system (PMS) that is aligned with the municipal context. The current challenge in South African local government is that there is a lack of information on the effectiveness of performance management implementation at local government. The aim of this article was to provide a synthesis of the latest findings in the performance management literature in South Africa by highlighting themes. The methodology used is qualitative and relies on reviewing literature in the Google Scholar database between 2018 and 2023. This study finds that municipalities struggle with multiple challenges but there is a positive shift occurring in performance management related to a culture of compliance, the building of institutions and the relationship between the political and administrative arms of government.

Keywords: Performance management systems, Implementation, Local government, South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Municipalities in South Africa have used performance management to improve local government's efficacy, responsiveness, and transparency to its constituents (Mkhize, Nzimakwe, & Mthuli, 2021). Performance management, which has been more common in the business world, is finding its way into municipal governments more and more (Selepe, 2018). South Africa's Constitution (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996; Fourie and van der Walddt, 2021) Article 152 mandates that local governments must ensure accountable governance, sustainable service delivery, economic and social development, a healthy and safe environment, and community participation in local government affairs.

It is the obligation of municipalities to provide services to their constituents, and they do so in accordance with their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Zwane & Matsiliza, 2022). The IDP is the municipality's primary five-year strategic plan and a legal requirement (Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021; Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022). To create the IDP, the municipality, the community, businesses, government departments, and all other stakeholders with an interest in the municipality engage in extensive public participation processes. The IDP is formulated by gathering and recording community input on its wants and priorities (Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022).

Performance management is a method that can help address service delivery issues, as all municipal employees are mandated to have contracts based on performance management that are linked to the IDP and key performance indicators of the municipality (SALGA, 2019). If a performance management system (PMS) is implemented properly, as stated in the SALGA performance management handbook (SALGA, 2019), better service delivery can be anticipated. That's why it's so important for the IDP's standards to be reflected in performance management contracts for municipal employees.

The degree to which a municipality

meets its commitments under the IDP is indicative of its prosperity. Employee performance, in turn, refers to the efforts put forth by workers in the delivery of services. Performance management can be used to assess how well municipal workers are carrying out their duties in light of the IDP's vision and priorities (SALGA, 2019). At present, the IDP is linked to PM in that PM agreements for municipal workers should be aligned with PM targets (Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022).

This article is a literature review that examines the South African background of implementing performance management in local government as there is little research on its application in South Africa (South African Cities Network (SACN), 2020). The purpose of the study is to highlight the main findings in the literature on the application and implementation of performance management.

While other scholars have investigated challenges affecting local government in South Africa related to employee performance and management (e.g. Chirau, & Blaser-Mapitsa, 2020; Maake et al., 2021; Tyokwe, & Naicker, 2021), there is a gap relating to a summary and synthesis of main findings of recent literature. Thus this paper seeks to fill that gap and is useful for researchers seeking to discover where the literature has focused in recent times. The methodology used, is qualitative and is a document desktop review of relevant South African performance management papers available on Google Scholar between 2018 and 2023.

Defining Local Government in South Africa

Municipal performance management is founded on South African law. To promote a "culture" of performance in municipal administration and politics, the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) mandates that municipalities use performance management. The regulatory framework also provides flexibility for local governments to create PMSs that meet their unique requirements. However, the PMS that the municipality prepares and implements must reflect the "priorities, objectives, indicators, and targets" of the local IDP (Adam, 2020; Mofolo &

Adonis, 2021).

The Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) and its implementing regulations lay heavy emphasis on citizen participation in the IDP and PMS planning processes. The increased frequency of service delivery protests, however, is indicative of poor public participation processes, with councillors and municipal officials often being blamed for not responding to constituent concerns and failing to provide even the most fundamental services (Masiya, Davids, & Mangai 2019; de Vries & Ile, 2021). Masiya et al. (2019) state that service delivery demonstrations are fuelled by municipalities' failure to offer basic services, but they don't explain how this relates to poor performance management.

Recent publications on performance management in South African local government (Adonis, 2018; Selepe, 2018; Adam, 2020; Public Affairs Research Institute, 2020;) give a detailed understanding of the legislative foundations upon which the performance management system rests. To what extent performance management in municipalities contributes to effective service delivery or any other outcome of successful implementation of performance management that is linked to the IDP is not addressed either in the literature or in the PMS itself.

Although the IDP vision of municipalities is meant to be incorporated into municipal budgeting processes (Selepe, 2018; Munzhedzi, Phago, & Mubangizi 2022), implementation of the statutory framework for performance management in local government in South Africa is inconsistent. There is a potential for performance management to cascade to all micro-units of the organization (Adonis, 2018; Selepe, 2018), however at present it seems to be employed largely for evaluating municipal managers and managers reporting to the municipal manager. Insufficient up-to-date information is available about the implementation and outcomes of performance management systems in South African municipalities. There is no clear indication in the law (RSA, 2000, 2001) that performance management is required at the

local level.

After holding its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa (SA) is now seen as a young but promising democracy. There are federal, state, and municipal governments (Ramodula and Govender, 2020). South Africa's local governments are called municipalities, and its major statutory mandate is to provide community services (de Vries and Ile, 2021). According to de Vries and Ile (2021), this is the most approachable level of government. Because of its responsibility to provide fundamental services to its residents, the quality of local government is of highest importance (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021).

Economic growth has been a top priority for South African administrations since at least 1994. The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) vests authority and duty for providing essential services at the municipal level. To what extent a municipality fulfils its constitutional mandate is a good indicator of how successfully it performs its duties (Mofolo, & Adonis, 2021). The efficiency with which the municipality carries out its duties is a measure of the competence of its staff and council members; these duties must be carried out in a manner consistent with the municipality's integrated development plan.

Since 1994, promoting growth has been a top priority for local governments (Ngam, 2021). South Africa's Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) grants local governments the right to govern and the responsibility to provide basic services. The success of a municipality is determined by how well it carries out its constitutional mandate (Munzhedzi, 2021), and the success of municipal employees and council members is determined by how well they assist the municipality in carrying out its mandate, which must be consistent with the municipality's integrated development plan.

The mayor oversees the political side, while the municipal manager is in charge of the administrative side. Municipal governments are "political institutions" with duties specified in the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), according to Ramodula and Govender (2020). One of these duties is coordinating with locals to improve municipal

services and cut down on trash. Municipal government in South Africa is composed of both an elected council and an appointed municipal administration, similar to systems in other nations (Kaywood, 2021).

METHODS

Google Scholar was the databased used in this study to search for relevant academic journal articles, news reports and local government reports published between 2018 and 2023. Through a qualitative document review, the study identifies themes. Keywords such as "performance management implementation," "South Africa," and "performance management systems" were used to do journal article searches. Each relevant article, news and local government report that contained the key words was recorded and evaluated in depth. The findings from that exercise are used in the discussion that follows.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Status Quo of Performance Management in Local Government

Municipal performance management is prioritized by law (the Municipal Systems Act) and constitutionally mandated (the goals and tasks of municipalities). The municipality uses performance management and develops key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess its effectiveness in delivering the services called for by the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP).

Due to the importance put on efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in post-apartheid South Africa, performance management has become a regular mechanism for all local governments (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021). Thanks to advances in public administration, South Africa's municipal governments have begun using performance management systems similar to those used elsewhere (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021). Local governments can become more efficient and accountable to their citizens through the implementation

of NPM's business practices. South Africa's municipal government uses a two-tiered approach to track staff performance. Performance is managed on two levels: the individual and the organizational.

The goal of performance management in South Africa's municipalities is to better serve the public. Ndevu and Muller (2018) claim that because of attempts by local governments to mimic the private sector, there has been a change in public sector accountability. One could argue that the two are intertwined because of the potential benefits of performance management on service quality. When an employee signs a performance agreement, they commit to doing their best to help the firm succeed. In South Africa, municipal performance is evaluated in terms of its efficiency and sustainability in relation to the Auditor General's report (Selepe, 2018).

Challenges facing local government performance management in South Africa

According to the Auditor General of South Africa (Marais, Sheik, & Schoeman, 2022), municipal-level performance management systems in the country are failing to deliver the desired outcomes. According to Selepe (2018), poor management and internal controls at the local level are to blame. There is a consensus on the topic that supplements the Auditor General's reports on the state of local government in South Africa (Mnguni, & Subban, 2022). This consensus takes into account issues including the fiscal stability of specific municipalities.

A lack of progress in addressing the sector's backlog in providing housing, sanitation, water supply, and other essential services has contributed to its already poor reputation (Masuku and Jili, 2019). Contributing aspects are discussed by Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi (2019); Masuku and Jili (2019); all of whom point to issues with municipal capacity, politics, poor interactions with communities, cadre deployment, and a lack of accountability.

Despite the difficulties now facing local governments, Ndevu and Muller (2018) and Shava and Chamisa (2019) argue that extensive performance management

implementation can assist ease these difficulties. Municipal employees in South Africa only partially apply performance management because they do not fully grasp it (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021).

A provincial government may appoint an administrator to oversee a municipal and ensure that services continue to run smoothly in accordance with Section 139 of the South African Constitution (Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021, 166). But an intervention under Section 139 shows that political or administrative leadership is failing in the municipality. Council accountability is a recurring theme in the literature review on service provisioning (Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi, 2019). Both Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi (2019) and Masuku and Jili (2019) fail to see the link between accountability and responsibility.

There has been a rise in service delivery demonstrations in recent years due to poor municipal performance and a lack of performance management (Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi, 2019; Shava and Chamisa, 2018). The African National Congress' (ANC) cadre deployment program is widely acknowledged as a detriment to local government's overall performance, despite Shava and Chamisa's (2019) lack of detail identifying the causes of poor performance at local government. Members of the African National Congress (ANC) are given priority for deployment to key positions within the municipality if they meet certain criteria, such as education level and professional ability (Shava and Chamisa, 2018). If a municipality fails to maintain order and provide basic services, the province government can appoint an administrator to do so (Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021). This is provided for under Section 139 of the South African Constitution.

The failure of local political or administrative leadership, however, is evidenced by a Section 139 intervention. The problem of council members' lack of accountability is a recurring theme in the literature review on service delivery (Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi, 2019). Both Masuku and Jili (2019) and Breakfast, Bradshaw, and Nomarwayi (2019)

recognize the need of responsibility, but neither sees a connection between the two.

Service delivery demonstrations have gained in popularity in recent years as a response to municipal underperformance and a lack of performance monitoring (Dweba, & Thakhathi, 2021; Xolani, et al., 2022). There is agreement that the African National Congress' (ANC) cadre deployment program is a detriment to the general running of local government, despite the fuzziness with which Shava and Chamisa (2019) outline the causes of low performance at local government. The ANC will give its members preference for deployment to critical posts within the municipality if those members match particular requirements, including as education level and professional expertise (Shava and Chamisa, 2018).

Corruption persists because there is no mechanism to hold local government cadres and officials accountable (Zulu, Yalezo, & Mutambara, 2022). Too little attention has been paid to the possibility that local government issues unrelated to cadre deployment could undermine performance management. According to Shava and Chamisa (2019), effective local governments prioritize the creation of an IDP that is in line with provincial and national planning paradigms and policies and that contains all relevant appendices, sector plans, performance management, and accountability measures for both council members and officials.

The IDP, Service Delivery and Performance Management in Local Government

It is recommended that municipalities establish an integrated development plan (IDP) to guide municipal development and service delivery (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021). To do otherwise would be in violation of the Municipal Systems Act (2000). Because of its central role in shaping the future, the IDP must be in sync with efforts made at the national and state levels. Integrated Delivery

Partnerships (IDPs) are formed by municipalities in South Africa to ensure that services are provided as expected (Selepe, 2018; Masuku and Jili, 2019; Koma, 2016; Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli 2021).

Integrated development plans (IDPs) are "the development tool that structures and coordinates service delivery in a municipal space and is linked to a municipal budget" (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). Performance management and the supply of municipal services rely heavily on the IDP and the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) (Selepe, 2018). Moreover, the MSA law allows for the development of a performance management system that is integrated with the Individual Development Plan (Selepe, 2018). The IDP is an essential instrument for the local government to use in conjunction with its budget and performance management in order to realize its development goals.

Although performance management is included in the IDP, its implementation, monitoring, and review are left up to each individual municipality. IDPs do not take into account the fact that regular PM evaluations would help guarantee that municipalities standardize performance management and make it a useful instrument for maintaining accountability in service delivery (Selepe, 2018).

Not a single municipal in South Africa has a fully functional PMS that links the PMS to the IDP and the budget, as reported by the South African Cities Network's (SACN's) performance management study (2020). It appears that performance management agreements are not being applied to all municipal employees, but rather primarily to the highest-ranking administrators, according to the available information. Ndevu and Muller (2018) claim that the failure to adopt performance management at the local government level is due to a lack of political will, a lack of responsibility, and a failure to handle the consequences of poor performance.

Emerging Themes in Performance Management Implementation literature in South Africa

The literature consulted has revealed several themes relating to performance management implementation that are discussed below.

Culture of Compliance

A 'compliance' culture is emerging around the implementation of PMs in many South African towns, according to studies undertaken recently by the South African Cities Network (SACN, 2020). The analysis finds that local governments are more focused on following the legal mandates that direct the implementation of performance management than on expanding other community initiatives. Despite PMS's best intentions, the principles in the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) have not been put into practice. De Vries and Ile (2021) examine the outcomes of implementing performance management in South Africa's Kysna Municipality. There is little evidence that the municipal's performance management mechanism has improved services for its residents. The Auditor General of South Africa's audit findings are taken into account when developing the performance management system's key performance indicators alongside the municipality's upper management (de Vries and Ile 2021).

Several authors (de Vries and Ile, 2021; Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021) have pointed out the lack of monitoring and assessment at the municipal level. The outcomes of monitoring and analyzing service delivery outputs related to the SDBIP influence the local government's performance management system. According to (de Vries and Ile, 2021), another challenge is the severe lack of people with the skills essential to carry out project management.

Public Participation in Performance Management

As stated by Mamokhere and Meyer (2022), public involvement procedures should be utilized by municipalities to incorporate citizen and stakeholder feedback into development plans and performance management systems. According to de Vries & Ile (2021), the ward committee system was established by the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) to ensure that communities have a say in the creation and execution of the local government's performance management system. The MSA specifies that every municipality must establish a system of ward committees. The ward committee is

responsible for communicating citizen issues to the relevant municipal departments. Residents aren't being approached about performance management difficulties, and despite the popularity of service delivery demonstrations, it doesn't appear that ward committees are being used as the mechanism for community participation (de Vries and Ile, 2021). The widespread dysfunction of the ward committee structure was already a major barrier to public engagement before the Covid 19 pandemic hit. As Munzhedi and Phago (2020) point out, the pandemic necessitates severe health and safety measures, therefore the current way of consulting with communities needs additional consideration and change. To improve citizen participation, however, most rural towns lack the resources and personnel to advance technology advancements (Munzhedi and Phago, 2020).

Building of Institutions

The performance management system and its implementation in a municipality depend on the employees and their willingness to cooperate in order to achieve common goals (Musara, Niyimbanira, & Madzivhandila, 2022). Through the use of a performance management system, employees' contributions to the accomplishment of municipal goals are acknowledged, possibilities for growth are identified, and the employee is made aware of how their work fits into the development plan of the municipality (Selepe, 2018). Employee productivity increases when these conditions coincide, and the institution is better able to fulfill its developmental mandate and achieve its goals as a result of the performance management system's influence on the employee's growth in skills and abilities. However, Masuku and Jili (2019) have called attention to an issue: the influence of politics in the selection of top executives. It appears that some top managers in local governments lack the knowledge and skills to do their jobs effectively, leading to inadequate service provision (Masuku and Jili, 2019).

The Political - Administration Interface

Municipalities are now characterized by a separation of political and administrative functions (Selepe, 2022). Local government in South Africa similarly features this split between administrative and political power (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Selepe, 2018). Inefficient service delivery is a result of the political interface's growing interference with administrative activities (Masuku and Jili, 2019; Munzhedi and Phago, 2020). Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli (2021) add that there is a clear link between the political arm of the municipality and the execution of performance management, and that while this dimension exists, there is limited research on it. Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, (2021) argue, however, that poor performance management implementation can be traced back to friction between political and administrative branches in local governments.

To further politicize the process, Masuku and Jili (2019) note that political structures often deliberate over and settle on a chosen candidate for the position of municipal manager before presenting their recommendation to the council for approval. This strategy is linked to the ANC's cadre deployment policy, as stated by Masuku and Jili (2019). The strategy has been criticized for limiting the efficiency with which local governments can deliver services (Thebe, 2017). Officials have been appointed to these positions without appropriate training or experience on occasion (Shava & Chamisa, 2018). The policy of cadre deployment has been criticized for being poorly planned and managed in terms of strategy and performance (Shava and Chamisa, 2018). The local government was in shambles when the democratic administration took office in 1994, but they were able to patch things up with the help of the cadre deployment policy.

The strategy has been criticized for allowing senior individuals to be nominated without the necessary skill or aptitude, which has led to poor performance management and accountability (Shava and Chamisa, 2018; Thebe, 2017). There is a general lack of trust in local governments, according to research (Masuku and Jili, 2019). Masuku and Jili (2019) argue that if the political and administrative branches of a municipality work together for the public welfare, they will

be meeting their obligations under Section 153 of the South African Constitution. Masuku and Jili (2019) highlight the importance of municipal worker training and political and administrative coordination, but they don't discuss the function of performance management. It has been discovered that in some South African municipalities, performance management implementation is hindered by the strained connection between the political and administrative branches of the municipality (Khunoethe, Reddy, & Mthuli, 2021).

The Lack of Institutional Capacity

Lack of institutional capacity is cited as a major cause of the problems faced by local governments in South Africa (Ramodula and Govender, 2020; Munzhedi and Phago, 2020). Poor performance management is often attributed to the fact that some municipal employees lack the requisite skills for the efficient implementation of performance management (Ramodula and Govender, 2020; Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021).

Due to a lack of institutional competency, local governments often exhibit ineffective consequence management, showing too much compassion toward criminals (Ramodula and Govender, 2020; Ndevu and Muller, 2017). In order to maintain the values expressed in the constitution, Ndevu and Muller (2018) argue that a new style of leadership and management is required at the level of local government. Ndevu and Muller (2018) argue that rather than calling for a new generation of leaders and managers, it is preferable for the current crop of employees and councillors to embody the leadership values outlined in the constitution. This sentiment is applicable to all statutory requirements that municipalities must fulfil. More than half of South Africa's municipalities are in rural areas, and Munzhedi and Phago (2020) note that this is compounded by a general lack of institutional capability.

Contributors to Effective Performance Management Implementation in Local Government- Experience from South Africa

Performance management is a legislative

requirement and as such municipalities must continue to implement performance management to remedy the negative image of local government and instil a culture of accountability and improved service delivery. It is also imperative that employees form part of the performance management system in its entirety.

Capacity Building of Municipal Employees

In order for municipal workers to accomplish their duties effectively and contribute to the municipality's achievement of its goals and objectives, ongoing capacity building is required (Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli, 2021). Sekgala and Holtzhausen (2016) identify training and development as a critical area in the capacity building discussion, and argue that it should be incorporated into performance management to ensure that employees are properly equipped to carry out all activities that contribute to the municipality's development agenda. The results suggest that using this approach will encourage employees to take greater ownership of their job (Sekgala and Holtzhausen, 2016).

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

According to de Vries and Ile (2021), adding an evaluation and monitoring phase to performance management improves its efficacy. Research by Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli (2021) shows that performance management is not being reviewed or monitored effectively in most local governments. When there is a lack of alignment between strategic goals and operational metrics, and when the performance management system (PMS) being implemented does not account for the specifics of local government, monitoring and evaluation are ineffective, say Khunoethe, Reddy, and Mthuli (2021).

CONCLUSION

This study provided a literature review of recent literature regarding performance management implementation in South African

local government. The importance of performance management is that it supports the practice of accountability and improves the quality of service delivery. In South Africa, the IDP requires municipalities to implement performance management by requiring them to foster a "performance culture" inside their municipal bureaucracy and legislative branch. The legislative framework also gives local governments the leeway to develop PMSs that are tailored to their particular needs. However, the "priorities, objectives, indicators, and targets" of the municipal IDP must line up with the PMS that the municipality develops and implements. If a PMS is implemented successfully, improved service delivery is likely to result, as all municipal employees' performance management contracts are intended to be aligned with the IDP and the key performance indicators of the municipality. That's why it's critical that municipal workers' performance management contracts follow the IDP's guidelines.

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