

Department of Community Safety: Western Cape – A Case Study of certain management practices

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1. Introduction

The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), which is located within the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa is tasked, among others, with the monitoring of management performance in all government departments. For this purpose it developed the Management Performance Monitoring Tool (MPAT). This tool measures departmental compliance to regulated management practices as well as performance and innovation in this regard.

The tool sets specific compliance and performance standards against which departments assess themselves. These self-assessments are moderated by a panel of subject matter experts based on evidence provided by the departments in substantiating its self-assessment.

One of the key outcomes of the assessment process is the identification and documentation of good management practices.

1.1. The assessment of the DCS: WC's management practices in terms of Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT)

The DPME's assessment of the Department of Community Safety: Western Cape's (DCS: WC) performance in respect of management practices was not based on substantiating documentation (evidence). This was mainly due to a combination of evidence not being supplied, the required evidence not being readily available as well as challenges related to evidence management.

In its self-assessment, the department indicated its compliance with 94% of the standards indicated in the MPAT. In this, it claimed to exceed 68% of all the standards. According to the department, it exceeded full compliance in all the standards related to governance and accountability.

Although unsubstantiated, the DCS: WC's reported high levels of compliance placed a focus on the department as a possible example of good practice.

1.2. Overview of the mandate of the DCS: WC

The DCS: WC is responsible for security risk management, traffic management, social crime prevention, community police relations and civilian oversight over police and other law enforcement agencies in the Western Cape Province.

It delivers the following broad range of services:

- Increases safety in communities by improving the performance of policing through effective oversight.
- Makes safety everyone's responsibility by means of building partnerships and creating forums for promoting active citizenship in the field of community safety. Maintains law and order for all modes of transport by providing consolidated and integrated traffic policing operations.
- Elevates security measures to minimise security breaches in respect of theft and unauthorised access to Western Cape Government buildings.

1.3. Methodology

The approach followed in this study was to be as open-minded as possible. This necessitated less structure and more open-ended interrogation of information. Following a desktop study of the evidence substantiating the department's MPAT self-assessment as well as the standards to which it was relevant, further background information was obtained from internet sources. As a matter of protocol, interviews were arranged by the provincial Office of the Premier, with the object department nominating the interviewees (Please refer to Annexure 1: Interview Schedule). Although vaguely thematic, the interview questions were unstructured. This was necessary to eliminate preconceptions about the department's performance and the possible conditions facilitating it.

The interviews were recorded to ensure the factual correctness and context of what was said. The findings were communicated to the department for verification and further contextualisation.

2. Considering good management practices

2.1. From vision to values to practice

The core task of the DCS: WC is to contribute to an open society, free of fear of crime. They aim to establish efficient and effective civic involvement to assist the police and other safety organizations. The department views its role as being more related to the prevention of factors facilitating unsafe environments or conditions, rather than suppressing them. At a more conceptual level, safety should not only encompass the reduction of crime, but also traffic safety, the security of government assets (including information) etc.

The staff of the department shares in and is committed to the values of the department. These values are simple and straightforward. From national and provincial objectives they distill the essence and communicate the frameworks, policies and procedures to staff in clear messages on what really matters. This helps to base compliance to national and provincial legislation and prescripts on a system of shared and sustainable values rather than

a set of technical guidelines and rules (forced compliance). Being value-based, compliance thus becomes second nature.

2.2. Serious leadership: Understanding actions and its consequences

The management of the department is a stable unit of long-serving individuals (± 9 years average at middle and senior management level). This unit effectively translates political 'wants' into fair, equitable and transparent public policy and programmes.

Senior management scrutinizes the logic of objectives (national and provincial). They dissect it, analyze it and integrate it into ongoing practice. This is also a symbolic act: nothing is dropped down from the top to the bottom without constant explanation, contextualisation and affirmation of values. An inspiring example for the department is the 'broken windows' approach of the New York Police Department (NYPD), which basically boils down to two principles:

- Firstly, small unsafe situation induce larger unsafety - it is worthwhile concentrating effort to address smaller safety issues and thereby preventing its escalation into catastrophes.
- Secondly, evidence-driven- and consistent management (especially in respect of the examples set by managers (role-modeling)) are essential to improving organizations such as the NYPD and the department.

The application of these two principles is evident in the seriousness the department's management attaches to administrative mistakes, fraud, corruption etc. and the way they deal with it. Throughout the organization, there is a common understanding that actions have consequences and that management regards the work of the functionaries as serious and important. As Mr. Steyn puts it: *"There's Nothing Like a Hanging in the Morning"*¹. This refers to the consistent follow-up and behavioural boundary setting by the department's management.

Finally, as Chief-Director: Corporate Services, Mr. Steyn keeps delegated powers on the agenda by ensuring that staff understand the legal foundation of decision-making in the department and public sector. In practice, he would not execute his powers (sign off documents) if the documents do not reference the relevant powers delegated and how it relates to the mandates in the department. It is a way of keeping staff attuned to the basics of government and departmental administration imperatives.

¹ Allegedly Samuel Johnson quote, **"There's nothing like a hanging in the morning** to focus a man's

2.3. Empowerment

2.3.1. Opportunity

The department empowers itself and its staff by clearly defining the boundaries within which it/they operate. In doing so, and crucially, the department bases its operations in the legislative and broader policy frameworks defining its mandate. It always starts with in depth analysis of legislation and of the policy that impact on the execution pipeline, from the 'president down to practice'. Then senior management engages staff on the departmental administrative- and staff performance obligations. They give staff time to get use to these obligations, to absorb the underlying logic and values as well as and the processes necessary to achieve it. This does not imply leaving staff to their own devices until the next round of engagements. The departmental management keeps on pushing, in a mild way, staying in touch with staff, emphasizing the core policies and practices. Through this guided internalization process, seeming beaucroatic 'red tape' is nullified, as compliance is translated into something practical.

2.3.2. Ability

A significant management challenge is to how to align or change micro behavior in relation to the 'bigger picture'. Staff should have a better understanding of this 'bigger picture' in order to have an active buy-in and realize how their behavior impacts on compliance, especially in respect of governance and accountability prerequisites and improvements. Senior management ensures that everyone in the organization knows his or her role. To this end, they use training, toolkits and audits.

Auditing and training should combine to translate control into development. It should become a natural process of measurement, resulting in learning, resulting in improvement. This is not putting it down as a very 'soft' process. Good auditing shows that you take the detail in execution seriously, that you do not think that day-to-day work processes are trivial.

2.3.3. Motivation

The micro behavior of staff is, to a great extent, influenced by their perception of the worth and seriousness of their work. The department identified the possibility of enhancing staff perception through improved tooling (training, equipment, ICT etc.). Improved, new and/or contemporary skills and equipment could signal support the department's view to the (frontline) staff that it takes them seriously in your efforts and that the department tries to make it easier for them to perform.

2.4. Policies and strategies

Compliance to national and provincial legislation, prescripts and policy is a non-issue and is part of the department's normal operations. The difference between blindly complying and contextualizing is evident in the DCS: WC.

Although the department bases its policies and practices on the national imperatives, it views this as the skeleton on which local level flesh needs to be added. This implies a bottom-up approach provincial and departmental policy making, but always with the broader context of the constitution. There is an active buy-in to national policies, but the execution is and must be tailored to the provincial needs.

It is generally agreed that there is no need for the DCS: WC to re-invent the wheel (duplicate existing, working practices) and that it is open to learn from good practice elsewhere and customize it to suite its needs. There is, however, merit in being well-informed and connected to the national goals, as the national goals provides an important basis for measuring and comparing the contributions of departments across provinces.

At a more administrative level, the history of the department also shaped the way in which it organizes, aligns and controls its operations. Since 1994, the Western Cape has experienced significant political flux. The DCS: WC, specifically, has been under scrutiny because of the relative political instability. Political opposition was looking for 'blood'. This took the form of the department being continuously audited. These audits (that continued for about 5 years) had two positive effects:

- First, the department got used to auditing and being nitpicked; and
- Second, they got 'their house in order'
- The DCS: WC in an example that compliance creates credibility. Active fraud prevention is central to this and is but a part of the department's more extensive strategy of risk management.

2.5. Resources

2.5.1. Human resources

There seems to be a combination of factors positively impacting on the human resource base of the DCS: WC.

Sharing of common provincial objectives and values as well as loyalty to the provincial public administration system is far from the normal public service mentality experienced world-wide. The DCS: WC's staff is motivated. They have professional pride without going 'over the top' and being perceived as arrogant. Trying to improve is second nature to them. They got the space to manoeuvre and took the opportunity to innovate. The senior management, specifically, is not in a routine mode, they stay open minded by, among others, eliciting external stakeholder knowledge and experience. Perseverance, in the face of seemingly insurmountable implementation and political obstacles, is a basic part of their make-up.

Staff is experienced: they came through the ranks of the organization thus having a good combination of strategic and operational experience. This provides some insight into the relative seniority (± 9 years at middle and senior management level) of the department's management team. The tacit knowledge of the organization is a constructive. There is a sound organizational memory without the risk of developing tunnel-vision or intellectual 'inbreeding'.

With this being said, there is a perceived loss of control over certain functions that contribute to the effectiveness of the department's human resources. Some of the human resource related functions were centralized to the provincial Shared Services Centre. Currently, the direct access to necessary resources, such as tailored/customised training, as well as making your own (and quick) recruitment decisions are severely limited. There is also a concern with regards to talent management and succession planning. This poses the risk of losing competent staff as well as corporate memory. The success of their department is strongly related to the positive commitment and competence of the staff. Continuous investment in this is crucial.

2.5.2. Technological resources

It would be helpful if the department could get more high-end technological tools. This could make work more efficient and also contribute to the perceptions of both the frontline staff and the public. The general perception of a well-equipped traffic officer might be a lot different compared to that of a pencil wielding 'speed cop' in an old vehicle.

2.6. Innovation/improvement

2.6.1. Performance and administration

Improvement is a second nature to the DCS: WC. Performance management is viewed as closely linked to financial accounting. The links are both at the conceptual and practical levels.

Like financial accounting, performance management should be evidence-based (invoices and receipts). Like financial accounting, performance management should be well established, technically sound and implemented by means of accepted practice.

On a practical level, performance management and financial audits need to be integrated. There needs to be a 'marriage' of financial auditing and performance auditing. As Mr. Steyn explains: "Without this integration, you are making nonsense look financially sound". Compliance and performance is better ensured by smart cross checking with different systems (e.g. financial, human resource etc.) to see if things add up.

2.6.2. Strategy

It is a challenge to stay ahead in innovating service delivery.

The department has a 'research-and-development-laboratory'-like approach to innovation. The DCS: WC is actively seeking international expertise and experience, to obtain a broader, more holistic/comprehensive perspective on province specific safety-related issues.

The department initiated a "Safety Lab". This institution is meant to think 'out of the box'. As this is a relatively new initiative that still has to prove its worth, it receives limited financial support from the department. The vision is that this entity would be able to obtain private sector investment in addressing safety in the province.

2.6.3. Culture

The provincial administration's focus on organizational culture seems to be having created an awareness of organizational culture at the departmental level. The DCS: WC uses the outcomes of the Barrett Survey (specifically entropy²) in understanding and managing its organizational culture. This survey indicates where and organization could be more effective in aligning organizational values with the personal values of staff. The impact of shared

"Cultural entropy is the amount of energy in an organization that is consumed in unproductive work. It is a measure of the conflict, friction, and frustration that exists within an organization" citation from: Richard Barrett (z.j.) 'High Performance: It's all about Entropy. Oh, and don't forget the Vision and Values' download http://www.uwc.ac.za/usrfiles/users/1/Article_2.pdf d.d. July 21., 2012

values on loyalty, commitment, perseverance, the drive for excellence is considered to have a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the DCS: WC's compliance and performance.

2.7. Reporting and communication on progress

The quality of information is crucial in improving service delivery. Central crime/safety statistics are produced at a rate that is not compatible with the requirements of the DCS: WC. The department is looking creatively for more alternative and pro-active information sources, e.g. frequently requesting morgues to provide information on the causes of death, rather than wait for the official statistics. There is a need to develop a 'Safety Barometer. This requires a targeted and up-to-date system(s), incorporating various data sources.

In their management Mr. Steyn and Mrs Mohammed take a very analytical stance: first you have to really know your goals and your current position and then you can take action. Auditing is an important source of information. To enable a learning approach to management, auditing should also focus on positive aspect. Exclusive attention to non-compliance, fraud etc. creates a negative and defensive climate, which may be a risk in itself. A more positive approach creates greater openness to learning and enhances commitment to change. In practice this would mean placing the spotlight on the positive aspects of compliance e.g. what is possible to achieve when red tape is reduced (lean and mean) or how many lethal traffic accidents have been prevented because of improved safety.

2.8. Involvement of stakeholders

In the foregoing the department's strong emphasis on improving and communicating has already been alluded to. The department's conscientious stakeholder engagement strategy facilitates the balance between national goals and provincial needs (conditions), such as the implementation of community safety demands. This is part of the broader analytical approach followed by the department's management. They are very open to signals from all kind of sources on how well they perform and how public needs (operational conditions) shift. They actively gather more information on how well they are doing and, in doing so; they link up with (new) stakeholders representing different needs and broadening the scope of the department's understanding of its mandate and operations. For the management of

the department it is also a way of staying open-minded by bringing in fresh ideas from outside the department.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion we are convinced that compliance, especially in terms of governance and accountability, is a 'part of life' for the department. Compliance is second nature. It is a living practice to comply, not some form of external pressure or burden. An essential characteristic is the department's strategy is that they very carefully analyze their goals and objectives, they dismantle it to its essence and then fashion it to the needs of the department and the public it serves. Good tooling is important to compliance both from a practical perspective - making things easier and/or more efficient - and a symbolic perspective - by showing that you take the execution of your core tasks seriously.

What typifies the department's drive towards constant compliance is its relentless search for improvement and innovation: finding better ways of serving the public. In doing so, compliance is seen as continuously evolving.

The DCS: WC's management provides direct and visible feedback to its staff on both positive and negative performance. This shifts the focus on, and commitment to fair, equitable and transparent public administration to the lowest levels of the organization.

Strong personal leadership is an important ingredient in the recipe of this department's success. It is specifically the personal touch to leadership that plays an important role. Leadership is one-to-one, visible, pro-active and easily accessible.

Annexure 1: Interview schedule

Interview DCS: WC - 17th July 2012 (09:00 - 12:30)

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