



Permission to record

Introductions

Biographical information:

Initials & Surname:				
National/Provincial Department:				
Race (mark applicable box with an X):	African	Indian	Coloured	White
Gender (mark applicable box with an X):	Female	Male		
How many years serving as DG/HoD:				
Please indicate your previous public service experience (if any):				
Have you ever served on a HoD evaluation panel(s)? (Mark applicable box with an X):	Yes	No		
Are you or have you ever served as a cluster chairperson? (Mark applicable box with an X):	Yes	No		

Evaluation questions:

The aim of the evaluation questions is to assess the strengths and areas for improvement of the HoD PMDS, guiding the DPMSA as policy custodian and DPME as implementation department, in enhancing its effectiveness and supporting employee growth and performance. The questions will cover the user's understanding as well as experiences of utilising the online HoD PMDS and will cover the different phases of the HoD PMDS.

1. Understanding the need for PMDS:

- 1.1. In your opinion, please indicate why is it important to manage the performance of Heads of Department / Directors-General.

Responses: All the interview participants strongly agreed that it is important to manage the performance of Heads of Department. Some of the reasons provided were that the MTSP and NDP goals needs to be achieved, it is also about personal development and to ensure that the required support is provided, Feedback on performance is essential, DGs/HoDs must be held accountable for their work, and must take responsibility for their actions.

- 1.2. In your opinion, is the current HoD PMDS effectively assessing the individual contribution of the DG/HoD and organisational performance?

Responses: It does to a certain extent, all systems have positives and negatives. The current HoD PMD System does not adequately assess the individual contributions of HoDs. In terms of outcomes, it is possible for a DG to receive level 4 rating but the Department as a whole (organisational performance) is still poor. There is a blurred distinction between individual vs organisational performance. Organisational performance is based on departmental targets and the employee performance is crafted in creative English to support the departmental target but it lacks the other things that are important for a department to run effectively, eg if the Department has the highest rate of suspensions, this does not reflect a department that runs properly. There is a need to get the balance right between measuring the 2 areas.

2. **Performance Agreement Phase:**

2.1. In your opinion, what must be considered when drafting PAs?

Responses: There should be a linkage between different HoDs to support each other e.g., Public Works and Dept of Health when building health institutions. Currently they work in silos without integrated work between the DGs who work together on the project. There is a need to engage with the EA when preparing the APP to ensure proper alignment, this is key of what goes into the PA. Convince the EA that the PA should allow the DG to properly manage the organisation and also set clear targets. The agreement should be a clear guide on the Minister's expectations.

2.2. Did/do you and the EA conduct feedback discussion(s) (face-to-face or meeting) on your performance agreement?

Responses: In some departments, Ministers do not have time for proper engagement with DGs/HoDs during the performance agreement (PA) process. However, in other cases, they do engage, albeit at a late stage. The frequent transition of Ministers (four in three years) impacts the continuity and passion in executing agreements initially signed with previous Ministers.

2.3 Please indicate the difficulties/stumbling blocks you experienced with the performance agreement phase.

Responses: There is a persistent silo mentality in government departments and there is little to no synergy with other departments. There is often no integrated approach reflected in the HoDs' PAs. There is also a lack of coordination and linkage between different spheres of government, particularly in performance agreements. This disconnect hampers the effectiveness of cross-departmental and intergovernmental projects.

2.4 How can the custodians of policy and implementing departments eliminate the stumbling blocks?

Responses: The DPME needs to improve on the evaluation process and provide guidance to DGs on how to craft PA's that have the required strategic intent and is of good quality. It

is important to facilitate a meeting between the DG and EA to discuss performance. Teams throughout the system must be alerted if there are changes in resources to ensure the system is aligned.

3. **Mid-year Review Phase:**

- 3.1. Did/do you and the EA conduct feedback discussion(s) (face-to-face or meeting) on your mid-year review?

Responses: Within the province, all departments undergo quarterly review assessments, where they present achievements, and the roles of HoDs and MECs are reported. This continuous assessment process ensures that issues are addressed promptly. It depends on the busy schedule of the Minister, usually this process is done at last minute which impacts on the quality. It is an ongoing interaction process where work and performance are discussed on a regular basis, this ends up informing the mid-year and annual assessments.

- 3.2. If not, why is this the status, and how can we improve on ensuring timely feedback provision?

Responses: There should be more focus on the induction of EAs and Deputy Ministers, as the current induction focuses more on the Ministerial Handbook. This sometimes results in friction/differences between EAs and DGs/HoDs as it could be that there is not a clear understanding of their respective roles. It requires more ongoing development and this is where the NSG can play a meaningful role. There is a need to improve the political/admin interface.

- 3.3. If feedback was provided, how long did it take for the EA to give the performance feedback?

Responses: Feedback for signing scoresheets was received only one month ago, and the panel feedback on the individual's own performance is still pending.

- 3.4. Please indicate the difficulties/stumbling blocks you experienced with the mid-year review phase?

Responses: Continuous discussions and quarterly presentations make the mid-year review phase less significant, as achievements and issues are already addressed regularly.

4. **Annual Assessment Phase:**

- 4.1. Did/do you and the EA conduct feedback discussion(s) (face-to-face or meeting) on your annual assessment?

Responses: There is a need to go back to having prescribed quarterly performance reviews. Do an addendum on the performance contract to make changes. Fully digitise the HoD PMDS.

- 4.2 In your own opinion, is 31 December each year a reasonable timeframe to submit an annual assessment for the DG? If not, what would be the possible date for this process?

Responses: There is a proposal to bring forward the deadline for annual assessments from December 31. While there is no objection to adjusting the timeline, it is emphasized that team commitment is crucial to meeting deadlines without compromising the quality of assessments.

- 4.3 Is the annual assessment based on the performance contract entered at the beginning of the financial year? If not, what other areas were discussed pertaining to your performance?

Responses: The annual assessment is based on the performance agreement that is signed at the beginning of the performance cycle. They realise that new priorities may arise and it is important to discuss on a one-on-one basis the performance discussions. The DGs provide their inputs on how the performance of the Department can be improved.

- 4.4 Please indicate the difficulties/stumbling blocks you experienced with the annual assessment phase?

Responses: Apart from timing due to the busy schedules of the EA, there were no further stumbling blocks. The portfolio of evidence remains very valid, but the treatment of “over and above” work, remains very interesting. It is important to consider how the PA was crafted as it may favour the allocation of level 4 scores. There is a need to consider the final outcome of the areas of performance, there should be more focus on the quality as opposed to just delivering on targets. There is also a need to move away from looking at “audit culture” and focus more on quality impact.

5. **Evaluation Phase:**

- 5.1 Did/do you and the EA conduct feedback discussion(s) (face-to-face or meeting) on your performance evaluation outcome?

Responses: One DG mentioned that feedback was received within 2 to 3 days after the meetings were concluded. This feedback is considered when the next PA is drafted. Most DGs felt that there was a need to improve in this area. Some DGs were not given any feedback as the DPME did not communicate with the EAs.

- 5.2 If there are any recommendations from the Evaluation Panel, please explain how are the recommendations implemented to ensure improved performance going forward.

Responses: Many of the DGs did not receive feedback. Feedback has not filtered through from the evaluation panel.

- 5.3 Do evaluations accurately reflect employee performance and contributions? Do the current evaluation processes objectively evaluate your performance?

Responses: DGs felt that they must be fair towards the system as the country is a young democracy. The systems as such are also fairly young. Most DGs were satisfied with the current evaluations.

5.4. Please indicate the difficulties/stumbling blocks you experienced with the evaluation phase

Responses: The system is perceived as fair, but there are concerns about protecting DGs even if performance is poor. While the system is fair there are areas for improvement.

6 **Evaluation Panels:**

6.1. In your opinion, who is the relevant person to chair the evaluation panels?

Responses: There was a proposal for a more structured evaluation panel involving the DG of the cluster, two co-chairs from the cluster, a representative DG, and the minister of the DG being assessed. There were concerns about the DG in the Presidency chairing all panels; alternatives include having the Chair of the PSC or retired public servants chair the evaluations.

6.2. What is your view on the inclusion of Executive Authorities (EAs) in the evaluation panels?

Responses: There is a belief that the person managing the DG should be on the evaluation panel to reduce disagreements and ensure that the views of the EAs are considered. The Head of the Public Administration (HOPA) will work well. The HOPA in other countries is seen as a very senior and powerful position who indicated to a large effect what must be included in HoD PAs. It will therefore make it possible for the HOPA to set a date to moderate the PAs of all HoDs once the HOPA has been fully implemented.

6.3. What is your view on the inclusion of the Public Service Commission in the evaluation panel?

Responses: Some DGs indicated that the PSC was effective in their management of HoD PMDS previously whilst other DGs stated that the PSC is an oversight body and cannot be part of the evaluation. The PSC has a role in sound management of the public service.

6.4. What is your view on the inclusion of the DG in the Presidency (HOPA) in the evaluation panel?

Responses: Some DGs supported the inclusion of the DG in the Presidency in the evaluation panel as it currently works well whilst others felt that the DG should not chair the evaluation as the DG is responsible for FOSAD and oversight.

6.5. What is your view on the inclusion of policy experts as opposed to other DGs? in the evaluation panel?

Responses: Involving sector experts in the evaluation process can provide valuable insights and improve services. Their input should be honest and aimed at enhancing performance rather than exposing flaws.

- 6.6. What is your opinion about introducing 360 degrees in the assessment of HoDs? Please provide suggestions on how it can be best implemented.

Responses: There is broad support for implementing 360-degree feedback to enhance the evaluation process. This approach is seen as beneficial for improving management skills and service delivery. However, it must be introduced gradually to avoid potential issues and should include input from a range of stakeholders, not just direct reports.

7. **Employee Development:**

- 7.1. In your opinion, why do DGs not indicate developmental needs in their Performance Agreements?

Responses: DGs often face busy schedules and may not prioritize or see the immediate need for additional training. There's also a perception that DGs have sufficient experience and may not need further development. The NSG need to ensure that DGs/HoDs remain on the cutting edge in an ever-changing environment.

- 7.2. Did you attend the developmental areas identified in the PDP? (If no, what hinders you from attending?)

Responses: The demanding schedules of Heads of Departments (HoDs) make it challenging to attend training programs consistently. DGs often face interruptions and may be called back to their offices, affecting their ability to complete or attend training.

- 7.3 For the identified development needs to realise, in what way can it be done, considering the busy schedules of the DGs?

Responses: Consideration must be given to implementing the Professional Development Points system. After a period of time there must be compulsory degree, diploma etc due to changes. Continuous education is important to keep oneself abreast. MBA should be a requirement for DGs. The policy on Sabbaticals (Revolving door Policy) should be used more to assist in the development of HoDs,

8. **Recognition, Rewards, and Consequence Management:**

- 8.1. In your view, which other rewards and recognition programmes can be used to motivate HoDs?

Responses: Non-financial incentives such as recognition letters, vouchers for holidays, training opportunities, or other perks can be effective motivators.

- 8.2. In your opinion what can be done to improve the compliance rate of DGs?

Responses: There must be consequences for non-compliance. The Ministers must be involved in the performance process and know the timeframes. It is important to simplify the system. It depends on how effective the Head of DG's/HoD's Office is. DGs rely on the reminders sent from the DPME.

- 8.3 Can non-compliance with the PMDS directive be considered insubordination, what is your view?

Responses: In instances where the DG/HoD wilfully do not comply it must be seen as insubordination and the disciplinary action should be implemented. However, there are many factors to consider such as the appointment of new DGs, relationships between EAs and DGs, rarely non-compliance is about insubordination.

9. **Overall Impact and Effectiveness:**

- 9.1. Has the performance management system led to improved performance and productivity at individual/department/service delivery level/trust in government?

Responses: No not in many cases, it's important to ensure that the DGs impact on organisational performance is measured and evaluated. The PMDS is a tool to manage performance but it is not always effectively implemented. Some DGs mentioned that they perform well to rather leave a good legacy (it is an inner-drive) and it is not derived from the HoD PMDS, Others do it for the love of their country and they are committed and dedicated to what they do.

- 9.2. In your opinion, are there any of the four (4) dimensions of the current HoD PMD System that should be amended/omitted/or replaced in order to improve the system, including the weighting allocated to each?

1. Employee performance which comprises 40% of the final performance evaluation score
2. Key Government Focus Area (KGFA), comprises 20% of the final performance evaluation score,
3. Organisational Performance based on the Annual Performance Plan (APP), as reported in the Annual Report), comprises 20% of the final performance evaluation score and the
4. Auditor General's Audit Opinion and Findings which also comprise 20% of the final performance evaluation score

Responses: It is important to have a good balance with the dimensions for it to be successful. A balance is important, the systems must be aligned and contribute to performance. The system does not adequately consider the unforeseen complexity of some department's work. Some of the KGFA's need to be reviewed to ensure that they are still valid and measure what really needs to be achieve. The tool needs to be adapted to be more relevant to the different components and sizes of Departments. Evaluation must be done according to size and dynamics. It should focus more on the leadership role and be more structured on the employee performance dimension. The Key Government Focus Areas (KGFA) should be expanded and include the work done with the centre of government in this dimension e.g., combatting corruption. DGs do not understand why the Organisational Performance dimension is different from the

AG dimension. The system needs to be completely changed to focus more on leadership impact.

- 9.3. Please tell us about your experience of using the prescribed online HoD PMD System, i.e. is the system user-friendly, operates within the required speed, and meets all the requirements for its intent? If not, which system improvements can be introduced?

Responses: One of the DGs mentioned that the capturer is supervised when capturing but she knows her work well. Other responses from DGs' included, the system is always available and they receive good online support. It is a good start to have the online system and they rely heavily on their support staff who also attend the DPME training. The system was a great initiative and works very well, it minimises errors and is convenient. The DPME technicians working on the system are very good.

On the other hand, some DGs indicated that the system is not working well, there are issues with uploading of documents and there is downtime. However, an ICT system is the way of the future and they need to make it work. It would be good to take away the scanning of the signed agreement (hard-copies) to make it easier.

- 9.4. Is there anything we did not cover during the questions that you would like to add or suggest to improve the HoD PMDS?

Responses: It is important that the NDP be included in the APPs of the different departments. The EAs must be on board and there must be continuous improvement. The PMDS must be valuable for South Africans and it should measure what will truly impact on the lives of the citizens. There must be systems in place to address changes that happen throughout the performance cycle (adjusting agreements during the performance cycle).