

OPERATIONS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENT

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Abstract

Public service management reforms have not yet contributed to poverty eradication and generally socio-economic development of many African countries. The reforms suggested and implemented to date still prove to be weak in addressing the many challenges faced by the public service in delivering goods and services to the population. The failure of the current public service management calls for a consideration of business-driven approaches and practices that facilitate effectiveness, efficiency, competitiveness and flexibility in goods and services provision. The critical social theory methodology and the literature review technique described and raised awareness on service delivery chaos in South Africa. A public service reform that focuses on operations and quality management is one of the ways of improving and sustaining service delivery in South Africa. Operations management is an essential tool for the planning, execution, control, monitoring and evaluation of production processes. Quality management, in the other hand, is essential to ensure best quality of goods and services produced by the public service within acceptable time and available resources to meet or exceed people's expectations. The operations and quality management framework proposed in this article is a potential alternative to the current service delivery crisis in South Africa.

Keywords: Operations Management, Quality Management, Service Delivery, Public Service, Governance

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1. Introduction

The delivery of public goods and services to the satisfaction of the people has been a dilemma of the South African democratic government. The ruling party's motto "better life for all" and the public service's "good governance for service delivery" approach portrayed as a ways of doing things right, seem to amount to just useless slogans as goods and services delivered do not address the public's needs resulting in protests some being violent.

It is certain that many governments don't function the way they should in order to deliver goods and services to the people for various reasons. Mc Lennan (2009) talks about a state-driven goods and services delivery system in South Africa whereby politics define a power relationship between the state, the citizens and the economy. This perspective supports the idea of Rogers (1978) about the limitations of public service to deliver goods and services because of expertise and political biases. Rogers (1978: 1) advocates the transfer or adaptation of management practices that work well in the private sector into the public service. He argues that the traditional way of managing public service was not successful and that using the business management

models could be a solution. He emphasised the need for the public service to be run like private companies thus the potential effectiveness of the management transfer approach (Rogers, 1978: xi).

Although Rogers's experience and suggestions for fixing the mismanagement of New York City is ancient and might not be similar to the current service delivery crisis in South Africa, some of his critical questions in the search for improving and sustaining the management of the public service remain of actuality. Rogers (1978: 1) asks two important questions of relevance to the current service delivery crisis in South Africa. Firstly, he questions whether the management practices and expertise of business can be transferred to the public service especially the local government. Secondly, he probes the types of business-based management practices and expertise that can be transferred to the public service and with what adaptations.

These two questions remain valid and inform the hypothesis that business management practices and expertise can facilitate goods and services delivery in the public service. These questions also prompt the selection of operations and quality management, two types of management techniques that prove to produce good outcomes in the business

sector and which, if modified and adapted to the public sector can facilitate public goods and services delivery.

Operations management is essential in maximising the production of goods and services in the public service whereas quality management assures the satisfaction of beneficiaries beyond their expectations. The basic principles of operations management and those of quality management are considered to facilitate goods and services delivery. To such end, the operations and quality management framework (O&QMF) proposed in this article describes how operations and quality management principles, practices, process and application can facilitate goods and services delivery in the public service.

The research leading to this article is the reflection of critical social theory aiming at understanding the way the society functions in order to introduce theories facilitating social change. A literature review facilitated data collection, analysis and interpretation. A modelling technique assisted the development of the in proposed O&QMF. The literature review consisted of recording how operations management and quality management can facilitate production. The review of good practices on operations management and quality management in the public service informed the development of the O&QMF. The O&QMF will assist government entities not only to maximise the delivery of goods and services so as to satisfy the needs of the public beyond expectations therefore being effective, efficient, competitive and flexible.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the definitions of the operations management and quality management and assesses how operations and quality management facilitate production and customer satisfaction. Practical examples of the success of operations and quality management in the public service are also reviewed to inform the research and the envisaged framework.

2.1 Operations and quality management for production and customer satisfaction

Nowadays, business organisations strive to remain in the market and therefore the production of goods and/or services becomes a challenging exercise. The cost and time for the production and the quality of goods and/or services produced are therefore critical considering competitions in the business sector. Many strategies are therefore developed and implemented in order to survive the competition. Operations and quality management are among the strategies used by the survived business organisations. Operations management deals with processes for production whereas quality

management completes the production process by assuring customer satisfaction. In the one hand, the task of operations management is to plan, execute, monitor and evaluate the processes of the production of goods and/or services. In the other hand, quality management is about assuring good quality of products or services.

Barndt and Carvey (1982: 1) define operations management as the process of planning, organising and controlling operations to reach objectives with efficiency and effectiveness. They view operations as processes to transform resources in order to create a result in the form of a product or service. Operations management is the process of transforming inputs or resources into desired outputs/goals or products and/or services. Operations management has therefore two subjects: production management and service management. In public service these two subjects relate to the role and the mandate of government to provide goods and services to the people in order to better their lives.

For Tuomi (2012: 12), quality management is internationally recognised under the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 9001. ISO 9001 specifies the requirements for a quality management system. To fulfil the standard, an organisation needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide a product that meets customer and applicable regulatory requirements and its ability to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system. All requirements of the standard are generic and intended to be applicable to all organisations, regardless of type, size and product provided. This means that quality management can be applied in the public service in order to inform specified standards for products and services that meet the needs of the customers like any other organisation.

Tuomi (2012) argues that quality management means applying a system in managing a process to achieve maximum customer satisfaction at the lowest overall cost while continuing to improve the process. Stebbing (1990: 19) considers quality management as managing all functions and activities necessary to determine and achieve quality. For the author, quality management is a management technique that facilitates competitiveness meaning providing a product or service to satisfy the needs of the customer. The public service, having to serve the population that has a multitude of needs, has to focus on the quality of its goods and services as they relate to improving people's living conditions.

2.2 Operations Management and Quality Management in the Public Service

Before suggesting the use of operations management and quality management in the South African public service to facilitate service delivery, it is cautious to review some success stories about their

effectiveness elsewhere. Pollitt & Bouckaert (2004: 13) cited by Tuomi (2012: 6) argue that public management refers firstly, to the activities of civil servants and politicians. Secondly, it refers to the structures and processes of executive government, meaning for instance, using a technique such as Total Quality Management (TQM) in providing public goods and services. Peters and Savoie (1998: 15) acknowledge that three main innovations have taken place in public service management since the 1980s of which strategic management or planning or operations management and quality management.

Scharitzer and Korunka (2000) cited by Stringham (2004: 187) argue that the adaptation of quality management in the public service is entirely consistent with government's move to make the administration more efficient, more powerful, sleeker, and more citizen-oriented. They suggest that quality management reflects the new public management approach in applying performance-oriented programs. The three case studies below illustrate how operations management and quality management achieved good results in the public service.

2.2.1 The Management by Project in New South Wales

The New South Wales Department of Public Works and Services embarked on a public service reform to improve service delivery through a Managing by Project (MbP) system. The MbP system provides a flexible structure that assists in responding rapidly to environmental changes and in particular to changes in government direction without undergoing a complete organisational restructure (Crawford, Simpson and Koll, 1999: 2-3).

The MbP applies operations management through project management skills and includes quality management in order to satisfy the needs of the users. Through MbP, work is divided into different projects executed by dedicated project team members. The MbP focusses on the results while being flexible to deal with changes and delivering goods and services through cross functional and cross disciplinary project teams (Crawford et al., 1999). The authors quote Beltrami (1992: 770) who distinguished quality to signify the respect of norms and procedures; effectiveness; and customer satisfaction.

The MbP approach ensures the clear definition and alignment of the objectives to the vision, mission and goal. MbP also enables the effective use of resources; and the use of planning, control, monitoring and evaluation systems (Crawford et al., 1999).

2.2.2 Quality Management in Malaysian Public Service

Quality management was institutionalised in the Malaysian public service in 1991 through the Prime Minister's Department. Three programmes were implemented: the Quality Control Circle (QCC), the Client Charter (CC) and the Total Quality Management (TQM). Asim (2001) argues that all three programmes did not function as smoothly as planned, but immense success was recorded in the management of public service using quality management principles. The lack of commitment by some staff members was one of the difficulties in the implementation of quality management in the Malaysian public service (Asim, 2001: 9). Positive aspects of quality management in the Malaysian public service include improvement of work procedures and methods, the economic use of resources and improved motivation of employees according to Sarji (1993: 110) cited by Asim (2001: 9).

2.2.3 E-government: a strategic operations management framework

Affisco and Soliman (2006) based on the World Bank's assertion that applying information and communication technologies (ICTs) in government agencies can better their management and increase service delivery, argue that e-government is a coherent strategy for public goods and service delivery. E-government is a strategic operations management technique to facilitate public goods and services provision according to the authors. E-government is one of the priorities of the public service reform in South Africa: to maximise the use of opportunities created by the accelerating access to the Internet and ICTs (Ayeni, 2002).

Affisco and Soliman (2006) refer to their model as the strategic operations management framework for e-government service delivery (EGSD). The model represents a response to the need for a more strategic point of view on the electronic delivery of government services (Affisco and Soliman, 2006: 16). The importance of e-government is that it facilitates service delivery and at the same time collects from and provides information to the consumers or service users. E-government can therefore be used as a quality assessment tool by the beneficiaries of public goods and services.

3 Research Theory and Methodology

The research leading to this article used critical social theory based on a qualitative method through a literature review technique. The modelling technique was used to develop the suggested O&QMF.

3.1 Critical Social Theory

Critical social theory is a good approach for public administration research. Box (2005:14) argues that public administration is an area of research that has uncertain boundaries. Researchers and scholars are therefore reluctant to call public administration a discipline because it lacks theories proper to itself according to the author. However, the author infers that critical theory offers critiques of public institutions and possibilities for a better future. This article is concerned about the way the South African public service has failed to deliver goods and services to the population. In looking for a better future, the research proposes a business-driven approach to facilitate, improve and sustain goods and services delivery.

Box (2005: 16) argues that “A primary characteristic of critical theory is the idea that social systems change over time because of built-in tensions, or contradictions, between how they are and how they could be”. The current violent service delivery protests in South Africa demonstrate that the service delivery system is flopping. Critical social theory is therefore a good approach to question what is happening and how to implement positive changes.

To be specific, critical social theory consisted of three processes in this research. Firstly, the research considered systemic contradictions within the service delivery status quo in South Africa. The current service delivery system does not work and needs to be modified. Secondly, the dialectic process assisted in acquiring new knowledge alternative to the status quo through argumentation. The research was more exploratory than hypothesis-based focusing on understanding service delivery chaos to suggest solutions for improvement and sustainability. The suggested O&QMF responds to the third process of the research, to use the new acquired knowledge to facilitate change. The framework will improve and sustain the delivery of goods and services to the population to or beyond expectations.

3.2 Qualitative Method

The research was qualitative and used the literature review technique. This research technique facilitated the understanding of the service delivery chaos in South Africa, the failure of the public service reform as well as the learning from the success of the implementation of operations management and quality management in the public service through the three cases studies reviewed.

3.3 Modelling

The O&QMF was developed to facilitate service delivery in the public service in South Africa. It is a business-driven management system based on operations management and quality management. The

development of the O&QMF is explained in the following section.

4 The Operations & Quality Management Framework

Implementing operations and quality management in the public service means redesign in order to respond to questions such as how to improve productivity, how to reduce response times, how to reduce the cost of production, how to improve quality in order to meet customers’ expectations. Bamford and Forrester (2010: 2) argue that the aim of any service, retail, industrial public service, is to deliver goods and services of the quality, quantity and availability that will satisfy the customers’ needs while at the same time making most effective use of resources. This assertion classifies quality management as an integral part of operations management. The O&QMF adopts Bamford and Forrester’s inclusion of quality management as part of operations management.

The O&QMF includes two plans: an operations plan and a quality plan to facilitate the planning, management, control, monitoring and evaluation of goods and services delivery by the public service. It is important to echo that introducing business-driven management approaches into the public service system is not an easy task. Firstly, operations management and quality management are management tools that were designed to be used in the manufacturing and service industry sectors. Stringham (2004: 185) questions the applicability of manufacturing techniques and approaches into the public service delivery. The author argues that such techniques should be modified and adapted to the realities of each public service entity concerned.

Frost-Kumpf (1994) cited by Stringham (2004: 185) believes that many authors who write about quality management and its potential for application in the public service too frequently describe a system that promises too much and ultimately delivers too little. The management of the business sector is driven by the maximisation of profit, the design of goods and services to satisfy the customer and to motivate employees. This must also be the ideal for public service entities. For Swiss (1992) cited by Stringham (2004: 186), quality management can have a useful role to play in government, but only if it is “substantially modified to fit the public service’s unique characteristics.” This author responds to the early warning signal of Rogers (1978) about the revision of business-driven management tools before their use in the public service.

To be a customer focused as suggested by Asim (2001), quality planning need to heavily depend on the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) process in South Africa. The IDPs focusses on public participation for the service delivery system to satisfy the needs of the users beyond expectations. Quality

issues need to be part of the IDP process. Public goods and services must be people-driven and based on the available resources without compromising the quality.

The Operations and Quality Management Model (O&QMM) is the basis for the O&QMF. It adopts the operations management inclusive of quality management and project management as proposed by Bamford and Forrester (2010: 2). The model has three phases. The first phase is the design of operations processes, products and services as well as the planning of goods and services quality. The second phase is the implementation of project plans and at the same time the monitoring of quality issues. The third phase is to ensure that goods and services are delivered and that their quality is up to the set standards. This model responds to Barndt and Carvey (1982: 3) assertion that the purpose of any operations system is to add value over and above the costs of inputs and transformation processes. They further argue that when the input-output system produces a negative value added in government operations, public support is withdrawn. This is when service provision protests and indignation start in South Africa.

4.1 The Principles of the O&QMM

The O&QMM is based on five principles or key performance indicators (KPIs) by Bamford and Forrester (2010: 3-4). They are quality (specifications to satisfy the customer: getting things right); speed (how quick products and services are produced and delivered: doing things quickly), dependability (reliability to customer: doing things consistently and on time); flexibility (ability to adapt and respond to different needs: being able to change); and costs (expenses to produce and deliver products and services: doing things cheaply). These KPIs can easily be implemented within the public service. The authors suggest that in an ideal world, operations management should facilitate the optimisation of these five KPIs.

Operations management is important in designing the structure and techniques of the business process. These techniques must then convert the inputs (materials, labour, information, processes,...) into outputs (goods and services) through the planning, implementation plan or projects and control, monitoring and evaluation framework based on the mission, vision, values and objectives of the public service entity.

The conceptual model of operations management by Bamford and Forrester (2010: 25) includes among other things: designing products and services (including quality planning); controlling the resources; managing projects; managing operations strategically; managing quality systems and improving the operations. This model seems too complicated for a government entity because of the

sophistication and the need for high expertise. The O&QMM borrows from Bamford and Forrester (2010) as well as the general quality management (ISO 9001) principles. The scope and principles as well as the templates of the O&QMF for public service are explained below.

4.2 The Scope of the O&QMM

This article cautiously suggests the inclusion of quality management within the operations management system to respond to the two initial questions by Rogers (1978). The first question was: "can the management practices and expertise of business be transferred to public service (local government)? The second question was: "what type of management practices and expertise can be transferred, with what adaptations?"

The scope of the O&QMM is therefore an adaptation of operations management model by Bamford and Forrester (2010) plus the Managing by Project experience by Crawford et al. (1999). The O&QMM relates to the functions of the public service in designing, planning, controlling and monitoring and evaluating resources for the production and delivery of goods and services to satisfy the users.

To be different from a business oriented operations management, the O&QMM has three scopes, the operations and quality planning, project management and control and monitoring and evaluation. Each public service entity must have an operations manager responsible for the design, planning, execution and control (including monitoring and evaluation) of the goods and services delivered. The operations manager will be assisted by different project managers for various functions of the entity. Operations and quality issues should then be discussed in a structure comprised of the operations manager and all project managers. Quality management and control can therefore form part of a special project.

4.3 Principles of the O&QMF

Swiss (1992) cited by Stringham (2004: 184) believes that quality management can have a useful role to play in government, but only if it is substantially modified to fit the public service's unique characteristics.

The eight principles of quality management by ISO (2012) are therefore important to be considered when introducing quality management in the public service. A quality management principle therefore is an essential imperative or reference to operate and manage an organisation in order to improve performance so as to satisfy customers and achieve the objectives of such organisation.

The first principle is that the organisation needs to be customer-focussed. Because the organisation depends on its customers, it must understand and satisfy their current and future needs. The organisation must strive to meet and if possible exceed the expectations of its customers. Leadership is the second principle of quality management. The direction and unity of purpose of the organisation needs to be established by its leadership. To achieve its objectives each organisation must create an environment propitious for the full involvement of all its members. The mission, vision, values and objectives of the organisation must be understood and practiced by all its members. That is the third principle. The leadership must ensure full involvement of people at all levels of the organisation in order to maximise its performance.

The fourth principle is the process approach. This principle is more addressed by the operations management part of the O&QMM. According to the ISO (2012), a desired result is achieved more effectively and efficiently when related resources and activities are managed as a process. This principle prescribes the definition of a clear process to achieve the desired results, the planning of activities and the identification and measurement of the inputs and outputs of the process. The fifth principle is system approach management addressed by the project management component of the O&QMM. For ISO (2012), identifying, understanding and managing a system of interrelated processes for a given objective improves the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency. The control, monitoring and evaluation of activities in the O&QMM will facilitate the implementation of the operations plans through projects. The sixth principle is continual improvement which is considered to be a permanent objective of the organisation according to ISO (2012). After monitoring and evaluation, improvements must be recorded and plans for future improvement developed.

The seventh principle is factual approach to decision making meaning that effective decisions must be based on the analysis of data and information. Amongst other recommendation of ISO (2012), any decisions and action taken should be based on the results of logical analysis balanced with experience. The last principle is mutually beneficial supplier relationships. For ISO (2012), an organisation and its suppliers are interdependent, and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value."

Considering these principles, two major indicators need to be considered to assess the appropriate implementation and successful intervention of operations management and quality management in public service. Firstly, the adherence to the eight principles of quality management is very important. Secondly, the ISO 9001 must be verified

to justify the best quality of the goods and services provided.

4.4 Catalysts of O&QMF

Padovani and Young (2012) believe that local governments face similar problems in the provision of goods and services globally. The most crucial problems of concern which apply to this article are the absence of a profit measure; difficulty to measure performance; political and external influence in decision making; and insufficient resources. These problems can be resolved through what the OECD (1995: 7) refers to as catalysts for change. The OECD's and other catalysts are applicable in using operations and quality management in the South African public service as explained below.

4.4.1 Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Crawford et al. (1999) argue that the growth of the public service throughout the world after the Second World War engendered significant pressures for change during the early 1970's. In Africa, the call for change in the management of the public service was introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the early 1980's through the famous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). These two major lending banks believed that amongst other measures, the reform of the African public services would promote their effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery to maximise growth and development. De Montricher (1998: 109) cited by Crawford et al. (1999) believes that the primary focus of SAP was to reduce expenditures and improve government operations at the same time.

This catalyst implies the need for increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness to control and reduce public spending. This catalyst emphasises the application of operations management in the business of public service entities. Through operations management public service entities must accentuate strategic planning, management and control of the service delivery system (Peters and Savoie, 1998).

4.4.2 Competitiveness

The second catalyst for change is to attain a reduction in national differences in public services and increasing desire to enhance competitiveness of national economies as a result of globalisation according to OECD (1995: 7). Improving the quality of services to meet and exceed the expectations from individuals and business and responding to flexibly and strategic external change within the public services are then possible through the implementation of both operations and quality management.

4.4.3 E-governance or use of technology

The third OECD (1995: 7) catalyst for change in the public service is to use the opportunities offered by ICTs. McNabb (2009) believes that public service reform should consider not only a business-driven approach but it must also focus on a next-generation ICTs system that facilitates goods and services delivery. ICTs are vehicles that facilitate service delivery; they reduce time, distance and resources in the production and provision of services. An operations and quality management system that is based on and facilitated by an accessible ICTs platform is more likely to provide timeous and up to standard services.

4.4.4 Project Management Skills

Facilitating operations and quality management through projects is essential. The Management by Project suggested by Crawford et al. (1999: 3) justifies the role of project management in facilitating service delivery. The authors describe MbP system as the way to organise people and other resources to deliver products and services to satisfy our client's needs. MbP gives the best available people the best available resources through teamwork, leadership and project management principles to produce the best outcome for the clients. MbP breaks down artificial barriers between functions and business units by focussing on results not get bogged down in internal processes.

4.5 The Operations and Quality Management Model

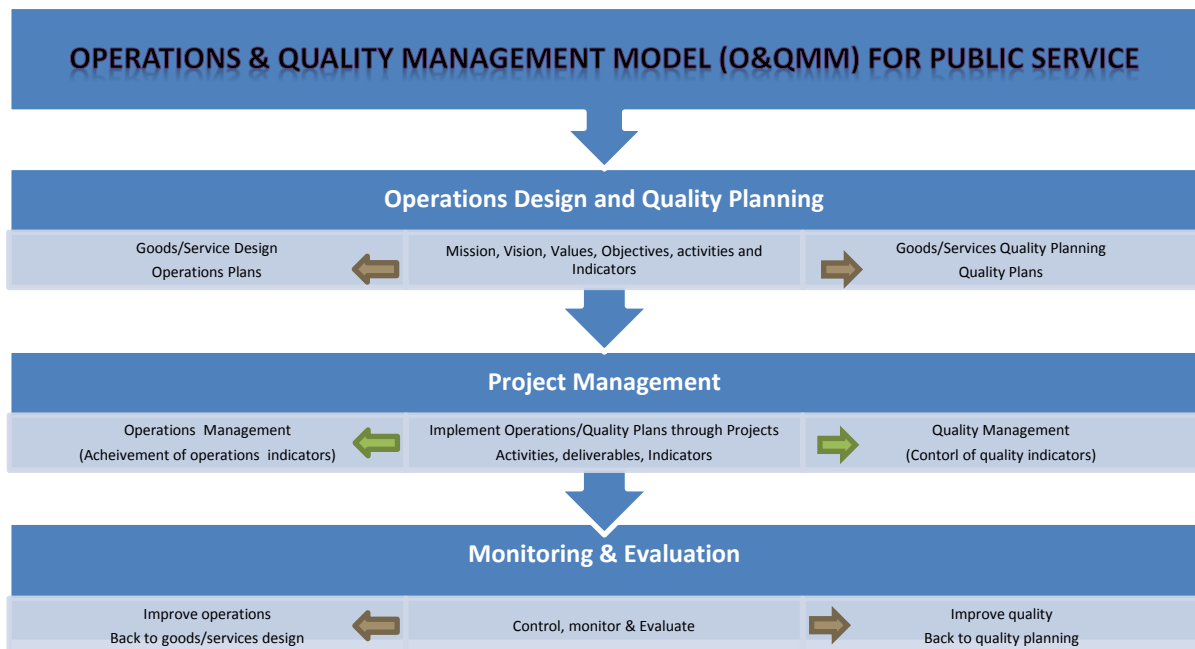
The O&QMM relies on the role to be played by the Operations manager. The operations manager, assisted by the project manager should develop the operations plans considering the mission, vision, values and objectives of the public service. Quality management issues must also be planed and contain in separate quality plans.

The project team is responsible for the implementation of the operation plans and quality plans. Each project manager should therefore be responsible for the indicators for each activity as well as the quality of the goods and services provided by the project. In this setup, there is no need of multiplying structures to have a separate quality officer. All project managers should therefore have a decision power and undergo project management and quality management training. They will also be in charge of the control, monitoring and evaluation of the activities as well as issues relating to quality. The overall control, monitoring and evaluation of all projects will be the responsibility of the operations manager as well as an external auditing.

In the public service an operations manager should have the rank of a director or chief director and the project manager should have the rank of director or senior manager. This will allow a good structure to include deputy and assistant directors as well as administrative and technical staff in each project.

The O&QMM for the public service is represented in the figure below:

Figure 1. Operations and Quality Management Model for public service



4.6 The Operations and Quality Management Framework

delivery. The O&QMF derives from the O&QMM above.

The template below shows the practical way of planning, implementing, controlling and monitoring and evaluating the process of goods and service

4.6.1 Template of the O&QMF

Table 1. Template of the operations and quality management framework

O&QMF Template					
	Operations			Quality	
Operations Design	Mission	Vision	Objectives		Quality planning
		Values			
Operations Management	Objective	Project	Operations Indicator	Quality Indicator	Responsible
Control Monitoring Evaluation					

Example of a completed O&QMF

Table 2. Completed O&QMF

O&QMF for the Gauteng Department of Social Development (2004 – 2009)					
	Operations			Quality	
Operations Design This design is led by Operations manager. Project managers participate. All projects are also discussed during this phase.	Mission	Vision/Values	Objectives		Quality planning
	To integrate and socially protect poor and vulnerable individuals, families and Communities of Gauteng.	Vision A society where poor, vulnerable and excluded individuals, families and communities are developed for an improved quality of life. Values "Batho Pele"			
			Contribute to the national effort to:		Description of key quality patterns for services:
			1. Fight poverty and build safe, secure and sustainable communities		- Tangibility? - Reliability - Responsiveness - Empathy - Assurance
			2. Develop healthy, skilled and productive people		ISO 9001 compliance for goods delivered

Operations Management	Objective	Project	Operations Indicator	Quality Indicator	Responsible
Project manager responsible for own project implementation and quality control.	Fight poverty and build safe, secure and sustainable communities	Grant delivery	All >18 years get the grant	Grant of + 500 per month	Mr Amisi Musa
		Provide housing to the elderly	1000 house delivered	House with 3 bedroom and equipped	Mrs Bawinile Ndlovu
	Develop healthy, skilled and productive people	Skills training for youth	600 youth are trained monthly	75% of trainees pass with + 65%	Mr Johan Viljoen
		Small business for unemployed	1000 people attend course receive grants	business growth by 10% in 6 months	Ms Vumilia Tabu
Control, monitoring and evaluation to be done per project activity					
Control	Objective clear? Yes	Project clear? Yes	1000 people trained? Yes	Business grew? Yes	Ops Manager
Monitoring	Objective linked to projects	Objective turned into Project	Indicator reached?	Service meets quality criteria?	Project Manager
Evaluation	Objective realised via activities?	Project reached objective?	All indicators achieved	Goods/services delivered up to quality?	External Audit

5 Conclusion

The initial questions of this research were to establish if the management practices and expertise of business could be transferred to the public service and to know what type of management practices and expertise could be transferred and with what adaptations.

Löffler (2001: 6) responds to these questions that quality has always played a role in the public administration. The author quotes Beltrami (1992: 770) who distinguished quality to imply the respect of norms and procedures; effectiveness; and customer satisfaction. The author argues that the meaning of quality in the public service changed in the late 1960s when management by objectives gained popularity in public administration. The management by project adopted in this article supports Löffler's argument.

The O&QMF proves the possibility of implementing operations and quality management in the public service to facilitate, improve and sustain service delivery. The O&QMF is a tool that combines operations management through management by project and quality management. The O&QMF observes operations management process of transforming inputs into outputs as well as the eight principles of quality management. The managing by project approach facilitates proper planning of operations and qualities of goods and services and considers strong control, monitoring and evaluation of the activities implemented.

The assessment of the quality of public goods and services provided by the public service through the O&QMF is necessary. Such assessment

constitutes a good question for further research. Parasuraman et al., (1988) as cited by Moura and Sintra ([Sa]: 19) proposes five dimensions in assessing service quality. They are, tangibility or the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication material; reliability or the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; responsiveness meaning the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service; empathy meaning the caring, individualised attention provided to the customer; and assurance or the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Assessing the importance of the O&QMF in addressing the five dimensions above is therefore a good completion of this research in confirming the importance of business-based techniques in facilitating, improving and sustaining service delivery in the South African public service.

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