CHAPTER 10

Rethinking Performance Management to Support Changing Mindsets for Sustainable Development

Performance management can contribute to the overall capacity and performance of the public sector. A public sector with strengthened capacity and increased performance, in turn, has a higher likelihood of reaching the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although performance management tools come in many shapes and forms, this chapter focuses on individual performance appraisals (goal setting for staff and their performance monitoring). The World Bank has a long history of supporting the development of performance management systems in client countries' governments across the globe. 114 Such systems are, at least in theory, vital in increasing the performance and productivity of public service. This chapter outlines how the mindsets of public servants are linked to the performance of public sector organizations, and how performance appraisals can contribute to that. It looks at several important factors that determine the success of performance appraisal schemes: i) creating clear and measurable performance objectives, ii) psychological factors, iii) making sure that good and bad appraisals have consequences attached, and iv) designing performance appraisal systems that are culturally and context appropriate.

Critical role of performance management for motivation and productivity*

While the *potential* impact that individual performance appraisals (goal setting for staff and their performance monitoring) can have on public service¹¹⁵ motivation and productivity could be relatively high, international experience shows that successful application is extremely challenging. In a review of the public administration literature on this topic, Heinrich and Marschke (2010) find limited evidence of the effectiveness of performance management systems. 116 Mixed evidence for developing countries has been found in recent surveys of public officials. On the one hand, there are successful cases, such as the Liberian Forestry Development Authority (FDA), where the World Bank Bureaucracy Lab survey, elaborated upon below, showed a positive link between performance and performance appraisals. On the other hand, there are less successful cases, such as a World Bank survey of public servants in the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, which showed that only half of the respondents found the performance appraisal process to be a meaningful one.117

There are many reasons why performance appraisals do not often reach their potential. First, performance at the agency level is often considered much more difficult to measure in the public sector than in the private sector; objectives are often unclear or pulling in multiple directions at once (introducing high-speed road infrastructure and reducing deaths by road traffic accidents for example); organizational structures are typically large and complex and, in some cases, staffing is based on political or clientelist choices. As a consequence, the public sector often lacks a clearly measurable link between performance and pay or career progression, with a steady progression up the hierarchy only loosely based on performance.

Nonetheless, given these barriers, performance appraisals can do a lot for overall public sector performance. They can, for example, motivate staff to reach higher targets than the previous year, show to management whom among their teams are under- and over-performing, or it can show high performing units within an organization, as well as units that need assistance in reaching their goals.

Why are mindsets important for performance?

Why do public servant mindsets play an important role in impacting the performance of the public sector? In short, because public servants have power. Of course, politicians define the legal framework that gives public servants their marching orders. But the latter have considerable wiggle room in deciding exactly how to implement political decisions. Street-level bureaucrats are the most famous example: a police officer deciding to give someone a ticket or not, or a social worker deciding to grant a welfare benefit or not. But discretionary power, and overall influence in the policy-making process, goes all the way through the bureaucracy. Since the 'let managers manage' adage has become more and more en vogue since the late 1980s, greater autonomy afforded to public servants has made their impact on public sector performance more powerful.¹¹⁸ Public servants also have room to shape political decisions through their inputs to the political process. For example, by providing information to politicians that supports a particular view of an issue.

The above exposition implies that merely giving a public servant an order does not necessarily translate directly into the work he or she will complete, nor how well he or she will perform. How motivated or self-confident public servants are, how they interpret their role within a team or an organization, and the quality of their relationships with their managers and peers, will all have an important role in shaping their morale and, in turn, determining the quality of their work (see Table 10.1). Years of research on the effect of motivation on performance has shown a strong and consistently positive link between the two. 119 Hence, in order to boost the performance and productivity of the public sector as a whole, it is important to analyze how organizations function by first better understanding the motivation of the individual public servants they comprise.

Box 10.1: Impact of improving public sector performance

State capacity is recognized as a fundamental pillar of economic development, as public institutions construct the legal and fiscal structures that determine the allocation of resources in an economy. Recent empirical studies have found that individual public officials and organizations are of primary importance for the productivity of the state. Best et al. (2017) find that moving from the worst-performing quartile of bureaucracies to the 75th percentile reduces procurement expenditures by around 11 percent (USD13 billion/year or "roughly one fifth of the total amount spent on health care by the Russian government at federal, regional, and municipal level combined"). Rasul et al (2018) find that moving from the 25th to 75th percentile of bureaucratic quality in Ghana increases project completion rates by almost 20 percentage points.

¹ Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2011). Pillars of prosperity: The political economics of development clusters. Princeton University Press; Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J. (2012). Why nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity, and poverty. New York: Crown Business; Page, L., & Pande, R. (2018). Ending global poverty: why money isn't enough. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 32(4), 173-200.

² Best, M. C., Hjort, J., & Szakonyi, D. (2017). Individuals and organizations as sources of state effectiveness (No. w23350). National Bureau of Economic Research.

³ Rasul, I., Rogger, D., & Williams, M. J. (2018). Management and bureaucratic effectiveness: Evidence from the Ghanaian civil service. The World Bank.

The role of performance management and performance appraisals

The performance of public servants is dependent on many different factors, some of which are outside of the organization's power, such as their home situation or overall health. Others, however, are very much within the grasp of management and can be addressed. The World Bank's Bureaucracy Lab summarizes government capability in a production function in which inputs and a variety of exogenous factors determine bureaucrats' attitudes and behaviors, outputs, and eventually outcomes and performance, shown in Figure 10.1.

Performance appraisals would be located under 'management practices' in this production function, with a direct link to

beliefs, attitudes (in other words: mindsets) and behaviors of bureaucrats. Performance appraisals play an important role as management practices to increase performance. For the purposes of this chapter, we define this tool as follows:

"The process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees in the organisation, so that the organisational goals and objectives are more effectively achieved, while at the same time benefiting employees in terms of recognition, receiving feedback, catering for work needs and offering career guidance."121

Figure 10.1: A pr	roduction function	tor government	capability
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		Observable outcomes		
		Yes	No	
le outputs	Yes	Production activities: the actions of officials and their impacts can be observed Examples: mail services, tax collection, sanitation, vehicle registration.	Procedural activities: activities are observed, but their impacts are diffuse Examples: mental health services, counseling, military (peacetime), youth penitentiary.	
Observable	o _N	Craft activities: it is difficult to characterize the necessary outputs, but there is a clearly observable outcome Examples: field inspections, military (wartime), doctors, forest rangers.	Coping activities: neither the activity nor the outcome can be cleanly measured Examples: diplomacy, intelligence, research.	

Before diving into the success factors of performance appraisal, it is necessary to look at variations in performance appraisals:

- 1. Formal, or informal.
- 2. Focused on improving the public servant's performance, or on identifying potential for advancement.
- Performed by an immediate supervisor, a committee, subordinates, the public servant or a combination of these.
- Linked to performance pay, raises, promotions, or other incentives; and to possible penalties such as demotions, pay cuts, or exits.
- Conducted every six months, annually, biannually, or ad hoc.

Contextual considerations largely determine the type of performance appraisal that is adopted in any given country. Countries with more advanced human resource information systems for example, are more likely to adopt more complex performance management systems as the information can be captured and stored digitally, which takes up less space and can be more safely stored confidentially over time.

Despite the wide variation in form, there are some examples that show performance appraisals can be a contributing factor in increasing the performance and productivity of public servants, and the public sector at large. For example, Vu (2019) shows that in 29 Vietnamese agencies and departments "broadly designed and well implemented employee [performance management] systems are associated with improved job experiences and perceived organizational performance"122. Additionally, a 2019 World Bank Bureaucracy Lab survey of public sector staff in the Liberian Forestry Development Authority (FDA) also showed a perception of positive effects of performance appraisals. Seventy-five percent of staff agreed that performance evaluations improved employee performance, and staff who reported a regular evaluation of their individual performance by the manager reported a 13- point increase in motivation in comparison with staff whose managers did not evaluate performance. 123

Often, however, performance appraisal systems have not delivered as expected with only a modest impact on performance. A 2016 analysis of 49 studies on performance management tools in public administrations shows a limited effect on performance. Besides the mere existence of performance appraisals, we conclude that it matters a great deal how they are implemented. A World Bank 2019 Bureaucracy Lab survey of public sector staff in seven Romanian ministries, showed that only 9 percent of respondents agreed that the results of the performance appraisal are used for promotion. Moreover, only 28 percent of respondents stated that the performance appraisal results motivated them to work harder. In short: having performance appraisals is not enough. We need to know what factors increase the likelihood that performance appraisals lead to a positive effect on individual and organizational performance.

Designing performance appraisal systems to change mindsets

Create clear and measurable objectives beforehand

For performance appraisals to improve individual level performance, it is important that employees know how and on what objectives they will be evaluated in order to ensure that performance expectations of both employees are managers are aligned. A UCSB/UNDP 2018 survey in Myanmar showed that this is not always the case:

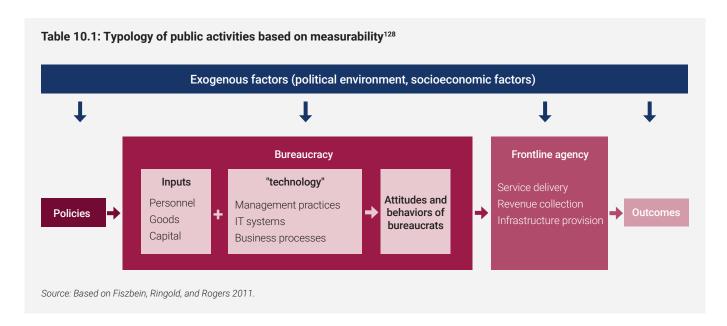
"[O]nly 26 percent of survey respondents said that they were adequately informed about the performance appraisal system, and 63 percent were not aware that the performance appraisal took place annually."126

This is not simply a technical requirement that makes officials clear as to what they are reporting on. It also ensures that officials can relate to the appraisal process. A generic performance process does little to bolster an official's mindset towards her or his own role in the public service machine.

To increase the likelihood of clarity on both the employee's and manager's part as to where the official fits within the public service, the system's objectives should be specific to each particular job and measurable in ways the appraise can relate to.

The earlier mentioned Romania survey showed a high preference among staff for quantitative performance indicators. Public servants can then be clear on how their appraisal links to their work programme. In Botswana, as one example, an explicit link is made between a person's appraisal form and the programme/project indicators and targets on which they are working to ensure its relevancy. 127

Defining measurable indicators is not easy for every public service job. Table 10.1 shows how the measurability of outcomes and outputs can differ strongly within and between public sector organizations.



Forging a link between personal performance goals and appraisal indicators to organizational goals is a way of making individual mindsets coherent with others in the organization.

Creating a clear 'line of sight' between individual and organizational goals can help inculcate a 'performance culture' throughout the organization by providing clear direction and a common sense of purpose to staff members.¹²⁹

A sole focus on quantitative indicators will not be able to capture less quantifiable aspects of performance such as whether the employee is a team player, or whether he or she has innovative and creative ideas. The more successful approaches tend to be those that include a combination of both, but this makes the process vulnerable to an inability to quantitatively assess individuals in a common way. Many practitioners and researchers are now downplaying this concern by emphasizing that the appraisal process is a means of generating a conversation about roles and mindsets between employees and managers. It is the dialogue rather than the score that seems to matter most within the appraisal process.

Psychological factors in performance evaluation

That appraisals are in large part about generating a productive dialogue within the public service hierarchy leads to the concern that individual bias may hamper the efficacy of the appraisal process. Although appraisal methods at the level of an organization can and should be standardized to diminish individual interference, performance appraisals are sometimes subject to different appraiser biases that impact evaluation methods or their results. These biases can (involuntarily and unconsciously) influence how someone is rated during a performance appraisal. Table 10.2 summarises some common biases¹³⁰

As such, the appraisal process is vulnerable to the biases of the implementing manager. Employee perception of managerial bias can discredit the whole appraisal process. Checks and balances ought to be in place to check if the appraisal is carried out properly, and if the verdict is made objectively. Both a higher-level review or audit check of the appraisals should be in place, as well as the opportunity for the reviewee to see the appraisal and voice disagreement or appeal the conclusion. In order to constitute such a mechanism, a World Bank project in Tajikistan explicitly included "exercises in quality control and oversight functions with regard to the implementation of the guidelines on performance appraisal." 131

Means of counteracting these biases, such as having independent oversight of the performance management system, can be weak given the relatively large amount of information the manager has on her or his employee. A peer review system that empowers individual officials to support one another, such as Ethiopia's 'Change Army' (see Box 10.2) may be one means of confronting such vulnerabilities. To change mindsets effectively, the appraisal process must be seen as having credibility amongst unit staff.

Table 10.2: Psychological biases common	in performance	appraisals
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Halo Error: One element from the performance favorably determines the overall perception of the performance.	Horn error: The opposite of the halo error. Downgrading an evaluation based on the poor performance in only one dimension	
First Impression Error: Developing a negative/positive opinion of an employee early in the review period, allowing to influence later perceptions of performance.	Recency Error: Opposite of first impression error. Allowing performance at the end of the review period to play too large a role in determining the overall period. Severity Error: The opposite of lenience error. Rating someone consistently lower than is deserved.	
Leniency Error: Consistently rating someone higher than is deserved.		

Central Tendency Error: Avoiding extremes in ratings across employees.

Clone Error: Giving better ratings to an individual who is like the rater in behavior and/or personality.

Spillover Error: Continuing to downgrade an employee for performance errors in prior rating periods.

Box 10.2: An innovative approach to appraising cultural change: The Ethiopian 'Change Army'

The Change Army is a core part of the Government of Ethiopia's recent efforts to reform the civil service. In addition to a series of reforms that draw from the classic theories of New Public Management, the government has also developed and introduced the Change Army as a homegrown and 'Ethiopia-specific' approach (Araya et al., 2019)1. Following the success of similar initiatives in other parts of the economy and society, the Change Army was introduced into the civil service with the objective to mobilize and align the state, party and citizens towards the country's common development goals. The Change Army also functions to ensure that civil servants accord to the values and missions of the public sector.

The `state wing' of the Change Army consists of five levels: individual civil servants; model civil servants; lower-level leadership; middlelevel leadership; and top leadership. Individual civil servants are grouped into 5 and led by a model civil servant – a civil servant that is identified as an effective performer by superiors. The model civil servants regularly liase with superiors and conduct daily and weekly meetings and peer-review sessions with their groups, evaluating the each member's performance, the performance of the group as a whole, providing feedback, and identifying areas for growth. A similar structure is introduced at each layer of the hierarchy, ensuring a strong peer-monitoring and feedback mechanism throughout the bureaucracy. Moreoever, the regularly interaction of group representatives with superiors enhances the integration across the layers of the formal organizational hierarchy, ensuring that daily activities are well aligned with the broader organizational objectives.

The higher layers of the 'state wing' of the Change Army regularly interact with higher layers of the `public wing', a form of the Change Army across community and neighbourhood organizations. These regular discussions allow for citizens' demands and concerns to feed into the broader work plans of public organizations, i.e. a manner through which citizens' concerns can directly impact the daily activities and functions of the state

Create a performance appraisal system that is culturally and context-specific

Although performance appraisals date back to the third century CE in China, the modern version of it is a Western invention. 132 An analysis of the literature shows a clear skewness of performance appraisal research to Western contexts. While we might assume that in Western administrative cultures, similar logics might apply, this assumption is particularly weak in other contexts. 133 A study comparing appraisal schemes in the public sectors of Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines showed how national cultures can influence how performance appraisals will be carried out and how they can be most effective. 134 Whether a country has a culture of 'saving face', or one based more on directness and confrontation can have a significant influence. Giangreco and colleagues (2010) point out that in the Middle East,

"a well-known phenomenon affecting business life is 'wasta'. [This] refers to a reciprocal use of favours instead of merit to get things done. [...] Wasta would affect the hiring or promotion processes so that positions would be given according to friendship and family connections instead of being distributed according to qualifications."

Performance appraisals will have to take a different form in countries with such a culture. Furthermore, Peretz and Fried, in a study comparing 21 countries, show that:

"societal, cultural practices were related to organizational [performance appraisal] practices, and that congruence between societal cultures and [performance appraisal] characteristics tended to reduce turnover and/or absenteeism, whereas incongruence between these societal cultures and [performance appraisal] characteristics tended to increase the level of these two behavioral outcomes."135

Adapting performance appraisals to a national context goes beyond culture, however. Giangreco and colleagues show that in organizations that operate within a fragile or conflict-ridden context, adaptation and endurance are more appropriate goals and objectives. These are difficult to quantify and are often lacking in Western-style performance appraisals, where the context is (most often) stable and peaceful.

Both good and bad appraisals should have consequences attached to them

Finally, performance appraisals can also be implemented for primarily symbolic reasons. It could be an empty gesture to seemingly increase the accountability of the government towards its people. The World Bank survey in Montenegro's Ministry of Public Administration mentioned at the start of this chapter, showed that only 30% of respondents saw that the results of their performance appraisals were directly linked with their promotion possibilities and salary. In some countries, public employment might be based on clientelist or otherwise non-merit-based reasons. In such circumstances, a performance appraisal will be of little consequence as it will not lead to a useful dialogue with officials about their mindset as they navigate their role in the service.

An effective appraisal might identify individuals with the right mindsets but insufficient capacities to take a task forward. In this case, appraisals become a platform for building capacities in the public service.

Managers can discuss with officials how to build the capacities they need through training, mentoring, or experience.

Further, for a performance appraisal scheme to work as an accountability tool, consequences should be attached to bad and good evaluations. In the absence of consequences, the system becomes little more than a procedural obligation and nothing more than a ticking-box exercise. The World Bank study in Romania found that 94% of the respondents had been reviewed as performing 'very good', and 5% as performing 'good'.

It is important to note that positive incentives for a good appraisal can be both monetary and non-monetary. Research has shown that both can improve public sector performance. Whether employees are driven by monetary or non-monetary incentives can differ from person to person, however. For instance, an employee's age, income, and family status all influence the impact of the incentive. Managers will need to know the drivers of performance amongst their teams and staff members before deciding what form their incentives will take. Non-monetary incentives can come in many shapes and forms: awards, public recognition in documents or during meetings, granting the employee more autonomy in the future, offering further learning and development opportunities, a better work-life balance, etc. Once again, the manager's role in effective implementation of any performance scheme is paramount.

The possibilities of attaching rewards and punishments to a performance appraisal underlines that it should be the start of a

conversation, not a stand-alone activity. A World Bank study in Myanmar showed that:

"[s]upervisors seldom discuss performance appraisals with their staff. In the civil service survey, 67 percent of gazetted officers and 68 percent of non-gazetted officers reported that their supervisors discussed their performance appraisal report and gave them feedback about their job performance."¹³⁸

Without regular conversations, it is not possible to use appraisals to improve an official's mindset, to find opportunities for further training (personal development), or analyze who in the team is ready for more autonomy or responsibilities (career development).

An appraisal should not lead to a single, final punishment, but rather such consequences be part of an ongoing effort to get the best out of all service members.

How can we better understand what determines effective performance appraisals?

National governments, researchers, and international organizations have found out quite a bit about what works and what does not work in performance appraisals. A key finding is that the success of performance systems is contingent on the quality of the individual manager's appraisal process, their associated levels of bias, and the culture in which they are embedded. A service's broad performance framework provides a structure for a manager's decisions, but how the performance appraisal functions within a unit is still determined by a single manager's decisions. Thus, the efficacy of performance appraisal can vary within a single ministry or agency.

A centralized monitoring system that collects good quality data on the perceptions of individual officials with regards to the performance system and its relationship to their mindset and capabilities is thus vital to understanding the implementation of performance management. The extent to which a manager has crafted a performance management system to the specific needs of her or his staff is an empirical question. Similarly, whether a manager is truly holding their staff to account, or recognizing them when they deserve it, requires data on appraisal scores and individual productivity. Large-scale data

on these topics can allow analysts across the service to assess what determines an effective performance appraisal.

Governments rarely collect this data, or when they do have it, they tend not to use it. The World Bank's Bureaucracy Lab is based on the idea that government should be far more empirical in its approach to personnel management. The Bureaucracy Lab is focused on analysis that assesses what determines the performance of public servants and public organizations. Through surveys and micro-data analysis, it is possible to find out the impact particular management practices and organizational policies have on performance. The survey in the Liberian FDA is a good example of that, showing that staff that had a regular evaluation of their performance reported a 13-point increase in motivation. Another opportunity is conducting impact evaluations (also known as randomized control trials, or RCTs), where one organization or unit undergoes a certain policy whilst the other does not. The difference between the two organizations at the end of the trial can then be attributed to the policy, all else being equal. At the time of writing, such an impact evaluation is being conducted in the Liberian public administration, looking precisely at the impact of performance appraisals.

Conclusion and recommendations

Creating a higher-performing public sector is essential in attaining the SDGs. Performance appraisals can play an essential role in changing the mindsets of public officials, identifying, and strengthening weaknesses in their capabilities, and increasing the performance of public sector organizations. It is clear that appraisal systems are often implemented imperfectly, limiting their ability to support the required strengthening of government. In order to get the most out of this management tool, managers should:

- Make them something the individual can relate to: Create clear and measurable objectives, differentiated between jobs, and linking personal objectives to organizational goals.
- **Ensure they are seen as credible:** Take into account the biases that can affect and undermine appraisal processes and try their hardest to avoid the pitfalls that come with it.
- 3. **Build them fit for purpose:** Make sure that the appraisal system is adjusted to the culture and context of the country and organizations and not just copy pasted from another setting.
- 4. Give them the weight they deserve: Ensure that both good and bad appraisals have significant consequences attached to them.
- 5. Monitor at the micro-level: Build survey-based reviews of the appraisal process in each division of the service, ensuring the possibility of interviewees to voice their dissent.

Fundamentally, performance appraisal and management are structured starting points for a dialogue surrounding the performance of individual employees and their place within the public service team. Dialogue has long been the most effective means for change, and the public sector is no exception.

Endnotes

- 114. See for example: Independent Evaluation Group (2008). Public Sector Reform: What Works and Why? An IEG evaluation of World Bank Support. Washington, DC: World Bank Group; World Bank (1999). Civil service reform: a review of World Bank assistance. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
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