

ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES THROUGH TEAM BUILDING AT A SELECTED LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

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-Abstract-

The North West Province like many provinces of South Africa is faced with backlogs in terms of service delivery and does not have the capacity and means to meet its growth and development targets. It has also been recognized that lack of service delivery in the municipalities has been caused by a range of factors, namely: poor team spirit, lack of appreciation and recognition from managers/supervisors, hostile communication and no communication at all, low levels of trust, and the unwillingness of managers or supervisors to allow employees to be initiatives and take responsibilities for certain aspects of their work. Due to the above, it becomes imperative to study

organisational climate and human resource management practices of a selected municipality. From this current study, it is envisaged that findings identified with regards to organisational climate will reflect a true relationship with human resource management practices which will assist in building strong teams. In response to the Team Building Service Project , advertised in the Mail Newspaper in November 2012 by Mahikeng Local Municipality, **SCM/MLM80/11/2012**, and appointed by the Municipal Manager on 12 June 2013, Ross Psychological Services undertook the above project between 25-27th June 2013 at Orion Lodge in Rustenburg, in South Africa. The Human Resource Practices Questionnaire (HRPQ) was used to measure human resource management practices and the Organisational Climate Questionnaire (OCQ) was used to measure organisational climate in the municipality.

Key Words: Organizational Climate, Organizational Practices, the STRIDE Process

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1. Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 Of 1996) in terms of Chapter 7, local government is described as a distinct sphere of government in its own right and no longer a function of National or Provincial government. It is a sphere of government closest to the community, and this strategic position makes it the ideal tool for developmental government. The objective of Local Government in terms of Section 152(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), mandates that each and every municipality must strive to achieve within its financial and administration capacity, provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, ensure that services are provided to communities in a sustainable manner, promote a safe and healthy environment, and promote community participation in local affairs. The success of an organisation depends on the right strategies, organisational practices and management to unlock hidden values within the organisation.

2. Statement of research problem

The lack of a proper structured service delivery systems in the municipality under study has been caused by a range of factors, namely: poor team spirit, lack of appreciation and recognition from managers/supervisors, hostile communication, low levels of trust, and the unwillingness of managers and supervisors to allow employees to produce initiatives and take responsibilities for certain aspects of their work. It is in this light, that the current paper seeks to assess the relationship between organizational climate and organizational practices and to advice managers on how to improve the municipality's service delivery modalities.

3. Aim of the study and Objectives

The aim of this research paper is to provide insights on the dynamics of organizational climate in relation to organizational practices and also aims to contribute to an understanding of municipal organizational climate, municipal practices and challenges facing municipal managers when delivering services to the public. Five strategic objectives of the Team Building project were undertaken in the current study to increase the team understanding of team dynamics and improve teamwork and team spirit, to understand the organisational climate in the municipality, to determine challenges faced by managers when delivering services to the communities, to determine the relationship between organisational climate and organisational practices in the municipality and to make recommendations to management in relation to organisational climate and organisational practices in the municipality.

3. Literature review

3.1. The STRIDE Process

This breakthrough organisational intervention methodology utilizes five inter-related steps to bring about rational changes in a relatively short period of time. The five stages linked are together through a series of questions found under each heading

in the processes. Each series of questions anticipates the next set of questions, thus the entire process is coherent in its consistent pursuit of coherence and continuity of process. The purpose of the process is to arrive at clarity of focus to enable clarity of actions. The danger with such a process occurs where there is no potential will or power bases from which to implement the outcomes of the process.

3.2. Organizational climate and Human resource management practices

Organisational climate was assessed in the municipality in order to ascertain how the working environment is, hence the assessment of organisational climate was relevant. Wright and Nishii (2010) asserts that, it is not the human resource practices as intended by management that will be the determinative for organizational outcomes, but the human resource practices as perceived by organizational members. This is confirmed by Den Hartog, Boon and Verburg (2009) who identified in their study that perceived human resource management mediates the relation between actual human resource management (what is implemented) and performance. Human Resource Management involves the use of several policies and practices. Human resource practices can be summarized into three specific groups: entry, performance, and exit practices (Verburg & Den Hartog, 2006). Human resource management practices in the municipality were examined and the psychometric properties of the Human Resource Practices Scale were validated. Human resource management is an umbrella that encompasses according to Chen, (2005:22): *'specific human resource practices such as recruitment, selection, performance appraisal and reward system, formal human resource practices, which direct and partially constrain the development of specific practices; and overarching human resource philosophies, which specify the values that inform organizational policies and practices.'*

Human resource practices through the use of selection, training, and other resource management practices in the broad-spectrum

not only advocate the use of employee well-being in the workforce, and constitutes an investment in human capital that is being aligned and integrated with overall organizational strategy (Chen, 2005:23).

4. Research design and methodology

The research approach can be described as a descriptive, cross-sectional field survey, the data as primary data and data analysis as exploratory and correlational. Questionnaires were distributed and self-scored and confidentiality was assured. Interviews and observation methods were utilized. The research methods that were used in the collection and analysis of data involved interviews, observation, questionnaires, group discussion and library research. A survey was used as it was appropriate because it assessed the general aspects of the problems which were identified in the municipality.

5. Population

The population consisted of public officials at the selected Municipality. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) defined population as the complete set of events, people or things to which the research findings are to be applied. In this study, the research population constituted of 29 staff members ranging from the Acting Head to the Project Manager (see figure 1 for a more comprehensive list).

6. Data analysis

The following methods of the Team Building Project were implemented namely: Problem Solving/ Decision making exercise- the **STRIDE** Process; Psychometrics Testing (to have understanding of individual managers working style, and to develop areas identified as lacking development); Organisational Climate Survey (OCM) and Human Resource Practices Scale (HRPS); self-administered questionnaires were used as primary data collection instruments; executive managers, directors and managers were interviewed by means of

the afore mentioned self-administered questionnaires; Team Building Presentation; and Bonding Exercises.

7. Instruments and Data analysis

The Organizational Climate Measure (OCM) consists of 17 scales, divided in to four quadrants: human relations, internal process, open systems, and rational goal was used to measure organisational climate. The Human Resource Practices Scale (HRPS) was used to measure the perceived effectiveness of the HR practices (Nyawose, 2009). The questionnaire consisted of 27 items, covering nine HR practices, with three questions per practice. Only five HR practices were assessed in this study, namely training and development (TD), compensation and rewards (CR), performance management (PM), staffing (S), and diversity management (DM). A quantitative research design was used in this study to assess the relationship between Organizational Climate and Organizational practices. Data was gathered in the form of questionnaires that were handed to the participants and captured on a computer software program. The statistical program that was used for the analysis of data was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS is a computerized system of data interpretation.

8. Biographical Information

Table 1: Descriptive information

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Age	30.00	64.00	46.1000	9.59111
Service Years	.30	31.00	15.1950	11.35 478
Tertiary Education	1.00	4.00	2.9630	.8979 2

Table 1 shows that the ages of the respondents ranged from 30 years to 64 years, averaging at 46.1 years. The minimum years of service were 0.3 years, whereas the maximum was 31 years. An average year of service was 15.2 years. Highest education level and lowest education level were certificate and postgraduate respectively.

9. Research findings

Table 2 shows a summary of frequencies for marital status, education level, age range, sex, years served in the company is provided. **Age:** the findings were that Nine (9) respondents did not disclose their ages. The table indicates that 40 per cent of the employees are over the age of 50. **Service years:** Nine (9) respondents did not disclose their years of service. The years of service range from 0.3 (5%) years to 31 (5%) years. The average years of service are 15 years. All the respondents except one (3.4%) were blacks. The table indicates that 50 per cent of the employees in the municipality have less than or 15 years of service. **Sex:** About 65 per cent of the respondents were males and about 35 per cent were females. One of the respondents did not indicate his or her sex. **Marital status:** The results indicate that the majority of respondents were married (62.1%). **Disability:** Two (2) of the respondents did not disclose whether they are disabled or not. Of those who indicated, only two (7.4%) were disabled (one of these wears glasses). **Tertiary Education:** Two of the respondents did not disclose their level of tertiary education. 33.3 per cent of the employees have their highest education below or a Diploma, and over 66.7 per cent have degrees or postgraduate degrees.

Table 2: Summary of frequencies for marital characteristics, sex, educational level disability, age range and years served in the company

Demographic features	Freq	%	Cum %	Demographic features	Freq	%	Cum %
Marital status				Sex			
Married	18	62.1		Female	9	32	

Unmarried	9	13.0		Male	19	68	
Total	27	100					
Education				Disability			
Certificate	1	3.7.	3.7	No	26	92	
Diploma	8	29.6	33.3	Yes	2	7.4	
Degree	9	33.3	66.7	Total	29	100	
Post graduate <i>Did not disclose</i>	9 2**	33.3	100.0	Years served in company			
Total	27	100		Less than 5 yrs	8	40	40
Age range				6-10 yrs	0	0	40
30-39	6	30	30	11-15 yrs	2	10	50
40-49	6	30	60	16-20 yrs	2	10	50
50-69	8	40	100	21-26 yrs	3	15	75
<i>Did not disclose</i>	9**			26-30 yrs	4	20	95
Total	20	100		31-35 yrs	1	5	100
				20	100		

Figure 1 below gives the frequencies and percentages of job titles that are present in the municipality.

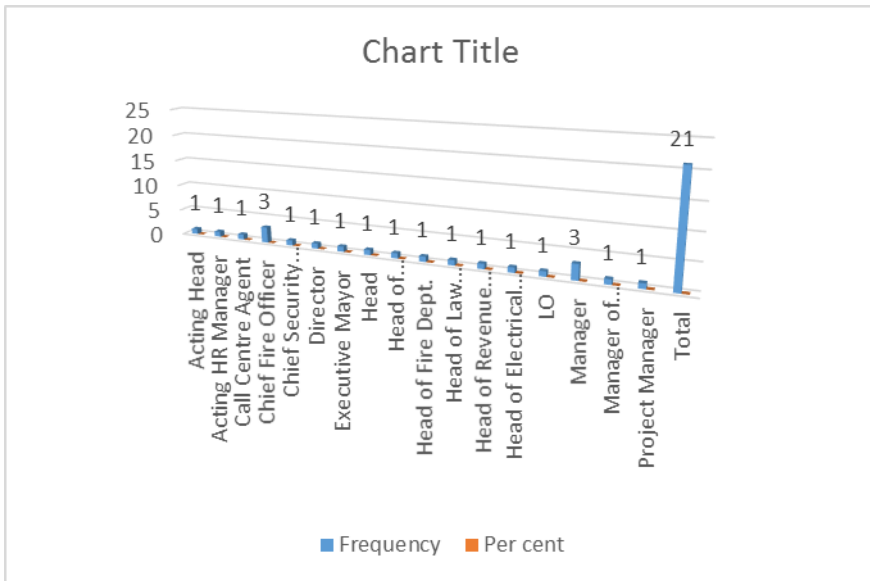


Figure 1: Job Title

Figure 1 reflects the different job titles of respondents, ranging from Acting Head of Department to Project manager. Eight (8) respondents did not disclose their job titles Table 3 shows the different departments in terms of directorates of the respondents.

Table 3: Directorate

Did not disclose	8**	38.1
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According to table 3, the respondents, N=21, (28.6%) N=6 work in corporate support, (9.5%) N=2 work in finance, (19.0%) N=4 work in public safety, (9.5%) N=2 work in planning and development, (4.8%) N=1 works in community service, (4.8%) N=1 works in environmental services, (19.0%) N=4 work in technical services, (4.8%) N=1 works in planning and development (housing) and (38.1%) N=8 did not disclose.

Table 4: Name of the Union

Note:

Name of trade union	Freq	Valid Per cent
IMATU	7	29.2
SAMWU	15	62.5
Total	24	100.0

Did not disclose	5**
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Note: IMATU=Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Unions

SAMWU= South African Municipal Workers Union

Table 4 indicates that of those respondents, who indicated which union they belong to, the majority (70.8) belong to the SAMWU and the remaining respondents (29.2%) belong to IMATU. Five (5) respondents did not disclose which union they belong to, if they are members of trade unions.

Table 5: Shop Stewards

Are you a shop steward?	Frequency	Per cent
No	20	90.0
Yes	3	10.0
Did not disclose	6**	
Total	23	100.0

According to table 5, the majority (90%) N=20 of respondents are not shop stewards and (10%) N=3 are shop stewards Six (6) respondents did not tell whether they are or not shop stewards.

12.3. Regression Results

Regression analysis was done to find out whether organisational practices depend on organisational climate. Table 6 indicates that organisational climate does not influence organisational practices because the P-value (0.158) of the regression model is greater than 0.05.

Table 6: Regression results

R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
			R Square Change	F Change
.128	.070	.26986	.128	2.211

10. Organisational climate

The major or critical items that the majority of respondents had little opinions on included items 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24 and 25. These are respectively: There is a performance management system (PMS) in place in this municipality (75.9%); the PMS provides valid and acceptable data on performance as the basis of performance-related pay decisions (57.1%); PMS also helps in the process of managing expectations (64.3%); The municipality gets value for money for its reward system (72.4%); Rewards are clearly related to performance (72.4%); I feel that the municipality gives me ample opportunities to take on extra responsibilities and these earn more (69.0%); and in the municipality there are more rewards and encouragement than threats and criticism (79.3%). On the other hand one major item respondents had much opinion on was item 43, that is, “in this municipality, employees look out for their own interests (73.4%).

10.1. Descriptive information on organizational climate

Table 7

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average Organisational Climate	1.95	3.44	2.7874	.40208
Average Organisational Practice	2.74	3.80	3.1877	.32128

All the scores of organisational climate were added and the sum was divided by the number of scores added to find an average score. This average score was the overall organisational climate score that was used in the interpretation of the data. The same was done on the organisational practices, to obtain an average score for organisational practices. The scores ranged between 1.95 and 3.44. The average organisational climate score is 2.8, which is close to 3 but slightly less than 3. This might mean that, on average, the respondents had little opinion on the organisational climate. This might imply that in general, employees in the identified municipality in Mafikeng have little opinion on the organisational climate, which is not good. The critical items the majority of respondents disagreed with were items 2, 7, 20 and 26. These are respectively: “I possess the knowledge and skills that my job requires of me” (96.6%); “There were: Few opportunities for employees to receive training in the municipality” (55.2%); “Employees receive sufficient support from the municipality in times of financial problems” (53.6%); and “My supervisor acknowledges outstanding job performance in writing” (55.2%). On the other hand, the items the majority of respondents agreed with included items 27, 28 and 29. These are: “I would like to receive a written acknowledgement for outstanding job performance” (89.7%); “I would like to be acknowledged for outstanding performance during Mayoral Coordinating Meetings and municipality’s meetings” (83.8%); and “I am in favour of an annual event

where outstanding job performance is publicly acknowledged “(83.8%). For organisational practices, the average score is 3.2, which is also close to 3 but slightly above 3. This might mean that, on average, the respondents agreed with the statements.

11. Discussion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that, the municipal managers still experience significant challenges while delivering services to the public. While managers have a reasonably high level of awareness about what more effective service delivery would entail, there appears to be significant obstacles that are a hindrance for them to be able to perform optimally.

The **STRIDE** process, assisted managers in recognizing and verbalizing negative distressing work challenges, this resulted in managers becoming aware of significant multiple challenges facing them, and they admitted that they are the only ones who are responsible in finding better approaches to resolve concerns expressed. One of the greatest obstacles facing the municipality emanates from human resource constraints and shortages. The widespread lack of commitment, negative/poor attitude, poor morale, organisational culture, chains of accountability, lack of communication amongst departments, and interdepartmental clashes, silo work approach mentality, lack of training and empowerment, lack of respect, and ineffective management all create an organisational climate disabling good performance. The other recommendation cited was the setting of Service Delivery Standards, and to be displayed for all to see even the community members so that every employee to be held responsible for poor performance. There is common attitude or stereotype that results in a general perception by public that municipal services are poor. Based on the findings of the study, climate in the municipality is on a very subjective level. It seems to be experienced so in terms of communication and also experienced by different demographic groups. This is a disturbing finding, taking into consideration the environment that municipal employees are operating from. Managers should be able to influence employees to achieve organisational

objectives. Hence it is difficult for employees to perform optimally if they are unable to communicate effectively with their managers. Zohar (2008), contends that communication has been found to have a strong influence on organisational climate. Most respondents cited the importance of the Batho Pele principles should be adhered to when delivering services to the public. Batho Pele is a way of conducting oneself in the presence of others. It is also a preparedness to acknowledge their rights and needs and a willingness to help them add value to their lives. Batho Pele is a commitment to other people that echoes through the ages of human compassion (Batho Pele Handbook 2003:25)

12. Conclusion

On areas needing further development, respondents cited issues like in order of percentages, management leadership, communication, further training, financial management and again communication skills. On areas which continue to produce dissatisfaction in the municipality, the respondents cited issues like: communication, non-availability of resources (tools), lack of training, and lack of motivation which produces poor morale amongst employees. In conclusion, it is also crucial for the municipal staff to comply with the Batho Pele principles. When the consumers of the municipal services start saying that the municipality is providing for their needs, the Batho Pele principles will then be entrenched.

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