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A performance management model addressing human factors in the North West provincial administration

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Orientation: The article investigated factors from several perspectives using human resources-related issues of governance, legislation, regulation, organisation, administration and communication, workplace sociology variables pertaining to social and psychological relationships and several other factors that have an impact on the complex matrix of determinants for performance improvement in the public service.

Research purpose: This article explored the human factors linked to the performance management (PM) processes and its impact on the effectiveness of service delivery in the North West provincial administration (NWPA). The article isolated the strengths and weaknesses of the system of performance assessment from the human relations perspective, technical usage, the structural–organisational and the strategic perspectives, uniformity, legislative compliance and other possibilities envisaged and emerging.

Motivation for the study: The study would deliver a successful and carefully crafted PM model that could be used to remedy the current performance situation through improved and effective communication channels, as well as ongoing feedback, leading to a more productive and motivated workforce. This would ultimately yield improved service delivery for the citizens of the North West Province.

Research approach/design and method: To answer the main research questions, sub-questions and objectives of this study, several participants (permanent employees and managers) found in the departments within the NWPA had to respond to diverse instruments of inquiry (questionnaires, interview schedules, expert, operational, strategic and grass-roots opinion, etc.). The study took a sequential mixed-methods approach where interpretivist (qualitative) and positivist (quantitative) approaches were applied as the philosophy and descriptive statistics were used.

Main findings: The main findings highlighted all the human factors that mitigated against performance improvement in the NWPA. From the evidence gathered, some departments exhibited problematic manager–subordinate relationships, lack of training, no proper feedback, low staff morale leading to low job satisfaction, lack of leadership as well as broken channels of communication.

Practical/managerial implications: The findings revealed that it is important for the NWPA management to undertake the necessary efforts in order to adapt a new strategy and comprehensive model for improved performance, which would ultimately lead towards efficient and effective service delivery in the North West Province.

Contribution/value-add: This paper explores the salient human factors to be taken into consideration during performance management in the North West Provincial Administration.

Introduction and background

This study explored the human factors linked to the performance management (PM) processes and its impact on the effectiveness of service delivery in the North West Province. Bersin, Agarwal, Pelster and Schwarts (2015) from Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, which is one of South African's leading research companies for management, note in their report that the PM process affects most company challenges of leadership, engagement and capabilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to critically analyse the human factors (including the operational dynamics) involved in the current PM in the North West provincial administration (NWPA).

Among the issues identified to be placed under scrutiny in this article were three main clusters (i.e. human factors, performance environment and PM) as well as other factors or new themes identified by participants in order to expose, through an analysis, all human factors mitigating against improved performance within the NWPA departments.

Literature review

This particular study will explore issues linked to a comprehensive, integrated model to address the problem, mainly of human factors in the performance equation within the NWPA. By pointing out all the human, spatial, temporal, structural and strategic elements in the PM processes within the NWPA, management would have a tool in the form of the model proposed in this study for senior managers to use in order to improve performance in the future.

From both the qualitative and quantitative methods used, it became evident that, in agreement with O'Boyle and Aguinis (2012), Olson (2013), and Bersin (2014) the effectiveness of PM systems has long been questioned by many as they do not accurately reflect the way in which employees perform (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Matjila, Maleka, & Jordaan, 2015; Metawie, 2005; Nel et al., 2014; Souhrada, 2016; Swanepoel, Erasmus, & Schenk, 2010; Tilley, Smart, Ross, & Jackson, 2010; Van Wyk, 2014; Wärnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015).

Following concerns regarding the increasing service delivery protests in South Africa, including the North West Province, as noted by Van der Westhuizen (2005) and several interviews conducted by Pule (2015), there has been a call for review and transformation of the PM process within the public service.

Performance management systems

The human factor study of individual human performance in an organisation also looks at the individual (the smallest part within the organisation) as a system. As is the case with an organisation, individuals as a system also have certain inputs with which they join an organisation and that they release for as long as they are part of that organisation (Nel et al., 2011) (Figure 1).

Failure to develop psychological attachment among employees means that an organisation may have to carry increased costs associated with more detailed and sophisticated control systems. However, when employees share the organisation's goals and values, it could be interpreted as employees acting instinctively to benefit the organisation (Nel et al., 2011).

Microsoft recently decided to disband its PM process after decades, realising that it was encouraging many of its top managers to leave the organisation (Bersin, 2014). In a similar
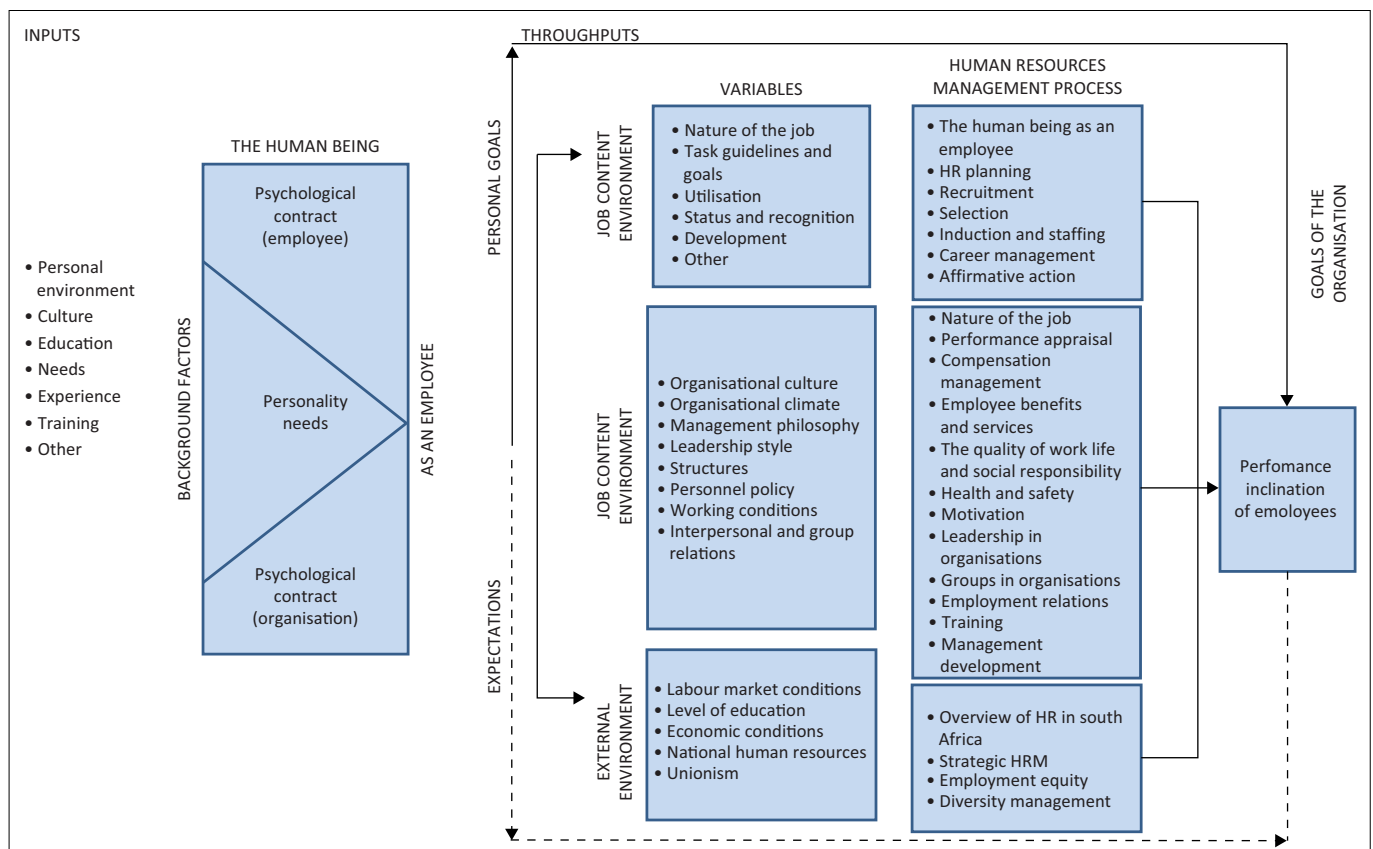
According to Heathfield, 2018, the author defines Human Resource Management (HRM) as *"the function within an organisation that focusses on the recruitment of, management of, and providing direction and guidance for the people who work in an organisation".*

Source: Nel, P. S., Werner, A., Poisat, P., Sono, T., Du Plessis, A., Ngalo, O., Botha, C. (2011). *Human resource management* (8th edn.). Cape Town: Oxford University Press

FIGURE 1: A management systems model of the employee as a subsystem.

vein, Olson (2013) emphasised that Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, influenced giants like Ford and Conco to mimic his policies, including 'survivor-esque' evaluations that guaranteed some workers to be graded as failures. The 'rank the yank' system popularised by Jack Welch while he was at General Electric between 1981 and 2001 resulted in employees being pitted against their peers to avoid being labelled as losers (Bersin, 2014).

The bell curve, as illustrated in Figure 2, reflects another disturbing situation. A normal distribution curve is a sample with an arithmetic average and an equal distribution above and below average like the curve shown in Figure 2.

Evident from the curve, in the area of people management, the model essentially says that there will be a small number of very high performers and an equivalent number of very low performers, with the bulk of employees clustered near the average. In the area of PM, this curve results in what we call 'rank and yank', a process that discriminates grossly against the so-called low performers (Bersin, 2014).

Bersin (2014) states that various organisations force the scores into a normal distribution curve, using grades from one to five, where the best performers score a five and the lowest one point. This results in 10% of the staff receiving a grading of 1 (*losers*); similarly, 10% obtain a five (*high performers*), and most staff will receive average scores. If all employees are high performers some will still receive a low score.

Research problem and objectives

The problem statement was that PM within the NWPA departments has contributed to the deterioration in performance and low morale within several levels of employees in the NWPA departments.

Research questions

Main research question:

- What is the role of human factors in the PM process within the NWPA?

Research sub-questions:

- Which human factors are central to the promotion or disruption of performance improvement in the NWPA departments?
- What is the most suitable performance environment (or organisational communication) for improved performance?
- Does the existing PM system promote service delivery in the province?

Research objectives

The study focussed specifically on three main constructs (i.e. human factors, performance environment and PM) as well as other factors or new themes identified by participants, in order to answer the main research questions. The research objective was to identify key human factors that play a positive role in the performance environment in the departments within the North West Province. Thereafter it was necessary to isolate and identify those human factors from the current application of the PM process. Finally, there was a need to establish an effective and efficient model leading towards performance improvement in the NWPA. This would enable management to improve performance in the NWPA.

The potential value-add and contribution of the study

This study could contribute towards more improved systems of communication, compliance, coordination and collaboration within the provincial performance environment, thereby creating a leaner, less bureaucratic model of PM.
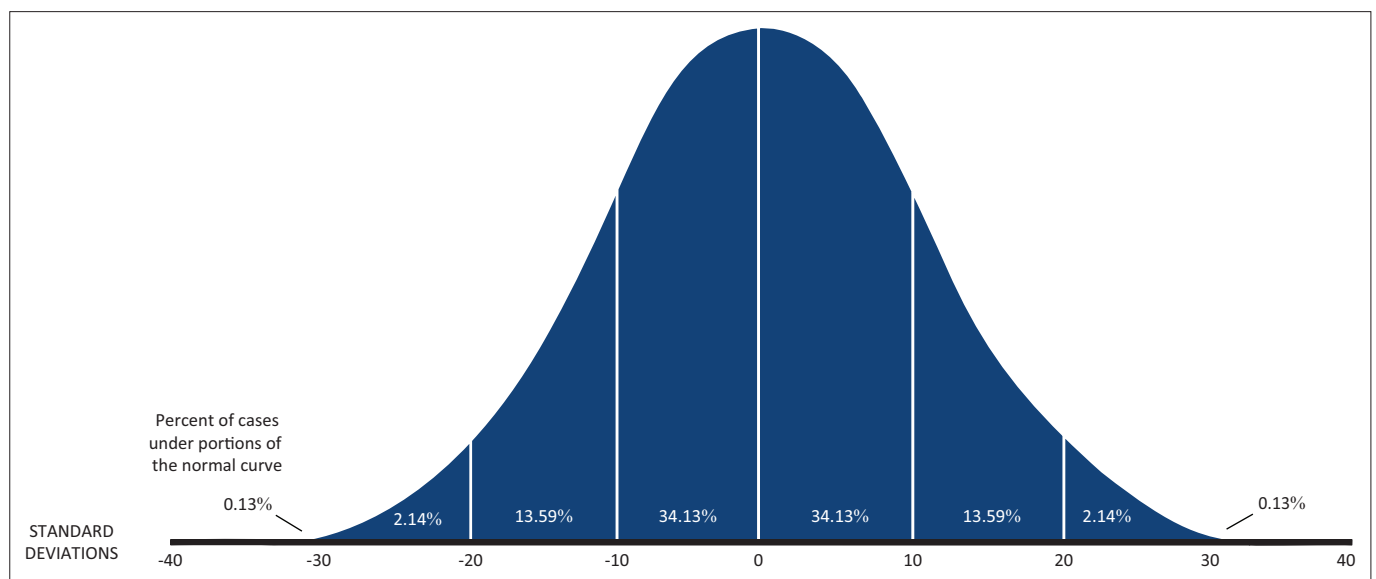
Source: Adapted from Bersin, J. (2014). The myth of the bell curve. Look for the hyper-performers. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/sites/johbersin/2014/02/19/the-myth-of-the-bell-curve-look-for-the-hyper-performers/

FIGURE 2: Bell curve psychological testing: normal distribution, the myth of the bell curve.

Few studies to date have concentrated on the human communication systems that have militated against the inputs of PM at throughput stage or the organisational flaws that have seen a deterioration of the significant human adaptations across departments (e.g. managers' forum formation) that would free the system of the bottlenecks that have proliferated to the extent of system decay. Systems like the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) stay too long in the organisation and are perceived to be aged in many ways that affect organisational human behaviour, as well as policy encounters (Stoner, 1982).

Research strategy and design

Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) and Mouton (2001) advised that research design is a blueprint that lays down a step-by-step outline and the procedures followed by the researcher in conducting a particular study. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was used.

Sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach

This study, which taps into sequential explanatory mixed-methodological approach, because of the multilevel nature of the population and multivariate nature of the cluster items, as suggested by Gray (2014:58) as well Roberts (2007:143), states that many of the observations on research experience made in qualitative research can be extended to quantitative research. The study used a sequential, explanatory, mixed-methods approach; thus, the strengths of one can make up for the shortcomings of the other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner 2007). The conjoint analysis of qualitative and quantitative data provided and enriched understanding of factors affecting human interactions and

served to redirect the way PM is applied and to incorporate these factors. Figure 3 is an illustration of the research approach moving from the qualitative method into the qualitative method as adopted by Creswell and Clark (2007).

Measuring instruments

Kent (2015:265) stated that 'research methods may be mixed in terms of different sequences, for example phased, concurrent or overlapping'. In this study, the sequential mixed-methods were sometimes concurrent, sometimes phased and sometimes overlapping, because of the study's multilevel and multivariate nature. It is always difficult and inappropriate to draw a clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection because of the overlap between the two (Kumar, 2011). Methods of collecting qualitative data include interview transcripts, field notes from observations, photographs, video and unobtrusive data. In order to achieve rigour, qualitative approaches aim at building trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Gray, 2014). The measuring instruments that were applied (including the pilot study) are outlined in the following.

Pretesting of the research instrument

A pilot study to test the research instrument – namely, the questionnaire – was conducted. As advised by Maree and Pietersen (2007) and Best and Khan (2006), the development of a questionnaire as a tool is critical for collecting data to prove or disapprove a research question.

Each of the questionnaires used in the four phases of the pilot in this study, to construct the final questionnaires, started with firstly the *cover letter*, which accompanied the questionnaire
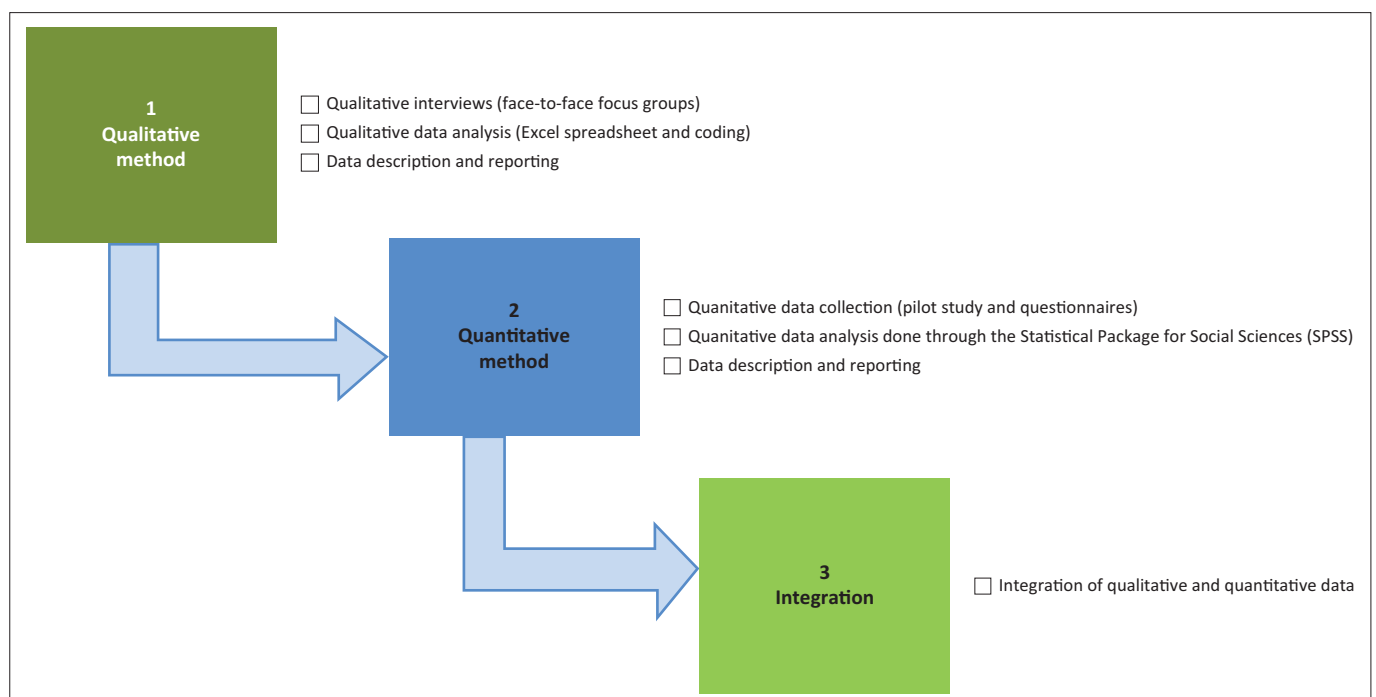
Source: Adapted from Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed-methods research*. Irvine, CA: Sage

FIGURE 3: Sequence for application of mixed-methods.

and outlined confidentiality, the research topic, time frame for collection and contact details of the researcher. All twelve departments took part in this pilot or pretest. Kumar (2011) advised that pretesting a research instrument should entail an examination, often an understanding of each question and its meaning as understood by a respondent. The phases are outlined in Figure 4.

The descriptions of the various questionnaires are presented in the following.

- *Phase 2.1*: Clustered comprehensive questionnaire

The clustered bigger questionnaire comprised this phase. Total pilot questionnaire participation was $n = 61$. This clustered questionnaire contained the following:

- *Section A* of the questionnaire contained information regarding demographic information, such as years of employment, gender, age, job level, educational level and department.
- *Section B* consisted of clustered sections, where *Cluster 1* contained questions pertaining to *human factors*. *Cluster 2* contained questions pertaining to *PM process*. *Cluster 3* contained questions pertaining to *performance environment*. *Cluster 4* contained questions pertaining to *performance improvement*.

- *Phase 2.2*: Shorter questionnaire

This phase of this study consisted of two separate questionnaires to 50 respondents, split into clusters (selected on the basis of their salary levels) of managers classified under (a) the highly skilled managers or senior management services (SMS), who are on salary levels 9–16 and (b) subordinates who are classified under the lower skilled level on salary levels 1–8. The sample size of this phase was $n = 50$ distributed questionnaires. The shorter questionnaire was reduced to 20 items. From the distributed questionnaires, 10 participants made up Cluster A (managers) responded and 33 participants responded to the questionnaires, which was made up Cluster B (subordinates from the two additional departments selected for this phase). The total number of participants was $n = 43$.

- *Phase 2.3*: Refined questionnaire

Participants from the final 2 out of the 12 provincial departments were used. In this phase, 20 questionnaires were administered among participants from both management and subordinate levels. The shortened questionnaire, which was constructed from the results of the pilot study, consisted of a 10-item questionnaire with a sample size of $n = 20$. The total number of participants was $n = 20$.

- *Phase 2.4*: Highly focussed questionnaire

The questionnaire was incubated, developed and improved because of the constant appearance of key items deriving from the literature, interviews and the pilot study. This questionnaire consisted of 10 items, with a sample size of $n = 735$ participants which are permanently employed within the twelve provincial departments. A total number of
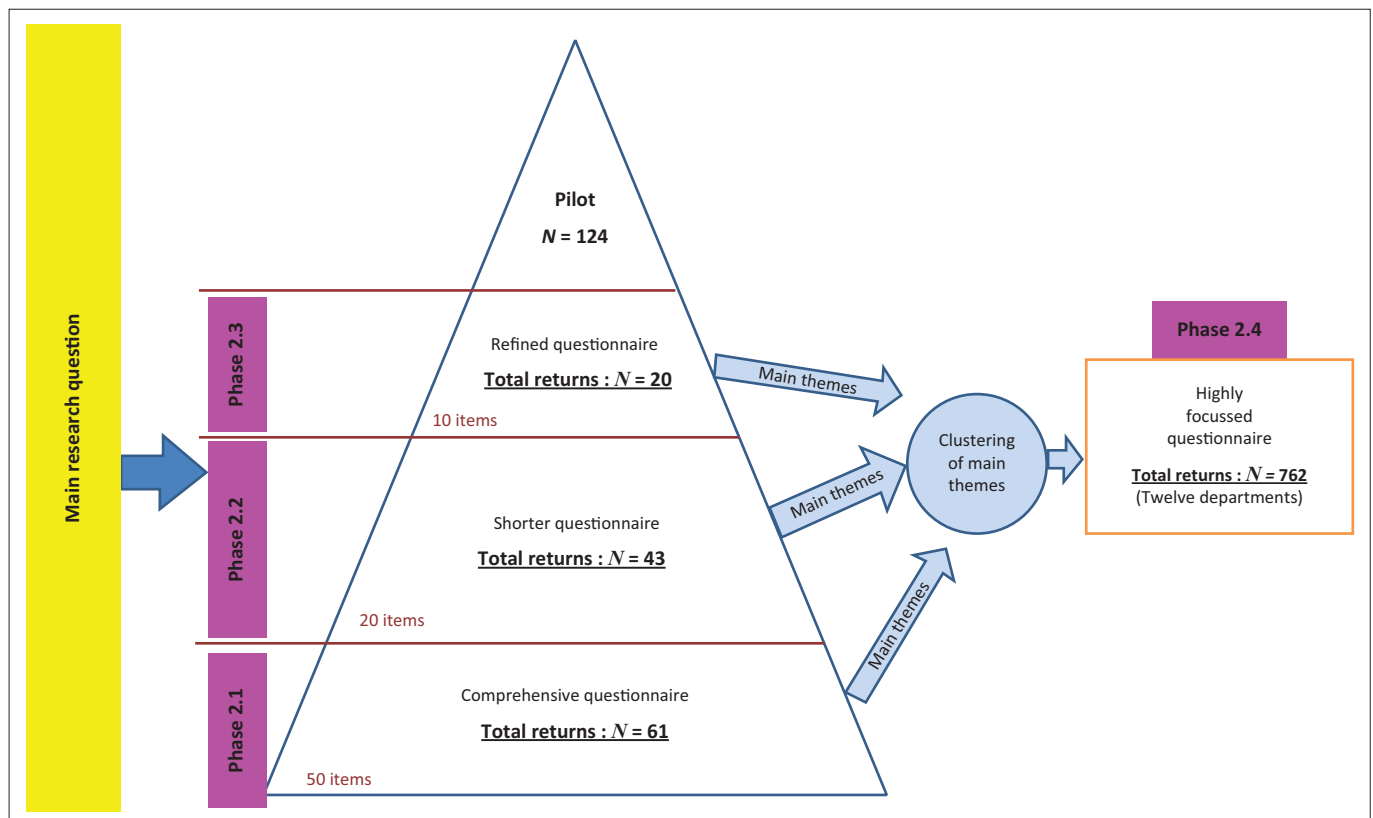
FIGURE 4: Quantitative multiphase process used for the pilot, the participants were $n = 124$ participants and for the purpose of this research's final questionnaire the participants were $n = 762$ participants.

TABLE 1: Summary of qualitative data collection sources and strategies used.

Data required	Source	Strategy	Primary or secondary data
Identification of factors and sub-factors that need to be investigated in this study	Literature	Extensive literature review	Secondary data
Qualitative phase	Senior managers from the Public service commission + director from the department of public service and administration + chief of staff + head of department + chief director for corporate services + provincial service delivery coordinators (assistant directors)	Face-to-face interviews	Primary data
	Director's office of the premier (level 13) + shop stewards (different levels from different departments) + Performance management managers (different levels) + assistant and deputy directors of different departments (levels 9–12) + senior/admin officers + senior/admin clerks + personal assistants/secretaries/receptionist + messenger/Minimum information security systems officer + general assistants (cleaner/messenger/groundsman)	Focus group interviews	Primary data

questionnaires distributed: *n* = 800; actual collection and/or responses received: *n* = 762. Data was collected from all four district offices, namely (1) Ngaka Modiri Molema or Mahikeng–Mmabatho District; (2) Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati or Vryburg; (3) Dr Kenneth Kaunda or Klerksdorp–Matlosana; and (4) Bojanala or Rustenburg and Brits district offices.

Qualitative method (interviews)

For the qualitative data collection, Table 1 provides a summary of how the required data was used, what sources were used and the strategies implied, as well as the data category used. Kumar (2011) stressed that interviewing is a commonly used method of collecting information from people.

Structured interview schedule

A structured interview schedule was used in both the face-to-face and focus group interviews. The questions posed during the interviews were categorised under the following headings:

- What is the purpose of employee performance management and development systems (PMDS)?
- What are the main human factors that affect performance negatively in the workplace environment?
- What is the status of the performance environment in departments?
- Is service delivery happening? Does PM indicate a true reflection of the situation in the province?

Content comparative analysis

The rationale of focus group construction for the purpose of content comparative analysis: The comparative content as outlined in Figure 5 included the following:

Processes of PM that impact on human behaviours, knowledge or lack of it and relationships (all content gleaned from respondents regarding human behaviour of managers or subordinates' attitudes, complaints, racism, favouritism, motivation, etc., that impacts PM and performance in general).

Knowledge levels of organisational, structural, legislative and strategic constructs of PM in general and the application of PM tools in particular within departments of the NWPA (training dimensions, record-keeping and knowledge management). Include training of managers, uniformity and collaboration, consideration of subordinate employees in
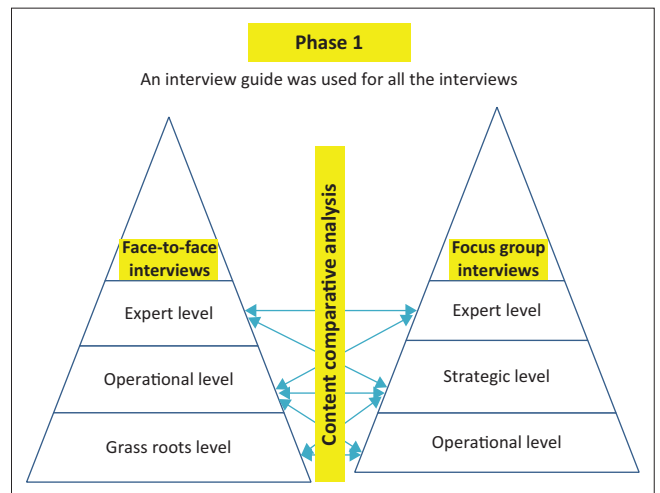
FIGURE 5: Content comparative analysis illustration.

progression, that is, position and salary, and other variables mentioned in the thematic or clustering approach.

Content comparative analysis (Figure 5) was used during the process to compare all levels and groups.

Quantitative method (questionnaires)

For the quantitative data collection, Table 2 provides a summary of how the required data was used, which sources were used and the strategies implied, as well as the data category used.

Research approach

Methodological issues included the amount of in-depth detail that could be collected from the cases and the degree of generalisability that could be made about inferences from data collection (Plowright, 2011). In this study, the sequential mixed-methods approach was used, where a qualitative method was followed by a quantitative one.

Among the three main paradigms that comprised the research process, namely positivism, interpretivism and realism, the researcher placed more focus on the second paradigm, namely interpretivism. The conjoint analysis of qualitative and quantitative data provided and enriched understanding of factors affecting human interactions and served to redirect the way PM is applied.

TABLE 2: Summary of quantitative data collection sources and strategies.

Data required	Source	Strategy	Primary or secondary data
Identification of factors and sub-factors that need to be investigated in this study	Literature	Extensive literature review	Secondary data
Quantitative phase	Senior managers + middle managers + lower level employees	Pilot + final questionnaire	Primary data
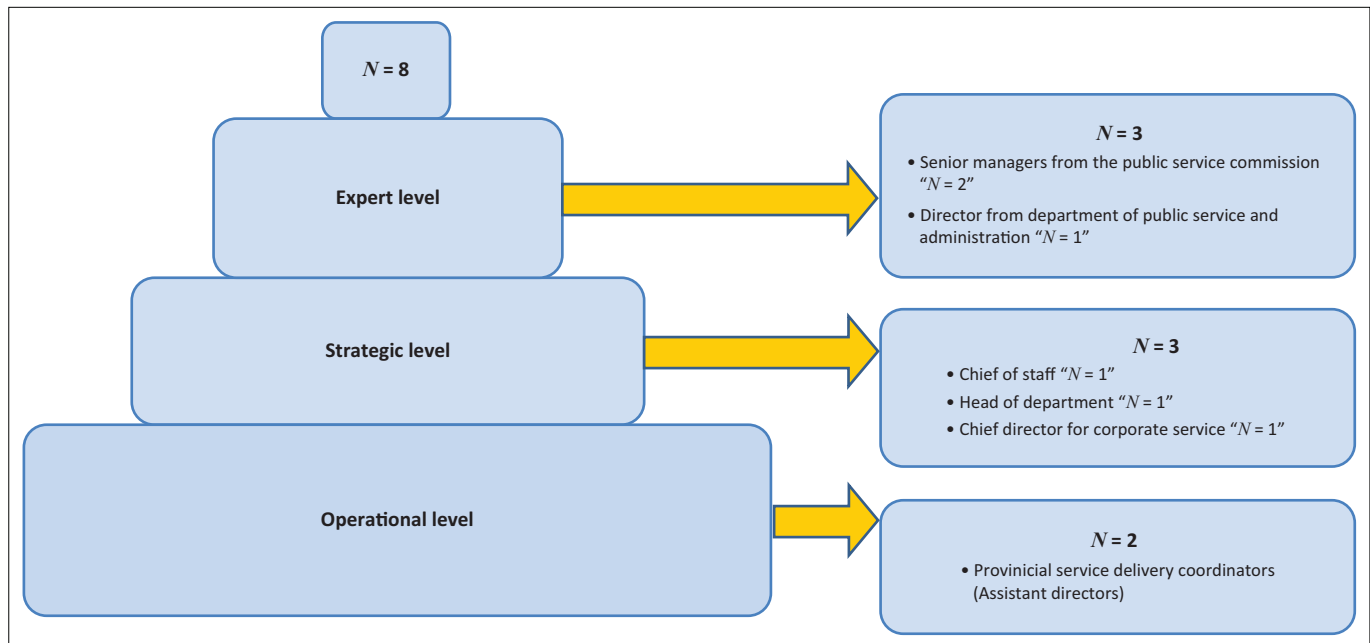
FIGURE 6: Sample size and levels of participants for the face-to-face interviews which were $n = 8$.

Research participants

The research participants who took part in the study for both the qualitative and quantitative methods are described in the following.

Qualitative method

Eight participants took part in the face-to-face interviews, and 23 participants took part in the focus group interviews. In this study, there were a total of 31 qualitative research participants. Among the 31 participants found for the interview phases of the study, $n = 8$ participants had been previously identified to form part of the interview phase as outlined in Figure 6 and spanned three main levels: expert, strategic and operational.

For the focus group interviews, $n = 23$ participants took part in the interviews as outlined in Figure 7. A group from grass-roots level (levels 1–8) was included to have a holistic view of the PM process in the NWPA.

Kumar (2011) stated that the sample size does not occupy a significant place in qualitative research; it is determined by reaching the saturation point while collecting data instead of being fixed in advance.

Quantitative method

For the quantitative part of this study, a total of 800 questionnaires were distributed among the permanently employed civil servants in all twelve departments of the NWPA. These questions cascaded from the pilot and subsequent multistage questionnaires. A total of 800 of the final questionnaire was distributed in all twelve of the provincial departments in the NWPA and the return rate was $N = 762$.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are depicted in Tables 1 and 2. For the purpose of this study, all twelve NWPA departments were included as the population, namely the Office of the Premier and the Departments of Health; Finance; Economy and Enterprise Development; Education and Sports Development; Social Development; Culture; Arts and Traditional Affairs; Tourism; Rural Environment and Agricultural Development; Public Works and Roads; Community Safety and Transport Management; Local Government; and Human Settlements. Table 3 depicts the population and sample used in this study. The National Treasury headcount database record of statistics reveals that 59 619 public servants were employed in the NWPA as at December 2016.

The study population consisted of twelve government departments in the NWPA with public servants in the categories of:

- lower skilled between levels 1 - 2 (plus)
- skilled ranging between levels 3 - 5 (plus)
- highly skilled production between levels 6 - 8, totalling 47 836 employees.

The middle and more senior managers were employed within the NWPA in the categories of:
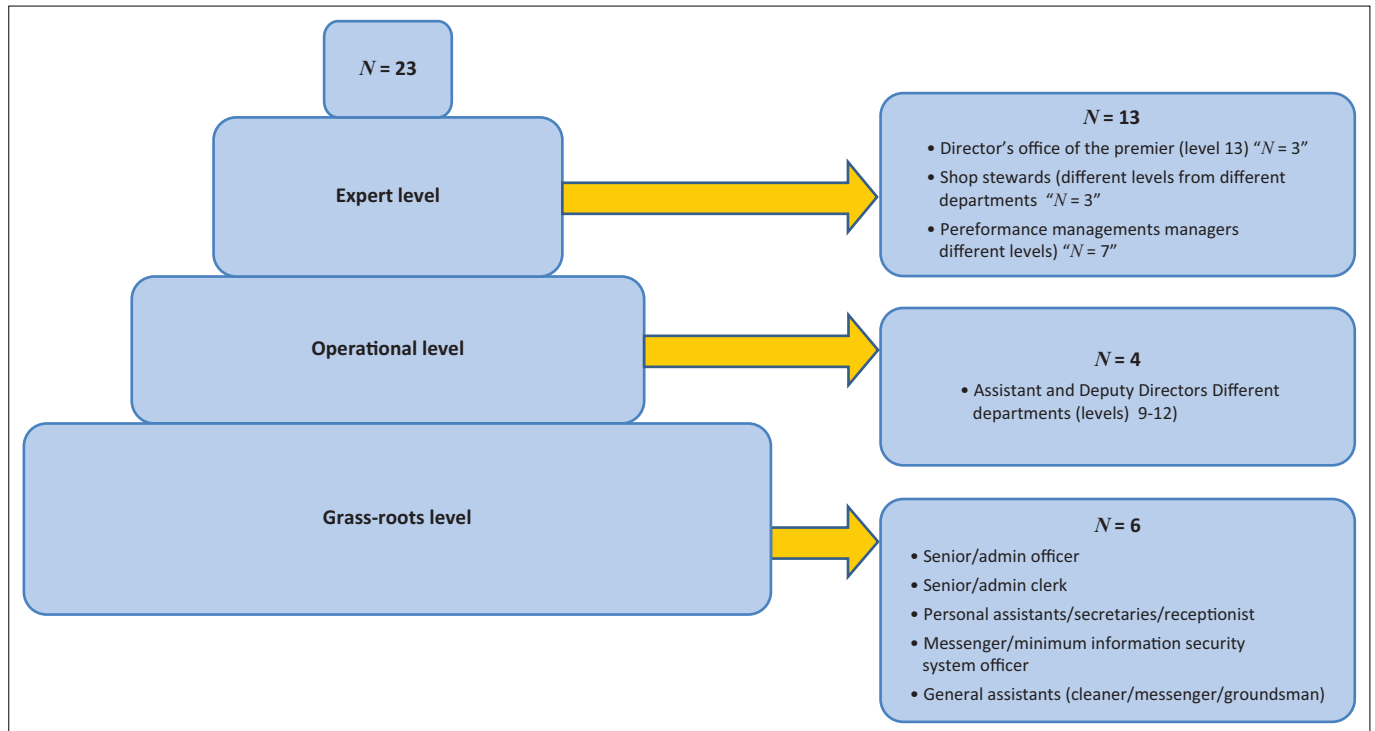
FIGURE 7: Sample size and levels of participants for the focus group interviews which were *n* = 23.

TABLE 3: Quantitative respondents' response rate per North West provincial administration department.

Department	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Office of the Premier	71	9.3	9.3	9.3
Culture, Arts and Traditional Affairs	67	8.8	8.8	18.1
Economy and Enterprise Development	71	9.3	9.3	27.4
Finance	51	6.7	6.7	34.1
Local Government and Human Settlements	60	7.9	7.9	42.0
Tourism	44	5.8	5.8	47.8
Rural Environment and Agriculture	64	8.4	8.4	56.2
Social development	59	7.7	7.7	63.9
Community Safety and Transport Management	58	7.6	7.6	71.5
Public Works and Roads	63	8.3	8.3	79.8
Education and Sports Development	59	7.7	7.7	87.5
Health	95	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	**762**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**-**

- highly skilled supervision or middle management services ranging between levels 9–12 (plus)
- senior and top management ranging from Level 13 and upwards, totalling 11 783 employed public servants within the NWPA giving a round total of 47 836 together with the 11 783 equals to 59 619 public servants

A purposive sampling technique was used for the purposes of this study. Dudovskiy (2017) explains that purposive sampling (also known as *judgment*, *selective* or *subjective sampling*) is a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of a population to participate in the study.

Because it is rarely practical to involve data collection from everyone, it is necessary to select a sample (Gray, 2014). De

Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011) explain that there are four types of probability sampling, namely simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling, that can be applied for quantitative analysis.

For purposes of this study, the calculation of the minimum sample size per department was based on a 90% confidence interval and only a 10% margin of error could be tolerated. The 90% confidence limit was chosen because of the large population and large samples from it. Usually a lower margin of error is recommended when an analyst is faced with larger sample sizes. For this study the formula recommended by Raosoft Inc. (2004) that is normally used to conduct online surveys was utilised.

The use of this calculation was based on normal distribution and was motivated by the fact that the sample used was more than 30. The sample size used in this study was more than the minimum of 382 recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). All twelve departments within the province were significantly represented and the sample represented the overall population.

Results

The clustering of variables drove the sampling design through the comparative nature of the questions. In this instance, Onwuegbuzie and Leach (2006) refer to pairwise sampling design, which was also elaborated on by Allen, Titsworth and Hunt (2009), where study participants were compared. Themes were used as a means to identify the results for both qualitative and quantitative methods and were presented with comments (because comparison of the

results of both the qualitative and quantitative methods was done in line with the literature review content, research objectives and questions). The majority of respondents were in agreement with most of the factors outlined in the three main clusters.

Human factors addressed

In line with the research topic, the following Cluster 1 human factors were addressed; they became evident in the main findings analysed in the study and are thus presented in Table 4:

- perceptions – lack thereof both management and subordinates
- communication – no effective communication channels
- feedback – no feedback from managers
- motivation – low staff morale
- placement – not done correctly and employees are wrongly placed
- job satisfaction – no job satisfaction in some areas
- leadership – poor leadership
- induction – no induction arranged for employees.

TABLE 4: Integration and comparison of mixed-method results.

Theme and code	Qualitative method occurrence	Quantitative method occurrence	Comment in line with the study
Cluster 1: Performance management			
Performance management (PM)	Most of the participants had knowledge of what PM is; however, the *negative view* was overwhelming.	Evidence from the participants was that the PM tool was *not effective* for use for performance measurement.	*Evident that there was agreement* that PM *is not prioritised* and not effective; therefore, it needs to *be prioritised and reviewed*.
Training and development (T&D)	Equal occurrence of participants' views was recorded. In some instances, *training provided was not job related* and others sat for years without attending any training.	There was disagreement as far as availability of *training or lack of training* in the respondents' workplaces. Denialism and resistance were subtly expressed, and in some cases excuses were given, with budgetary constraints as one of them.	*Evident that there was agreement* that T&D is *not effectively implemented*; therefore, it needs attention.
Senior management training (SMS T)	This theme was only identified during the interviews and most of the participants were of the view that SMS should be implemented. On the other hand, senior managers provided their own experiences regarding the challenges they face when training is provided.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *management training should be prioritised*.
Rewards for good performance (R4GP)	Equal occurrences of participants' views were recorded. Some employees did receive rewards; *however, these were not applied the same* across all NWPA departments.	There is evidence that there *is to some extent* recognition for performance, as a few respondents wrote in the comments section. However, there are areas where there *seems to be a lack* of reward ceremonies held in the NWPA.	*Evident that there was agreement* that R4GP *is happening to some extent*; however, it is necessary that there be a *uniform approach* across all departments.
Cluster 2: Human factors			
Communication (COMM)	Highest percentage occurrence; participants were of the view that the COMM channels in the NWPA were *not effective*. Participants were in favour of written and verbal communication.	Respondents acknowledged leadership COMM, *lack of interaction* between managers and employees; however, in the comments provided there was evidence of *mixed feelings* from respondents as most of the respondents agreed that there *was existence of effective* COMM and *almost the same numbers of respondents disagreed*.	*Evident that there was agreement* that COMM *is not effective; however, indication that there were mixed views, as to some extent existence of effective COMM*. However, it is necessary that it be *prioritised* across all NWPA departments.
Perception (PERCEPT)	Highest percentage occurrence; participants were of the view that there was a *negative perception* of both managers and subordinates and also that trust was broken between both managers and subordinates.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *a shift from negative to positive is needed for perceptions of both subordinates and their supervisors and to rebuild on the trust within their relationships.*
Turnover rates (TR)	There is a *significant amount of resignations and transfers* for various reasons.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to reduce turnover rates* within NWPA in order to work towards continuity and progress.
Feedback (FB)	*No feedback from managers*. Majority report.	*Inability of management to convene meetings* or up-to-date communication on issues of performance because of pressure.	*Evident that there was agreement* that there is no feedback. It is necessary that feedback as a mechanism to inform individuals how they are doing on the job be *prioritised*, as the main idea behind feedback is to motivate behaviour.
Motivation	Motivation levels of employees *are very low*. Majority view.	There is *low staff morale* among employees within NWPA. Majority view.	*Evident that there is agreement* that there is low morale. *Empowerment* is needed to motivate particularly a feeling of ownership, accountability and responsibility.
Placement	Placements *not done correctly* in the NWPA. Highest occurrence.	There are a significant number of *wrongly placed employees*.	*Evident that there is agreement* that placement is not done correctly. Placement of employees with the right skills, the right qualifications in the right posts so that job satisfaction can be achieved.
Job satisfaction (JS)	There is *no JS* among the employees within NWPA.	Generally, respondents were *happy with their jobs*.	*Evident that there is disagreement* with regard to JS. Because every individual is unique, with different motivations, it is encouraged that management provide more support to their subordinates and leadership styles should be supportive as well.
Leadership (LDSHIP)	Highest percentage occurrences; participants were of the view that LDSHIP is *not good* within the NWPA.	Majority agree that there is *poor LDSHIP* in the NWPA. There is also too much political interference, unprofessional modes and nepotism.	*Evident that there is agreement* with regard to LDSHIP. There is *a need to improve the leadership styles* within NWPA.
Induction	Highest percentage of the participants were of the view that there is *no induction* for employees within the NWPA.	Generally agreed that there is *no induction* in the NWPA.	*Evident that there is agreement that there is no induction*. Keeping employees up to date with the latest advances in their business creates a sense of loyalty towards the NWPA.

TABLE 4(Continues...): Integration and comparison of mixed-method results.

Theme and code	Qualitative method occurrence	Quantitative method occurrence	Comment in line with the study
Cluster 3: Performance environment			
Management and subordinate relations (M&SREL)	Highest percentage of participants stated *no good working relations* between management and subordinates within the NWPA.	Respondents perceived that working relations between subordinates and management *are healthy*. Conflicting responses in comments section. There *is no support provided by management*.	*Evident that there is agreement* that M&SREL *is not good; however, indication that there are mixed views, as to some extent existence of healthy relations*; however, it is necessary that *good working relationships always be encouraged* in the working environment.
Work ethics	Highest percentage occurrences of the participants are of the view that there is *no work ethic* within the workforce for employees within the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, that there is *a need to encourage compliance with work ethics and that management must lead by example* within NWPA.
Union relationships	Highest percentage of the participants were of the view that the relationship between the union and the NWPA is *not good*.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to encourage good working relationships with unions*.
Time fames	Highest percentage of the participants are of the view that there is *no adherence* to time frames among management and subordinates in the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to encourage adherence to time frames*.
Support structures	There *are support structures in place* in the NWPA. However, it is *not uniform* as the structures are different in every department. Majority view.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to have a uniform approach to all structures* within NWPA departments.
Resources (RES)	The RES area is wanting (*lack of RES*) and evidence of abuse of RES allocated to certain employees within the NWPA. Majority report.	Majority *disagree* with the notion that *RES are available*.	*Evident that there is agreement* that RES *is lacking*. A lack of RES hampers progress; availability of resources is encouraged and *resources should not be abused*.
Team building and teamwork	Participants agreed about *non-existence* of team building efforts and teamwork among employees in the NWPA.	Participants agreed that teambuilding exercises were *non-existent* within the NWPA.	*Evident that there is agreement* that team building and teamwork is not evident. *Teambuilding and teamwork is encouraged* as performance depends on team performance.
Knowledge management (KM)	Highest percentage of participants of the view that there is *no evidence of good KM systems* within the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to improve the KM* within NWPA departments in order to trace performance back in time.
Service delivery	Participants reported overwhelmingly that *service delivery was not evident* in the province.	-	Based on the qualitative input, there is *a need to put more effort into service delivery improvement* within the NWPA for the benefit of the citizens of the North West Province.
New or other themes identified			
Favouritism	Participants reported a *significant occurrence of favouritism* within the NWPA.	A glaring *evidence of high levels of favouritism* reported in the NWPA.	*Evident that there is agreement* that favouritism exists within the NWPA. *Favouritism must be discouraged* among employees and management.
Racism	A significantly high number of participants reported the *prevalence of racism* in the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *racism is discouraged* among employees and management.
Victimisation	A significantly high number of participants reported the *prevalence of victimisation* within the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *victimisation is discouraged* among employees and management.
Punishment	The *PM tool* is used as a *punishment weapon* against employees within the NWPA	-	Based on the qualitative input, *punishment must be discouraged* among employees and management.
Conflict	Not a lot of *conflict occurs within* the NWPA as reported by a significant number of participants.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *conflict should be effectively managed* within the NWPA.
Implementation	*No implementation* of policies and rules within the NWPA.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *implementation should be prioritised* within the NWPA.
Compliance	Evidence of *non-compliance* present within the NWPA is overwhelming.	-	Based on the qualitative input, *non-compliance should be eliminated* within the NWPA.
Nepotism	This theme was not fully addressed in the qualitative method; however, evidence of turnover rates points to the political heads bringing in their 'own people'.	Majority reported evidence of *nepotism* in the NWPA.	*Evident that there is agreement* that nepotism exists within the NWPA. *Nepotism must be prevented* among leadership, management as it demotivate employees, and this can lead towards non-performance.
Low salaries	-	Majority of the participants agreed that *salaries were not well constructed* in the NWPA.	Based on the quantitative input, *better market-related salary structures should be applied* within the NWPA.
Room for improvement	-	Majority of the participants agreed that there *was room for improvement* within the NWPA.	Based on the quantitative input, *improvement in human and environmental factors may lead to improved performance* within the NWPA.

In line with Table 4, note should be taken of cluster 3 in relation to the performance environment (PE) results from the majority of the respondents that:

- management and subordinate relations – not good in some areas
- work ethics – no work ethics
- union relationships – not good relationship in some areas
- time frames – non-adherence to time frames
- support structures – there are structures in place, although not uniform in all NWPA departments
- resources – insufficient resources
- team building and teamwork – non-existent in some areas
- knowledge management – not good systems in place
- service delivery – not good service delivery in the North West Province.

In line with Table 4, note should be taken of cluster 4 in relation to the performance management (PM) results from the majority of the respondents that:

- performance management - not effectively used
- training and development – lack of effective training and no sufficient budget
- senior management training – senior managers to be trained and lower level staff to be aware of the challenges managers face
- rewards for good performance – lacking in some areas and no uniformity in applying rewards for performance.

In line with Table 4, note should be taken of *other factors or new themes* identified by participants, such as favouritism, racism, victimisation, use of the PM tool as punishment, no implementation of policies and prescripts, non-compliance, nepotism, low salaries and room for improvement.

Table 4 represents an integration and comparison of the mixed-method results as a means of summarising in alignment with the main clusters and themes. The themes were used as a means to identify the results for both the qualitative and quantitative methods as outlined in Table 4 with comments, as the comparison was also done in line with the literature review.

Qualitative method (interviews)

Out of the total 31 participants, for the face-to-face interviews eight participants took part in the study. The gender makeup of the participants was as follows: seven males and one female.

For the focus group interviews conducted, 23 participants took part in the focus group interviews conducted by the researcher. The gender breakdown was as follows: 8 male and 15 female participants.

Quantitative method (questionnaires)

The results show that all mean responses were greater than the corresponding standard deviations. Most employees had been employed for a period exceeding 10 years. This is evident from the mean response of 3.20 years of employment. Most of these employees were females aged between 36 and 40 years. The mean response associated with qualifications of these employees was 4.21, suggesting that most of the employees had formal tertiary qualifications. The current job level for employees at all government departments is highly skilled production levels (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: Quantitative respondent, number of years employed, gender, age, job level and highest qualification.

Variable	Number of years employed within the North West provincial administration	Gender	Age group	Current job level	Highest education
N valid	762	762	762	762	762
N missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.20	1.60	3.93	2.95	4.21
Standard deviation	1.304	1.490	1.448	1.029	1.516

Findings
Summary of the findings

The study consisted of research questions and objectives, which were informed by previous literature. The management and employees within the NWPA are encouraged to take consideration of the study, particularly the proposed PM model. The three main clusters, including the fourth (other factors or new themes), which became evident through inputs during the interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data, were all part of the study. The clustering of variables selected for the study represented the focus areas of the research theme and the research question: the human needs, relations and motivation cluster; the communication and operational dimension cluster; the leadership cluster; and the PM process cluster.

The three main clusters of this research – dealing with (1) performance management, (2) human factors and (3) the performance environment – were coded and coloured.

The main clusters were coded in the transcripts for faster identification of the three main themes, as depicted in Figure 8.

Concentration was placed on the areas of performance management, human factors, performance environment and as other factors or new themes identified by participants were found. The summary of findings is outlined in the following.
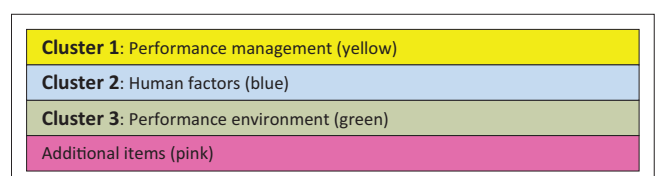
Cluster 1: Performance management

The link between performance and service delivery is very weak at present as evident in the findings outlined in Table 6 from all the interviews conducted. The prevailing spirit of laissez-faire found to be prevalent within the departments needs to be eliminated by consciously resuscitating areas of motivation (rewards, recognition and remuneration) and strongly addressing issues such as nepotism and favouritism, as identified by Participant 12 during the interview:

> 'But in our department, some of them are, they are using a favouritism, instead of rating you accordingly they are using the excuses or their way how to perform that. They are using favourite, favouritism is there.' (Participant 12, female, expert level)

In addition, political deployment of unsuitable candidates should be addressed, according to Participant 31, who responded by saying that:

> 'People are brought without any subject matter, they know nothing, but you are required to work with them. You understand

Cluster 1: Performance management (yellow)
Cluster 2: Human factors (blue)
Cluster 3: Performance environment (green)
Additional items (pink)

FIGURE 8: Qualitative method colour coding and clustering applied.

TABLE 6: Quantified qualitative outcomes of themes for Cluster 1: Performance management.

Theme	Code	Face-to-face	Focus Group	Total responded	Positive occurrences of the themes	Negative occurrences of the themes	Total occurrence of the themes
Performance management	PM	5	7	12	5	7	12
Training and development	T&D	6	8	14	7	7	14
Senior management services training	SMS T	2	3	5	0	5	5
Rewards for good performance	R4GP	7	7	14	7	7	14
Total		**20.0**	**25.0**	**45**	**19.0**	**29.0**	**45**
% of occurrences		**44.4**	**55.5**	**100**	**42.2**	**64.4**	**100**

TABLE 7: Quantified qualitative outcomes of themes for Cluster 2: Human factors.

Theme	Code	Face-to-face	Focus Group	Total responded	Positive occurrences of the themes	Negative occurrences of the themes	Total occurrence of the themes
Perception	PERCEPT	9	3	12	0	12	12
Communication	COMM	4	11	15	5	10	15
Turnover rates	TR	4	9	13	4	9	13
Feedback	FB	6	14	20	9	11	20
Motivation	MOT	5	7	12	5	7	12
Placement	PL	2	9	11	0	11	11
Job satisfaction	JS	3	5	8	1	7	8
Leadership	LDSHIP	5	6	11	3	8	11
Induction	IND	0	5	5	2	3	5
Total	**-**	**38**	**69**	**107**	**29**	**78**	**107**
% of occurrences	**-**	**35.5**	**64.4**	**100**	**27.1**	**72.8**	**100**

this comrade was brought here, he knows nothing, I've got to capacitate him on my own …' ' (Participant 31, male, expert level)

Cluster 2: Human factors

The aim of the study was to isolate the human factors prevalent in the execution of the PM tool outlined under the literature review as well as the findings from the interviews in Table 7. Through information sourced from the literature review and the interviews conducted, including the questionnaires, which identified and exposed flaws (see Table 4) identified in the three main clusters including the other factors that were identified during the interviews such as nepotism, favouritism, racism and so on, gaps and other misdemeanours in the current PM process. Some of these human flaws may affect the morale, ethos and general outlook of what public service is all about:

> 'Because I think in that way then they would be much more encouraged and motivated to behave and adhere to the work ethics or the guidelines that have been stipulated so I think to like even a, a courtesy to say well done, you know feedback, encourages, it motivates it, it gives you a drive it can just give you, you know that boost to say keep going, keep you are doing well. With that, I guess my colleague is, is spot on, to say, service delivery is compromised because as a workforce, as government employees we are disgruntled and most of us can trace back our, lack of morale and poor motivation in pursuit of rendering the services that we promised our people back to this policy.' (Participant 13, male, expert level)

The political interference mentioned in the study has become one of the most disturbing aspects that impacts on relationships within the human resource (HR) space, where negative attitudes begin to grow.

Some of the comments from the interviews conducted indicated as follows:

- 'most of the time you find that some of the forums are only constituted when required. You see, they are time related – in other words, they are not permanent'. (Participant 1, male, strategic level)
- '[I]n terms of the forum, I will specifically talk about the provincial 'Batho Pele' forum that I know and I participate [in]. The other forums that are here, I cannot say much about them because I never been there but I, I am told they are there, ja.' (Participant 7, male, operational level)
- 'our senior management (SMS), they sit in departmental management committee (DMC) meetings; they come with the resolutions, but they don't come back to, to their own dire … directorates. Yes, in our department ee … your Appeals Forums they, they establish it when there's a crisis, it's not there, even the moderating, the moderating, they stand when it's a pressure to them to say, no, we are waiting for the PMDS; they just start now calling people, they must have a structure that is already there.' (Participant 11, male, expert level)

Cluster 3: Performance environment

Among the findings in Table 8, there were a significant number of negative occurrences of the theme of management and subordinate relationships at 15 out of 18, which significantly highlights the state of affairs in this category. With regard to union relationships, it is evident that significantly more respondents at 11 out of 17 agreed that there was not a good working relationship between the NWPA departments and the unions. Regarding work ethic, it is evident that there is no work ethic in the departments as negative responses were significantly more frequent than positive responses. However, respondents felt that there is a modicum of team building and teamwork that is taking place, although to a lesser extent.

TABLE 8: Quantified qualitative outcomes of themes for Cluster 3: Performance environment.

Theme	Code	Face-to- face	Focus Group	Total responses	Positive occurrences of the themes	Negative occurrences of the themes	Total occurrence of the themes
Management and subordinate relationships	M+SREL	6	12	18	3	15	18
Work ethics	WETH	5	5	10	2	8	10
Union relationships	UNREL	8	9	17	6	11	17
Time frames	TF	3	7	10	4	6	10
Support structures	SS	5	6	11	10	1	11
Resources	RES	0	6	6	1	5	6
Team building and teamwork	TB&TW	3	3	6	5	1	6
Knowledge management	KM	2	10	12	4	8	12
Service delivery	SD	3	11	14	5	9	14
Total		**35**	**69**	**104**	**40**	**64**	**104**
% of occurrences		**33.6**	**66.3**	**100**	**38.5**	**61.5**	**100**

TABLE 9: Quantified qualitative outcomes of themes for Cluster 4: Emerging new factors.

Theme	Code	Face-to-face	Focus Group	Total responses	Yes	No	Total
Favouritism	FAV	1	5	6	6	0	6
Racism	RACM	0	7	7	7	0	7
Victimisation	VICT	3	3	6	3	3	6
Punishment	PNMNT	3	3	6	5	1	6
Conflict	CONFL	3	4	7	1	6	7
Implementation	IMPL	3	3	6	2	4	6
Compliance	COMPL	3	5	8	3	5	8
Total	-	**16**	**30**	**46**	**27**	**19**	**46**
% of occurrences	-	**34.8**	**65.2**	**100**	**58.7**	**41.3**	**100**

Knowledge management seems to have a much higher negative response rate than the positive meaning that KM needs attention or needs to be improved. A few participants also highlighted the fact that time frames are problematic, as there seems to be non-adherence to deadlines. With regard to service delivery, it is evident that there is a need to improve service delivery, as the participants provided more negative responses than positive.

Cluster 4: Emerging new factors

The findings in Table 9 indicate a significant number of respondents who agreed that there is favouritism in the departments; however, the themes of conflict and compliance were slightly more frequent than the rest of the responses. There is a need to improve and/or ensure that these themes are not militating against good performance and therefore they need attention and/or intervention.

Discussion

The study investigated the current PM status quo in the province, where service delivery protests have been witnessed and have escalated proportionally. The pattern suggests that the entire PM system needs redress. Manuel (2013) on the launch of the National Development Plan has clearly cited the escalating pitfalls in the PM process as a subset of poor service delivery.

Main recommendations

Proposed strategic input–throughput–output process

The input–throughput–output process in Figure 9 is aligned to the management systems model of the employee as a subsystem as depicted by Nel et al. (2011). This alignment was done to assist in guiding the NWPA management or to equip them with an understanding of the phenomenon, leading towards performance improvement. The input–throughput–output process (see Figure 9) could be used to determine specific activities that could be embarked upon by the NWPA with a view to improving service delivery for the citizens of the North West Province. The model provides guidelines for the three levels: (1) strategic, expert, (2) operational and (3) grass-roots levels (see Figure 9).

The proposed PM model (see Figure 10) also incorporated and aligned the input, throughput and output phases with the three main clusters (PM, human factors and performance environment) as well as other factors or new themes identified by participants. Looking out for the interests of people we serve is what public service is all about (Pule, 2015), as outlined in Table 4.

Proposed performance management model

The aim of the study was to design a model for improved performance. This model can be used to assist the NWPA to improve PM and ultimately service delivery in the province. The proposed PM model (Figure 10), as suggested in this study, can provide guidance to improve the PM model in the North West provincial government. The findings derived from the research investigations and discussions have led to the identification of main themes, which resulted in the design of the model depicted in Figure 10.

Based on the views expressed by various authors and researchers such as O'Boyle and Aguinis (2012), Olson, (2013) and Bersin (2014), the bell curve psychological testing or normal distribution is outdated (Figure 2).
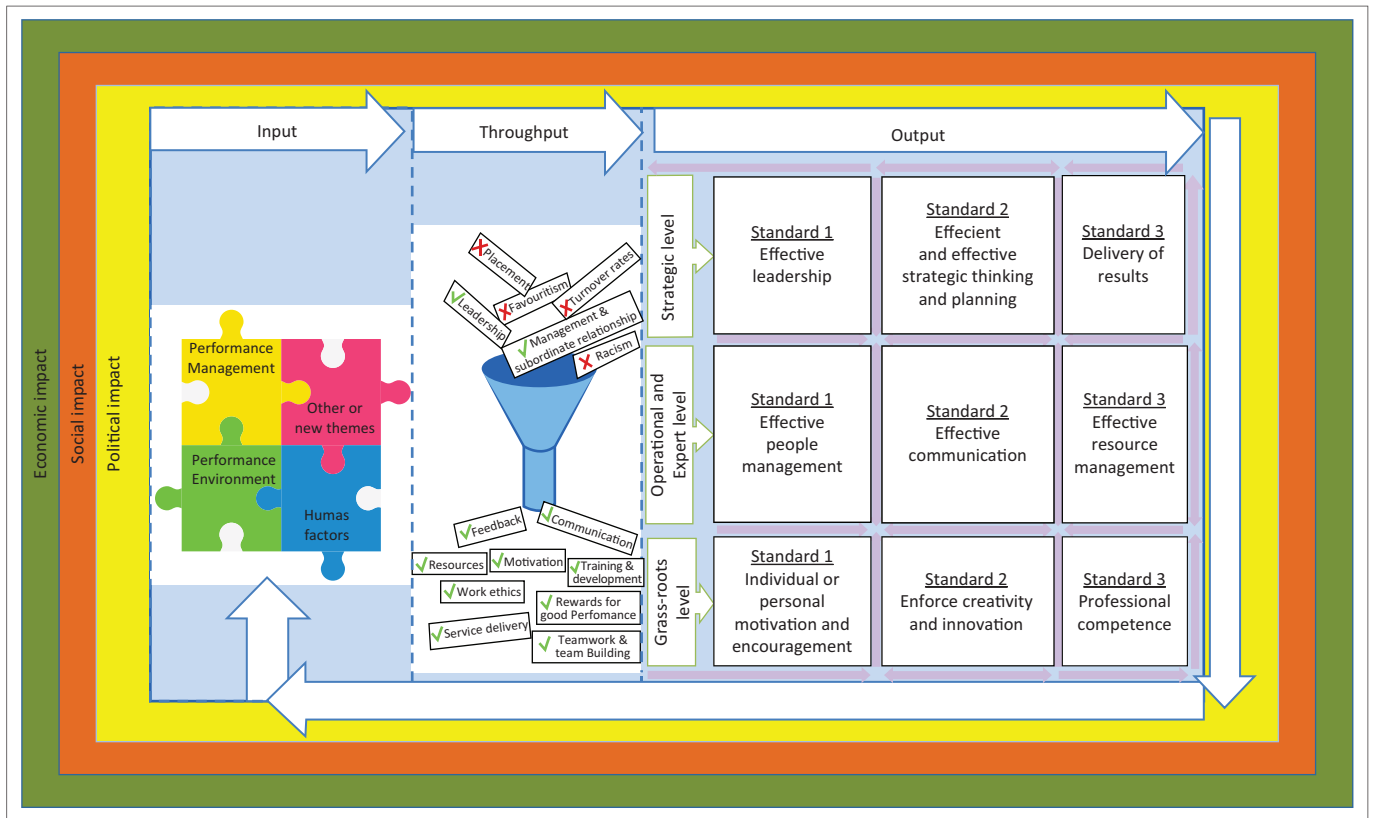
FIGURE 9: Input–throughput–output process.

According to the results, there were conflicting responses with respect to relationships between and among managers and employees. Although most respondents agreed with these assertions, a reasonable number of them also disagreed. Their mean response was 1.6, less than the standard deviation 0.499, and was almost skewed to 1, marking an agreement. Some of the reasons given to support the disagreement were: lack of interaction between managers and employees, lack of transparency, arrogance displayed by some managers, unhealthy competition among managers themselves and flawed processes at their workplaces. Some of the positive comments included availability of mentorship, especially to new appointees, and the way problems are addressed as they emerge. Research has also revealed that there is a paucity of research related to cases where managers are contracted to PM and their subordinates are not (Matjila, Maleka, & Jordaan, 2015).

Guidelines for implementation of the performance management model

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the proposed model was developed specifically and uniquely for the NWPA.

Management of performance is a two-way process and requires interaction between the employee and employer.

Guideline 1 – Performance management: Like in the private sector, the public sector around the world faces pressures to improve service quality, to lower costs, to become more accountable, customer focussed and responsible to stakeholder needs (Metawie, 2005). Souhrada (2016) observed that after years of discussion, many organisations are now totally rethinking their PM processes – sometimes eliminating ratings and often focusing more heavily on coaching, feedback, development and agile goal management, setting expectations for what the business needs to get the work done. There is a need to review the current PM because it is clear that there are gaps in the system.

Guideline 2 – Human factors: Softer issues linked to human elements should not be taken lightly, as they most certainly have an impact (either positive or negative) at the end. Proper and more effective planning towards improved performance and effective service delivery is therefore necessary to strategise more effectively for performance improvement, taking into consideration strategic alignment of the following:

- Provincial and National Treasury Framework for managing performance or the accountability cycle
- Legislative Regulatory Framework, which governs PM compliance
- principals captured in the book of the Presidency Guide, Vision 2030
- National Development Plan
- North West Provincial Integrated Development Strategy
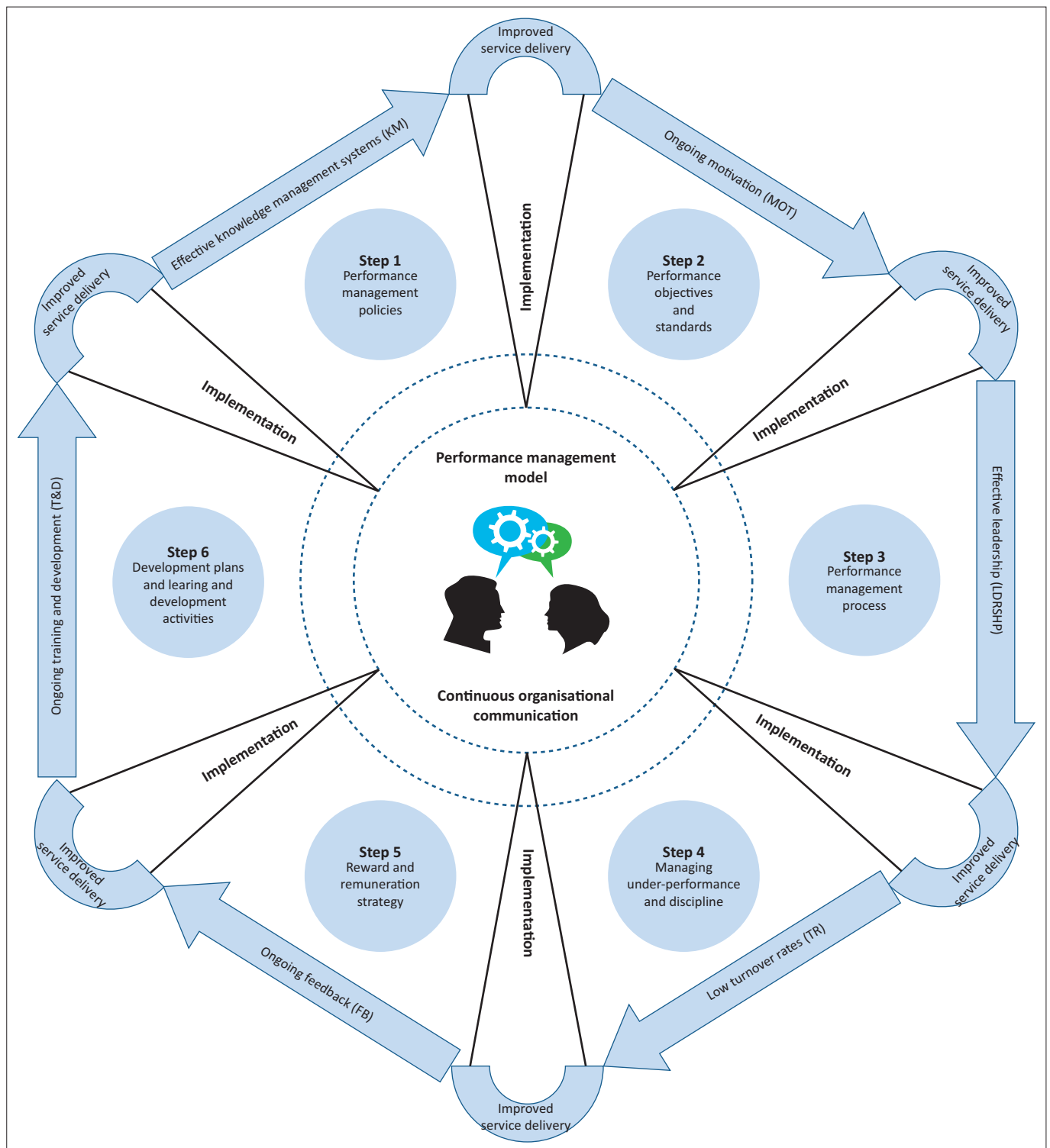- North West provincial pillars and concretes and the 'triple R' philosophy

FIGURE 10: Performance management model.

- Department strategic plan
- Individual performance agreements
- Employee work plans
- Job design

Guideline 3 – Performance environment: The factors linked to the performance environment should enable a well-functioning and conducive working environment, which positively supports and promotes improved performance.

Participant 11 at expert level was expressing frustration regarding the fact that the employee felt that there was a serious backlog of service delivery in the province.

Guideline 4 – Implementation of the policies: Directives must be done with effective support structures in place. Knowledge of policies, uniformity of implementation and utilisation of sound support structures is ideal towards making the performance environment a success.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Limitations

From this study, it was evident that both the literature review and findings had contextual and applicability limits. The literature review findings cited in this article as acknowledged were directly linked (grouped into three main clusters) to the main research question, sub-questions and objectives of the study. These were based on the environmental context; as the study was confined only to the 12 departments within the NWPA, therefore the findings cannot be generalised.

Recommendations for future research

This sequential mixed-methods study was confined to only the 12 departments of the NWPA. Recommendations are thus made for possible future research, as it might be possible to compare other provincial departments through encouraging participation in a mixed-methods study so that a more solid and rigorous comparative study could be conducted. This would substantiate the proposed model in this study and propose possible revisions or changes to accommodate the unique situation as well as linking it to PM processes in other provinces. It may be necessary to add national departmental officials into the study as well. If the model is implemented and is working for the benefit of the vision and objectives set by the current government, then it might be necessary that the North West Province be used as a pilot; the programme can then be rolled out to other provinces in the country and most probably further into other countries. In general, the study has outlined significant human factors that may build or derail the entire HR management system if red flags are not raised, addressed head-on and remedied. These daily service delivery protests that have become a common feature of the South African daily scenario are an indication of the disjuncture between the provincial government and its municipalities, communication gaps between the provincial and local managers, external as well as internal managers within departments. Organisational communication demands that internal and external communication be managed through existing channels. Many of these channels have been exposed as extinct in this study.

Conclusion

The primary research objective of the study was met as a proposed process in the form of input, throughput and output as a start, linking it with the suggested PM model for performance improvement in the North West Province for possible application in other provincial departments in the country and most probably further into other countries. The model has contributed to the body of knowledge in PM and towards performance improvement with reference to the NWPA. Recommendations were provided, improving the PM process in the NWPA, which should ultimately contribute positively towards service delivery for the citizens.

From the study, it became clear that several PM lapses exist within the NWPA departments. These lapses have contributed to the status quo of service delivery protests in most provinces. The present study has set the tone for further research in the area of PM, where deterioration in performance and erosion of morale has mitigated the performance status at all levels within the departments. This situation called for a closer look at the model, now referred to as the PM model.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

The study was conducted by K.K. as part of her PhD study in Business Management at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. This article is an excerpt of the PhD study. S.M. and S.S. were the promoters of the study. Sadly, S.M. passed away before the completion of the study and thus K.K. and S.S. are the co-writers of the article.

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