

# **THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT**

## **An Analysis of Performance Management Practices of the Zimbabwe Republic Police: A Case Study of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Midlands Province**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper brings to the fore the challenges faced by frontline managers where performance management practices are introduced in a bureaucratic police cultural environment through the study carried out on the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) between 2008 and 2011. The Zimbabwean public was disenchanted by quality of police service they received at police station level despite the police change programme of 1994 meant to improve police efficiency and effectiveness. The study sought to analyse the performance management practices of frontline managers in the ZRP who manage the police service delivery process at police station level. The qualitative approach using the case study design was used in the study. Forty six (46) participants were purposely chosen. Data were gathered through focus group discussions, face to face interviews and observations at six (6) selected police stations in the Midlands. Data were transcribed and analysed using the grounded theory approach of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Key findings of the study were that the ZRP frontline managers did not fully appreciate their role in effective police service delivery. The study concluded that ZRP frontline managers lack understanding of what constitutes effective police service delivery. This lack of a common understanding by those charged with the responsibility of quality control negatively affects delivery of effective police service. The study recommends that ZRP institute induction programmes upon the promotion of police officers to the position of frontline manager. The induction could clarify quality control policing, efficiency and effectiveness.*

**Key words:** Police, performance management, accountability, service delivery

### **1. Background to the Study**

The ZRP was born out of the British South African Police (BSAP) when Zimbabwe gained her independence from Britain on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1980. The BSAP was a Para-military arm of the British South African company of Cecil John Rhodes when the company colonised the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1890 and was retained as a law enforcement agency of the country.

The police leaders were military officers and followed the quasi-military traditions in both its internal and external activities. For example, in its internal rules it had rules such as 'complain after duty', 'No insubordination by word or demeanour' and 'No over familiarity with subordinates' (BSAP Standing Orders, Volume I, 1964).

Externally it focused on sectarian interests and did not encourage discussion of policing challenges with the public through its use of the Official Secrets Act. It even created a barrier of interaction between the public and its members by building camps for its members where the public had limited access.

At independence in 1980, the external character of the ZRP had to change to make it more responsive to the policing needs of all the people in Zimbabwe. However, it still retained the same internal control policy documents like the BSAP Standing Orders Book, save for the change of title to ZRP Standing Orders and removal of discriminatory statements (ZRP Standing Orders, Volume I and II, 1990).

### **2. Zimbabwe Police Change Programme**

In 1985 the then Prime Minister and now President Robert Mugabe made a famous statement, at a police passing out parade, that police should identify themselves with the aspirations of the people from whom they derive their legitimacy (Herald, 13 March 1985). This marked the beginning of an era where the ZRP started making serious efforts to be accountable to the population for its activities.

In 1994 the ZRP, with the support of the British Overseas Development Agency, launched a change management programme aimed at improving its operational efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. The programme was premised on three

component, i.e. strategic, human resource and Information system/technology development components (Zimbabwe Police Organisational Change Programme Document, 1994).

The ZRP goal was set as to provide an efficient and effective police service to the public in order to maintain peace and stability, thereby contributing to an environment conducive to social and economic development while its vision is to be a leading police service provider in the world by 2020 (Focus 2000 Strategic Plan, 1995; Beyond 2000 Strategic Plan, 2005).

Unfortunately, changes within the country's political environment at the beginning of the year 2000 significantly affected the overall implementation of the change programme. The Sponsor of the programme, the United Kingdom, withdrew funding for the programme resulting in key human resource training, records management and IS/IT development programmes being shelved. The resources such as transport, which were part of the programme dried up and the country went into an economic recession.

Meanwhile, the demands for accountable policing from the Zimbabwean public grew mainly as a result of the public sensitisation programmes of the change programme. The table below shows the recorded complaints against police between the years 2000 and 2008.

Year	2006	2007	2008
No. of Complaints	1611	2441	2716

*Table 1: Recorded complaints against ZRP*

*Source: Provincial Community Relations Annual Reports 2006-2008*

The growing number of complaints against the ZRP was supported by the growing negative reports on its performance in the print media. The Zimbabwe Herald recorded 53, 89 and 93 stories alleging improper work performance by ZRP officers in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. The following were the headlines of some of the stories in the Zimbabwe Herald:

- **Cop faces the music** –where a Chitungwiza police officer appeared at Harare Magistrates court on charges of extorting R3000 and six cans of beer from four suspects he had arrested for assault (Herald, 12 November 2006).
- **Cops arrested for looting** – where several police officers were arrested nation-wide for allegedly abusing their authority to loot various commodities from shops under the banner of price control (Herald, 13 July 2007).
- **Four policemen arrested at roadblock** –where four police officers manning a roadblock were arrested by plain-clothes police officers for taking bribes from motorists (Herald, 12 January 2008).

The increase in the number of complaints against the police indicated that there was something wrong in the manner police service was being given to the Zimbabwean population. Accountable policing appeared to be missing. Igbuzar (2008), then Commissioner in the Nigerian Police, refers to such accountability as acquisition of the ability to perform, obligation to provide explanations and justifications and absorbing the consequences of unaccountable actions including taking the necessary corrective action. This research sought to identify areas where the ZRP was compromised in its quest to provide accountable policing.

### 3. Problem Statement

The Zimbabwean public label ZRP as an organisation full of corruption, favouritism, abuse of power and laxity in execution of duty by the officers.

### 4. Purpose for the Study

The study sought to examine performance management by frontline police managers in Midlands and ascertain the allegations by the public.

### 5. Research Questions

The study was driven by the following questions:

- To what extent do police frontline managers understand effective police service?
- What performance management practices do ZRP frontline managers use?
- How can the ZRP improve the performance management practices of the frontline managers?

### 6. Related Literature Review

The drive towards adopting accountable service delivery practices in public institutions around the globe has been strong as governments and the general populace are increasingly demanding value for money spent on them (Bae, 2006; Jarrar and Schiuma, 2007). Most police organisations, as public institutions, have sought to develop performance management practices which justify their existence.

The results based agreements in the Netherlands Police (Sluis, Cachet and Ringeling, 2008); the Compstat - performance measurement and review system developed by New York City Police Department in the United States (Moore and Braga, 2003); and the different performance management frameworks developed by the Home Office in the United Kingdom are just a few such examples. However, given the fact that most police organisations have bureaucratic structures, this movement has not been without challenges.

Moore and Braga (2003) postulated that creation of a public value was the ultimate goal of public institutions which include the police and public value was defined as the contribution made by the public sector to the economic, social and environmental well-

being of a society and was what the public was willing to make sacrifices of money and freedom to achieve (Moore, 1995). Police performance management practices should be tailored to achieve the 'public good' rather than the 'police good'.

This perception contradicts the traditional police practice of being the dominant determinants of type and quality of service the public gets. Internally, just like they have depended on the use of authority given to them by the law to dictate quality of service they give to the public, police organisations have traditionally depended on cohesive controls to get compliance from their members (Fyfe, Greene, Walsh, Wilson and McLaren, 1998).

While the concept of performance management empowers the subordinate officer to contribute towards strategies to achieve organisational goals, the bureaucratic culture makes the subordinate a passive recipient of orders from a superior who exercises authoritarian control through the use of the organisational rank or position (Terpstra and Trammel, 2009; Shane, 2010).

## 7. Research Methodology

The philosophical underpinning of the study was the interpretive paradigm which postulates that reality lies within human experience; is space, time and situation bound; socially constructed; subjective; and is value bound and value laden (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). The study was an analysis of performance management practices in a quasi-military bureaucracy which meant (among other things) reliance on experiences and perceptions of the affected officers.

A case study design using qualitative research procedures in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data was found to be the most suitable research design for the study. The qualitative gathering data methods used in the study, were focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, observations and document examinations. The study adopted the phenomenologist view that it is individuals' perceptions of how they see their world that determines how they act (Krathwohl, 1993; Chilisa and Preece, 2005). Creswell (2009) refers to it as social constructivism in that meaning is constructed as human beings interpret their world based on their historical and social perspectives.

The frontline managers in the ZRP are Inspectors and Chief Inspectors who are the officers in charge of Police stations. The Midlands province, which had 29 police stations, was purposively selected from the 10 operational police provinces in Zimbabwe, thereby making its 46 inspectors and chief inspectors the sample for the study out of the 400 inspectors and chief inspectors in Zimbabwe.

Collection of data started with focus group discussions involving the three focus groups. Open-ended questions were put to the participants for discussion aimed at soliciting their views and opinions on the effectiveness of their performance management practices. Their responses were recorded both manually and electronically.

The researcher then carried out observations at six selected police stations as the Chief Inspectors and Inspectors discharged their duties. The observations were recorded and analysed on a daily basis. Data analysis was done as data were gathered to identify any emerging themes. Chilisa and Preece (2005) identify data gathering and analysis as one striking difference between quantitative and qualitative where unlike in the former analysis is done at the end of data collection while in the later it occurs throughout data collection. The findings were grounded in the data generated.

## 8. Research Findings

### 8.1. Demographics of Participants

All the participants had been in the ZRP for more than 10 years, with 72% of them having served for 20 or more years. The participants can therefore be referred to as officers with vast knowledge of what goes on in the ZRP. A majority of the participants (80%) had been frontline managers for more than 2 years and within that group 73 % had held their positions for more than 5 years.

### 8.2. Perceptions of Participants on the Concept of Effective Police Performance

Knowledge and understanding of the quality of service the ZRP has to deliver to the public depends on how the participants view effective police performance, and what they consider to be key attributes they must have to deliver effective police service.

Generally the participants described effective police performance as meeting a predefined criterion but differed on the criteria to be used to determine effective police performance. Those from the rural and farming environments viewed satisfying public expectations as important while those from the urban environment viewed meeting targets set by police management as key. The majority views of participants from rural and farming environments showed an accurate appreciation of the purpose of a police organization. The understanding of police effectiveness by those from the urban environment distorted the mission of the ZRP and was likely to result in the police exerting effort to satisfy their needs rather than the security needs of the public.

The participants listed the following as key attributes needed for them to effectively discharge their duties: ability to enforce discipline; ability to plan own work and that of subordinates; ability to lead, encompassing communication and motivation skills; being honest; and being exemplary in conduct. While the listed attributes are core management requirements it was the participants' understanding of the composition of those attributes that raised questions. Enforcement of discipline was singled out as either the most important or second most important by all the participants.

The following statement by some of the participants summed up the general perception of enforcement of discipline: "If you cannot instill discipline among your staff then you can never hope to achieve anything at the station. Police work revolves on discipline." This was reflective of a strong appetite for command and control, which removes creativity from subordinates (Terpstra and Trammel, 2009; Shane, 2010).

While the participants were agreed on the importance of provision of leadership their activities showed a lack of full appreciation of leadership demands and implications. Communication between the frontline managers and their subordinates was poor and they blamed their subordinates for most of the improper performance of duties and yet they were supposed to provide guidance.

The general sentiment on the feeling of subordinates of frontline managers was expressed by two constables who were found drinking beer in uniform at a business centre during visits to police stations. On being asked if their officer in charge would approve their drinking beer in police uniform they had this to say in shona: “Ndeyekwakeiyo. Isu tisu tirimundima, tinodavo kupombonoka.” This translated into English reads: “It is his problem. We are the ones in the field and also need to relax.” This raised the question of whether the ZRP frontline managers clarified the reasons why certain activities such as drinking in uniform in public places were forbidden in the ZRP organization.

### *8.3. ZRP Frontline Managers Performance Management Practices Linkage to the ZRP Mission and Vision*

The link of the ZRP frontline managers’ performance management practices with the organisational vision and mission were deduced from their activities. Discussions with the participants showed that the ZRP had developed very elaborate monitoring tools for frontline managers to check onto the performance of subordinates. Some of the checks included recording of time taken between the time reports are received and time such scenes of the reports were attended to, period taken to investigate a case, etc. In all cases there would be a standard set against which the achievement was compared. Achievements would be displayed on charts ready for evaluation by superior officers.

Properly implemented such monitoring tools would result in efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. However, observations made at police stations visited showed that some of the achievements made were unrealistic. For example almost all crime scenes were said to be attended to on time and yet the organization had an acute shortage of transport: all except two of the police stations visited did not have a single police vehicle.

The officers admitted to tampering with the figures “to avoid censure by superior officers who insisted on unachievable targets,” as said by one participant. This did not make the frontline managers exemplary since subordinates were used to falsify records to avoid censure. The fear of failure to meet set targets was great to the extent that the purpose of such control measures was lost resulting in cheating.

This lack of appreciation of the purpose of the evaluations was demonstrated by one participant on whether it was necessary to get the opinions of the public to evaluate police effectiveness when he said;

While it is necessary to please the community, they (the community) do not know the targets the police would have set for themselves and therefore their views should not be the determinants of police effectiveness.

The public are the consumers of police service and therefore their perceptions determine the quality of the service. The written police mission and vision acknowledge this fact. All public opinion surveys done at the police stations visited showed above 90 % satisfaction by the public of police service but yet complaints against police were being voiced in the media and also to complaints desk ZRP headquarters.

Despite the fact that subordinates were said to be paraded for duty to check on their readiness for duty a total of eight were found to be not presentable during the visits to six selected police stations. Quality checks on the work of subordinates were infrequent; patrols were hardly checked and dockets of cases could go for more than three months without an entry of a supervisor.

This raised the issue of the seriousness of the ZRP frontline managers in the implementation of quality control mechanisms. While annual plans were produced during visits to police stations there was little evidence of implementation of the plans. The excuse given in all cases was lack of resources such as transport and manpower. However, the excuse was found to be lame since some of the activities such as checking the quality of documentation done at police stations did not require the said resources.

### *8.4. Rigidity in the Face of Poor Logistical Support*

While there was a general lack of logistical support at the police stations the targets set in the annual plans appeared not to recognize such challenges. The targets were said to be “non-negotiable” and yet some of them were unrealistic as said by one participant on the requirement to carry out supervisory visits to personnel on patrols after normal working hours:

I stay five kilometers away from my police station and the police station does not have a single motor vehicle. How am I supposed to check on the activities of my staff after hours? Even if I was to get public transport to the police station how do I check on patrols in an area that spans 10 kilometres? I cannot be expected to walk the distance.

## **9. Conclusion**

In view of the discussions on the findings the following conclusions were made on the performance management practices of ZRP frontline managers:

- There was no lack of understanding on what constitutes effective police service delivery among ZRP frontline managers. This lack of a common understanding by those charged with the responsibility of quality control negatively affects delivery of effective police service through application of different quality standards in different policing environments.
- The ZRP frontline managers were underdeveloped in that they were more concerned with the controlling subordinates than with the outputs that led to achievement of the outcomes stated in the vision and mission statement. Enforcement of discipline was their prime concern and yet it had generated negative reaction not only from their subordinates but themselves in their reaction to targets set by their superiors.
- The general lack of resources and unrealistic demands by the senior command element of the ZRP has brought in frustrations resulting in situations where frontline managers do not insist on achievement of the overall organisational goals.

- Poor motivation among ZRP frontline managers has negatively affected their desire to achieve the required outcomes of an effective police service and made them seek unjustifiable excuses for their poor performance.

## 10. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made from the findings and conclusions:

- ZRP institute induction programmes upon the promotion of police officers to the position of frontline manager in which it clarifies the roles and the contribution of the officers to the organization's vision and mission.
- The ZRP review its policies with a view of changing those policies which are quasi-military and do not promote effective performance management practices.
- ZRP develop a participative evaluation of its frontline managers in which the frontline managers indicate their contribution towards the ZRP mission, the challenges they encountered and how they dealt with the challenges.
- While the objectives of this research were achieved, there is need for another research done on a wider scale, involving frontline managers from all the ZRP provinces, their subordinates and their seniors in order to get greater insight into the performance of ZRP frontline managers.

This research has unraveled an area which has not been examined before in the ZRP. While it may have provided more questions than answers on performance management practices in the ZRP, its greatest contribution is that it lays a foundation on ways of improving performance management practices in the ZRP.

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