

# Continuous performance improvement in the South African National Defence Force

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**Abstract:** This article concentrates on the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), as a South African public sector department, its acceptance of the Batho Pele principles and the implementation of various organisational performance improvement programmes. However, despite accepting the principles and the programmes, it is uncertain whether the SANDF institutionalised them in order to effect continuous performance improvement.

**Keywords:** South African national Defence Force (SANDF), public service delivery, organisational change, performance improvement.

**Disciplines:** Management Studies, Public Management and Governance, Military Sciences,

## Introduction

In 1998 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) implemented a process to effect continuous improvement programs in the SANDF. This process followed in response to the instruction promulgated in the *Government Gazette* (October 1997) by Minister Zola Skweyiya

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(Minister for Public Service and Administration [MPSA]) to improve Public Sector Service Delivery (*Government Gazette*, 1997: 5). The principles stipulated in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* No. 85 of 1993), as well as the requirements in the White Paper on Transforming Public Sector Service Delivery (*Government Gazette* – Notice 1459 of 1997), the *Public Service Act*, No. 103 of 1994, the *Public Finance Management Act*, No. 1 of 1999, and the Treasury Regulations (March 2005), demanded improved performance and improved quality of service delivery (Department of Defence Instruction (DODI) 24/2000: vi). These government policies formed the baseline from which the SANDF adopted the South African Excellence Foundation's (SAEF) model to measure organisational effectiveness (South African Air Force Instruction (MRI:007775): 1 – 2).

In the SANDF, the emphasis was initially on implementing the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) measuring model to measure Total Quality Management (TQM) and the effectiveness in the SANDF (Brigadier General Eksteen (Former Inspector General for the SA Air Force (IGAF), 2004: Interview). In 2000 the EFQM was substituted by the South African Excellence Foundation's model that was developed on the basis of the EFQM model but supplemented with additional criteria to establish a South African unique model (SAEF Y2001/1, 2001: 1). The SANDF, with the South African Air Force (SAAF) as the leader in the implementation process, launched the implementation of the SAEF model in 2000, as the official measurement model for the Defence Force (Brigadier General Carlos Gagiano, Former Inspector General for the SA Air Force, 2001: Presentation).

Research conducted by the authors, to determine the possible reasons why the SANDF did not excel in continuous performance improvement, provided alarming evidence that the majority of senior management (majors to colonels in the SANDF):

1. Did not understand the process, and
2. Are not actively involved in processes to improve organisational performance.

The aim of this article is to provide the reader with an insight regarding the reason(s) why continuous performance improvement in the SANDF is not delivering better results.

## **Effectiveness in the South African National Defence Force**

In 2000/2001 the South African Air Force participated in the national SAEF awards competition. As a result the Security Squadron at Air

Force Base Langebaanweg obtained second place in the competition (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). However, in 2002/2003, this unit only managed to form part of the finalists and in 2004 was not placed at all (Weldon Bond (CEO Ideas Management SA, 2004: Interview). The probable answer to this state of affairs might be attributed to a failure to effectively react on 'areas for improvement' (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). This situation can be related to Mears (1995: 1) who linked improvement to '...telling a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) story' and that a submission of underperformance, must convey the story '...in a simple, objective manner so that others can understand the problem and take action to improve the situation'.

According to Mears (1995: 1), conveying the story to others relies on data and statistics; therefore, the real use of statistics is based on the notion that '(D)ata tends to be more objective than general statements'. In a subsequent argument Mears (1995: 2 – 3) used the Florida Power and Light (FPL) company as an example regarding the objective use of data. The vice-president of FPL noticed an increase in the number of complaints received. The numbers represented a significant increase based on the average number of complaints received from 1988 to 1993. The vice-president of FPL was able to determine the problem and attempted to institute corrective procedures to reduce the number of complaints. According to Viljoen (2001: Presentation), an organisation must nurture their successes but observe their areas for improvement and react in time to prevent disaster. Successes in continuous performance improvement are not always instantaneous, but rather as part of a long-term strategy that takes years to achieve what the organisation sets out in the strategic vision and mission-statement (Viljoen, 2001: Presentation).

Statistics, obtained as part of an organisation's performance monitoring process, must be analysed in order to provide management with sufficient information to manage the organisation with success (Mears, 1995: 12). Therefore, objective data and the correct interpretation of the data could probably determine the problem and guide management to the corrective measures required to rectify the problem, which may reduce the prevalence of the problem in future. Schwella, stated:

(A) scientific approach to the study of the future is of interest and importance to public managers. Public management functions such as policy-making and planning involve, by definition, analysis and assumptions about the future. Such assumptions are used as the basis for policy and planning decisions (in Fox, Wissink & Schwella 1991: 312).

The problem at the Security Squadron could probably be linked to the failure of management to utilise historic evidence (areas for improvement) to improve future performance, which can be viewed as the primary reason why the Security Squadron did not feature in subsequent competitions. The solution is therefore embedded in the

requirement for an integrated organisation development model.

The Department of Defence Instruction: Policy & Planning No 24/2000 (The Continuous Performance Improvement Programme for The Department of Defence [DOD]) was drafted as a DOD Instruction to institutionalise the South African Excellence Model within the SANDF. Presumably, this was intended as a holistic approach to the implementation of the South African Excellence Model (SAEM); however, scrutinising the policy revealed an in-depth reference to the SANDF suggestion scheme and a trivial reference to the actual implementation (DODI 24/2000). The assumption can be made that, although it is expected of senior management to have a basic understanding about developing and measuring effectiveness in an organisation, some managers may not have the required skills to effectively implement measuring tools such as the EFQM and the SAEF models. With reference to the DOD Strategic Direction process a shortcoming in the 'performance improvement implementation process' could be seen as the principal factor that prevents organisations continuously improving. This argument highlights the supposition that the SAEF model should not be viewed as the tool to improve organisational effectiveness, but as a method to measure to what extent the organisation has improved. In addition, an integrated development model should utilise a measurement tool, such as the SAEM, to obtain information regarding the performance of an organisation, and then proceed through various phases or stages of the integrated model to change deficiencies in the organisation.

Palmer & Hardy (2000: 170 – 174) referred to various contemporary change models and pointed to the similarity between the basic variations of these models, having either a linear (Kurt Lewin) approach or a cyclical (Marshak) approach to change. These variations are all advocating different stages or phases with various steps within the stages. In an attempt to highlight the underlying problem of organisational change, Burke (1995: 159) argued that organisational change is, '...messy and never as clear as we have written in our books and articles'. This argument illustrates the difficulty in marrying the theoretical principles presented in academic literature to the problem of implementing these principles in practice.

Charlton (2000: 141) lists various aspects including:

...not having clearly defined, relevant, measurable performance standards and criteria expectations...,...a general culture of resistance to change..., and ...not knowing how to perform and/or not wanting to perform

as the most elementary performance inhibitors. The authors are of the opinion that a lack of knowledge by SANDF managers on how to integrate the Organisational Development (OD) models with a strategic development programme for the organisation could be considered as

the cause of failure of the Langebaanweg Security Squadron to continue to perform. To support this argument, Kotter argued that, successful organisations do not succeed only by gathering data, analysis, report writing, and presentations; they succeed because

(T)hey compellingly show people what the problems are and how to resolve the problems (2002: 8).

The Security Squadron at Air Force Base Langebaanweg can be regarded as the flagship unit of excellence in the SANDF after being selected in 2000/2001 as the runner-up (previously mentioned as third place) in the National Excellence Awards competition. However, subsequent failure to maintain or improve performance questions the manner in which excellence was institutionalised at the South African Air Force squadron. This state of affairs, as well as the arguments debated in the previous paragraphs, supports the notion that only by implementing the selected models without first following a process of organisational development might not result in the required outcome. Management in the SANDF can therefore, be classified in accordance with Charlton's (2000: 142) observation of 'not knowing how to perform' resulting in certain bases/units within the SANDF failing to develop the base or units based on the results obtained from a selected model. As a result, these units or bases may show little, or any, significant improvement in organisational effectiveness. The author is of the opinion that by continuing to conduct organisation functions in archaic ways, the organisation will continue to perform sub-optimal.

## **Improving public service delivery**

In February 2005, the Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA), Ms Geraldine Frazer-Moleketi, expressed her concern about the fact that the South African public sector showed no significant improvement in effectiveness since 1994 (Frazer-Moleketi, 2005: SABC News). This concern was again voiced during a work session conducted, in May 2005, to formulate a strategy for the next five years. The minister expressed concern regarding the increase in the number of complaints received regarding the effectiveness of service delivery in the South African central public sector.

Bond (2004: Interview) argued that although the South African Excellence Foundation (SAEF) does not publicly announce results of organisations, a problem regarding the effectiveness of public sector service delivery was already observed during 2003, when the SAEF participated in 'site visits' to various public sector organisations. According to Bond (2004), the principal question was whether the ineffectiveness could be linked to the SAEF model or to the public

sector's inability to enhance its effectiveness as a result of evidence obtained from the SAEF model.

The observation made by Bond (2004: Interview) accentuate the requirements stipulated in the *Government Gazette* (October 1997) by Minister Zola Skweyiya (Minister for the Public Service) to improve Public Sector Service Delivery (*Government Gazette*, 1997: 5). The detrimental factor in public sector effectiveness could arguably, be attributed to the probable misconception that the existence of excellence principles (The *Batho Pele* principles) represents a guaranteed improvement in organisational performance. This assumption appears to be in direct contrast with arguments of various academics attempting to promote organisation development as part of a continuous improvement strategy.

According to Kotter & Cohen:

(F)our sets of behaviors commonly stop the launch of needed change. The first is complacency, driven by false pride or arrogance. A second is immobilization, self-protection, a sort of hiding in the closet, driven by fear or panic. Another is you-can't-make-me-move deviance, driven by anger. The last is a very pessimistic attitude that leads to constant hesitation. Whatever the reason, the consequences are similar. People do not look carefully at the evidence, get on their toes, and start moving. Instead, they hold back or complain if others initiate new action, with the result that a needed change doesn't start or doesn't start well (2002: 17).

This argument highlights that, effective organisational development with continuous improvement as the focus requires the organisation to improve; furthermore, the behaviour of the people must be altered and the measuring of the organisation's outcomes must be adapted to ascertain whether the improvement was successful.

This process corresponds with the suggested method of Mears (1995: 2) i.e. to identify the reason for improvement, determine the current situation, analyse the problem, create and implement an action plan, and measure results. Any deviation from the predicted or required outcome, should act as a catalyst for management to realise that the organisation requires investigating the reason for the deviation, developing measures to remedy the problem, implement a change process and then measure the resultant outcome.

The inability of the SANDF to continue to improve could therefore be attributed to the absence of such a total process. This fact, accentuated by Charlton's (2000: 142) argument of management not knowing how to perform, resulted in the motivation to conduct the research. The research represents a challenge to develop a program to incorporate various sub-processes and to assist SANDF managers by providing them with a detailed integrated program for organisational improvement. The integrated program comprises a detailed process explaining various components of sub-processes, as well as various

software packages to enable managers to develop and implement a total program.

The intention to create a detailed guide implies that an integrated organisation development model is lacking in the SANDF and probably the wider central public sector. The real problem exists within the available literature where an integrated model is either omitted, not explicitly detailing integrated development processes, or does not exist. The majority of public sector managers have undergone management training in various areas of the public management field; and although, literature explains what should be implemented, it fails to explain the methodology to implement programs successfully.

## **Theoretical overview**

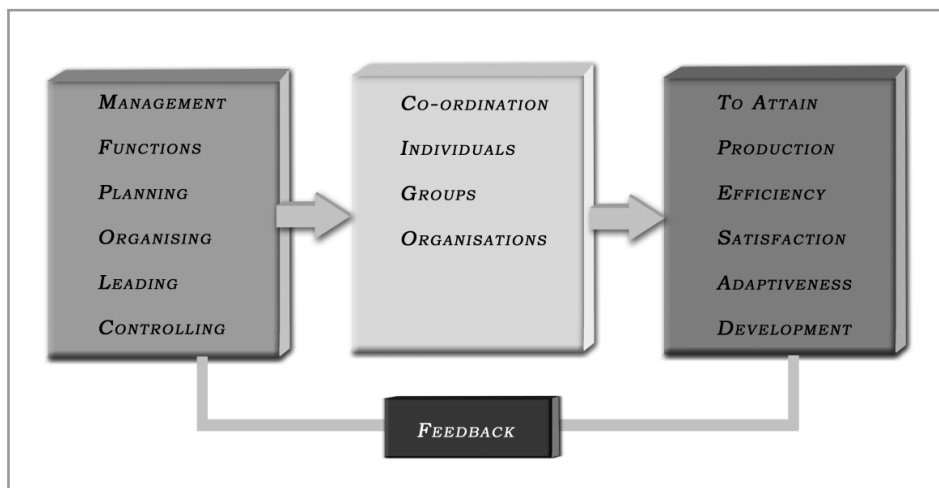
Palmer & Hardy argue that

(O)rganizational change has attracted considerable attention by both academics and practitioners. The result is a bewildering array of change models. They can select from a 29-step model, a 15-point 'manifesto', a 13-point plan, and a number of 6-step approaches (2000: 170).

The majority of the academic literature values organisational development (OD) and emphasises the importance of developing the organisation in accordance with the specific requirements. Academics such as Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly (1991: xii) converse OD in the last chapter of the literature, Smit & Cronje (1999: 259) address organisation change in chapter eleven; while, Palmer & Hardy (2000: 169) addresses managing change in chapter seven of the research. This method of addressing organisation change in a latter part of the literature creates the impression that authors writing about management, view organisation development as a reactive change mechanism, rather than a proactive process. Smit, et. al. (1999: 260) debate organisational change in terms of 'planned versus reactive change approach'. This type of approach, for example, will determine at what stage during the organisational management process, organisational development will appear.

The positioning of organisation development as a process could be either during the initial or the latter stages of the academic literature. The best practice could perhaps be to emphasise the importance of organisation development during the initial stages of the literature, and then support the arguments by founding the knowledge of other management principles as the prerequisites for effective organisation development practices. Gibson *et. al.* (1991: 40) indicates management's contribution to effectiveness as a process diagrammatically presented in Figure 1.1, where the specific functions are conducted through a coordination process to attain a specific outcome.

Figure 1.1: Management's Contribution to Effectiveness in Organisations (**Source:** Gibson *et. al.* 1991: 40)



According to Smit *et. al.* (1999: 260), organisational development serves as the tool to management, whereby deviations from the desired outcomes or objectives can be adapted to ensure the harmonious functioning of the organisational components within the organisation. The focus of organisational development is dependent on the evaluation of the entire organisation, thereby determining the specific elements that may cause the ineffectiveness. Gibson *et. al.* (1991: 11) graphically illustrate the study of organisations and indicates the placement of organisation development. The graphical representation (Figure 1.1) provides an indication that organisation development has links to the study of the individual, groups, the design of the organisation as well as to the processes available within the organisation, despite being discussed during the latter stages of the literature.

The former efficiency manager at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research [CSIR], (Basson, 2004: Interview) indicated that areas where the organisation requires intervention are identified through a process of measuring. The analyses of internal and external questionnaires could enable management to correctly identify problem areas (Bond, 2004: Interview). Results can be obtained through the utilisation of measurement tools such as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) measurement model, the Baldrige Quality Measuring Model, or the South African Excellence Foundation (SAEF) model of excellence (Viljoen, 2001: Interview). Mears advocates that:



(T)he problem with improving quality is that quality of many products and most services is a subjective attribute....(d)ata tends to be more objective than general statements (1995: 1).

This implies that modern managers can no longer rely solely on their intuition to determine where organisational problem areas exist, but managers require scientific tools to correctly identify problem indicators for early warning. The monitoring of problem indicators such as declining profits, declining quantity and quality of work, absenteeism or low employee morale, can arguably be indicative of an underlying problem or problem initiator.

However, Palmer & Hardy warn that

(M)anagers rarely process information rationally; organizational systems are unpredictable; managers favour previous practices even in the face of evidence to the contrary (2000: 194).

This argument probably explains why Mears argued that negative findings are often opposed to by the recipient and when confronted with a quality problem:

(The) ...typical reaction is to defend oneself against a personal attack. The problem in need of improvement becomes secondary (1995: 1).

Problem indicators, adequately supplemented by supporting data, may therefore focus the attention of management on specific areas that require change or development. This method however, could be seen as a reactive approach to organisational change.

Colonel Brand, Senior Staff Officer Policy and Planning at Defence Headquarters (2006: Interview), is of the opinion that the SANDF has an effective organisation monitoring system, which is incorporated in the Department of Defence's Strategic Direction process. In support to this notion, Colonel Huysamen, Acting Director Strategy at Defence Headquarters (2006: Interview), argued that although the processes are considered to be very effective, the concern is that results obtained through the monitoring process, are not adequately addressed to ensure continuous performance improvement. The existing development intervention strategy inherent to the DOD Strategic Direction process can therefore be adapted to address specific problems as part of the management contingency process. Adjusting the emphasis on the placement of the organisational development process, either during the initial stages or during the latter stages of the process, could ensure that it forms an integral part of a planned approach to the organisational change strategy. By so doing, management could change their approach from being reactive to being proactive by re-positioning the development process.

Siegal (1996: 54) argues that managers are encouraged to change the organisation's structures in response to the hyper competitive business

environment, and to alter organisation culture in order to enhance performance. According to Brigadier General Mann, Commandant of the Defence College (2006: Presentation), changes to the DOD structures is difficult but not impossible, but changing the organisational performance culture of the SANDF might be a more effective approach to affect organisation performance. This statement is consistent with the view of Siegal (1996: 54) who indicates that the emphasis on change has led to suggestions that ‘...organizations today are immersed in a virtual cyclone of change’.

The SANDF is, according to Brigadier General Luck, Deputy Director Manpower Utilisation for the Department of Defence (Luck, 2006: Presentation), currently involved in a changing process where the training of personnel is aligned with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) requirements. According to Colonel Janssen, Senior Staff Officer Military Strategy at Defence Headquarters (2006: Presentation) the SANDF is obliged to conform to the stipulations of the Government by complying with the objectives stipulated in the National Security Strategy, as well as conforming to other influences such as the SAQA stipulations. The dominant factor in the modern military environment, as well as in the Military Strategy, will be the organisation’s ability to balance huge profits or successes with low levels of dissatisfaction or labour related litigations (Huysamen, 2006: Presentation). The SANDF is compelled to perform within the constraints of the allocated Defence budget, and as such should perform more efficiently and ‘smarter’ rather than insisting or overtly blaming poor effectiveness and non-continuous performance improvement on the declining budget (Brand, 2006: Interview).

In response to this notion, Gibson, *et. al.* (1991: 33) debates that, criteria of effectiveness should emphasise two important considerations i.e.

1. the survival of the organisation depends on its ability to adapt to the demands of the environment; and
2. in satisfying these demands, managers must focus on the entire cycle of ‘input-process-output’.

The authors are of the opinion that a higher employee input is not necessarily directly proportionate to the output, and performance will therefore be affected by other elements of the systems approach. Furthermore, the increase in employee inputs might in the short-term prove to be sufficient; however, in the medium to long-term a decline to below the expected or required output levels is anticipated.

Managers can therefore no longer rely on unscientific measures as an input for affecting change in the organisation (Bond, 2004: Interview). Kanter (in Chawla & Renesch, 1995: 77) argues the concept of speed

to be the fundamental measure of organisational efficiency. According to Kanter (in Chawla & Renesch, 1995: 77) modern organisations require a process of constantly innovating and experimenting with new features that allow the customer to satisfy his/her requirements by referring to three types of speed i.e.:

*innovative speed* includes the timely placement of goods or services required by the customers in the marketplace;

*processing speed* that includes shorter cycle times, or implementing new products or services; and

*recovery speed* that includes the time it takes to respond to and fix problems.

These aspects can be readily related to service delivery and the achievement of objectives in the SANDF. The control process that represents a sub-process of the DOD Strategic Direction process addresses these three types of speed resulting in the early identification of deviations and subsequent corrective measures to ensure the achievement of the Military Strategic end-state (Brand, 2006: Interview).

According to Baker (2000: 3), the key to success and efficiency is the organisation's ability to be flexible. Cook and Hunsaker (2001: 15) argue that managers will endeavour to align the organisation with the requirements of the changing environment, and will allocate resources and alter personnel behaviour to fit the alignment. Managers however, should inspire values, attitudes and behaviour from all the stakeholders in an attempt to guide the collective efforts of the stakeholders towards the desired end-result (Landsberg, 2000: 28).

Baker (2000: 3) continues to argue that a flexible organisation is more reluctant to focus on narrow job definitions and is more receptive to innovations and a wider definition of jobs. The flexibility of an organisation also depends on its ability to out-perform its competitor and to obtain a competitive advantage and

(T)he organisation needs to create a culture that reinforces both effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness relates to the ability to satisfy customer needs while efficiency implies doing it in the most cost and time efficient way (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge, & Werner, 2003: 12).

Belbin (1997: 3) views these types of organisation as reliant on cross-functional team structures, and that they tend to avoid a more traditional hierarchical structure, i.e. a flat structure. These arguments appears to promote a flexible cross-functional organisation structure with empowered individuals in terms of innovative reasoning and a wider job definition, which allows for more creative responses from individuals. Thompson pointed out that

(T)he purpose of organizational learning and the acquisition of organizational knowledge is to provide the foundation for rapid, dramatic change; increasingly the fundamental requirement for organizational success (in Baker 2000: 2).

This approach coincides with the ‘ideas-management’ approach linked to the SAEF model where employees are encouraged to be creative (Bond, 2004: Interview). This approach also emphasises the need to determine key success factors that will enable the organisation to respond to the environmental changes, and could also address the essential element in the response of the organisation to the requirements of the customers and the external environment; thereby, having a direct impact on how financially and competitively successful the organisation is functioning (Thompson & Strickland, 2001: 106).

Although Ulrich (2000: 17 - 18) indicates six key success factors that might impact on the manner in which future organisations will operate and individuals will behave, these factors are generic and could vary from organisation to organisation. In the South African public sector, the *Batho Pele* or “Putting People First”-principles were introduced as the baseline for improving service delivery in public sector organisations (*Government Gazette*, 1997: 5). The *Batho Pele* principles can be cross-linked to the key factors identified by Ulrich (2000: 17 - 18):

- The organisation’s ability to adapt products to local conditions and cultures;
- technology that will affect where and how people work and the type of work people do;
- Speed of conducting services or delivering products;
- Consumer customisation that focuses on individual elements rather than on consumer segments;
- Intellectual capital and knowledge of employees; and
- Profitable growth that continually balances the short and long-term requirements of employees, customers and investors.

Management should shape the organisational requirements with the various individual requirements and manage the interrelationship between the conflicting needs, interests and feelings of the worker and the organisation (Thompson & Strickland, 2001: 346). Noer (1997: 214) identified five aspects of mutual dependency i.e. flexible employment, customer focus, focus on performance, project based work and the connection of human spirit and work. These aspects correlate with the enabling criteria of the South African Excellence Model. Although the South African Excellence Model is not the only scientific measurement tool to measure organisational performance,

it is currently accepted in the SANDF as the official measurement instrument and for this reason it will be used in this research as representing the scientific measurement tool.

The difference between the key aspects listed by Ulrich (2000: 17 - 18) and Noer (1997: 214 - 217), as well as the 'enabling' criteria of the SAEF model, indicates the interrelationship between the elements. The views by Ulrich (2000) and Noer (1997) and the various models i.e. the Malcolm Baldrige model, the EFQM model, as well as the SAEF model, emphasise the cross-linkages that exist between the various elements or criteria. Bond (2004: Interview) and Viljoen (2005: Interview) however, caution to the impact of fixating only on specific elements without monitoring the cross-impact that the respective elements may incur. Therefore, by utilising the various measurement models to obtain results on the organisational effectiveness, but failing to integrate the results with possible solutions, and neglecting to analyse the cross-impact of the various criteria, the potential effectiveness of such a measurement tool could be annulled, which may probably represent the modern organisation change phenomenon.

## **Contemporary organisational change phenomenon**

According to Schultz *et. al.* (2003: 249):

(C)hange is real, it is radical and it faces us everyday.

Palmer & Hardy (2000: 169 – 178) argue that organisational change is inevitable and there is a need for change in one form or another. Siegal (1996: 54) emphasises the fact that organisations today are immersed in a virtual cyclone of change. Schultz *et. al.* (2003: 249) is however, of the opinion that winning organisations are those that anticipate change and react continuously and timeously. To substantiate this argument, French & Bell (1999: 24 – 30) refer to a variety of change models that have been developed in an effort to improve organisational effectiveness. Palmer & Hardy state that:

(A)nnouncements of change often merely formalize activities that have already been in train for some time, rather than indicate fundamentally new actions (2000: 171).

These arguments tend to suggest that organisations should accept that the environment within which the organisation functions is continuously changing, which requires continuous changes within the organisation, and that changes should be anticipated and planned for in the organisation's strategic planning process.

The collated analyses of various change models by Palmer & Hardy

(2000: 172), strikingly omitted the inclusion or mention of any scientific measurement tool. This omission indicates that academics either generally accepted the inclusion of such a tool in the development process, or they are intentionally not including it because they regard the measurement function as a separate entity. In the 'ten commandments' advocated by Kanter (in Chawla & Renesch, 1995: 383), the reference to enabling structures could be viewed as a possible measurement tool, whilst in *The Blueprint for Corporate Renewal* advocated by Ghoshal & Bartlett (1996: 23) the reference to ensuring continuous learning could point to organisation measurement. The 'large-scale change' model advocated by Morris & Raben (1995: 64) included reference to built-in feedback mechanisms and the reference to consolidate gains and producing more change in Kotter's model (Kotter, 1996: 21) are the only observable links to a measurement tool. These observations create the perception that the majority of academics failed to integrate the organisation development process with a scientific measurement tool that can be used to objectively align interventions with the problems identified or results obtained. This could perhaps be the main reason why managers do not have the knowledge on how to effectively implement the development process with the measurement tools, such as the SAEF model. In conclusion, it can be argued that it appears as though there is a distinctive difference between the discussions on the organisation development process and implementation of scientific measurement tools. The suggested remedy to this problem is to inform managers on how to integrate organisation development and organisation performance measurement, into a single integrated organisation development process.

In the section above, on improving public sector service delivery, it was indicated that the South African public sector accepted the *Batho Pele* or "Putting People First"-principles as one of the key success factors. There is however, no conclusive evidence that all personnel in the public sector have accepted these principles, as service delivery in the South African public sector is prone to be poor (Bond, 2004: Interview). The argument can be made that if the entire public sector accepted and implemented a system of performance measurement as integral part of an organisation development strategy, poor service delivery would have been identified and addressed as an area for improvement, and corrective measures could have been implemented. In addition, it is also unclear whether the failure of some organisations to respond effectively to poor performance indicators are directly related to the missing link between development process and measurement results.

The conclusions made on these debated issues are whether:

- Organisation development processes can effectively change

problems in an organisation without reference to results obtained from scientific measurement tools;

- The utilisation of a scientific measurement tool should form part of the organisation development model to ensure that results or measured outputs obtained from the measurement serve as inputs to the initial phase of the model; and
- The implementation of a scientific measurement tool can improve organisational effectiveness without being supported by an organisation development strategy.

Since 1996 when the EFQM and the SAEF models were implemented in South Africa, many organisations in both the private and public sector experienced no or insignificant improvement in their performance (Bond, 2004: Interview). In some organisations it was found that there was no real improvement in organisational effectiveness with the result that the models were characterized as being ineffective (Van Den Heever, 2001: 2). In the South African Air Force some units experienced a marked improvement in organisational effectiveness, but with the departure of individuals responsible to administratively manage the SAEM, the units experienced a decline in performance (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). For this reason, it may be argued that public sector service delivery, as well as continuous performance improvement in the SANDF, requires an interrupted process not dependent on individual members who are passionate about excellence.

### **Public service delivery**

The requirement to improve service delivery in the South African Public Sector implies that service delivery within the SANDF, as a department within the South African public sector, should also improve. In 1998 the South African Air Force initiated the excellence process through the implementation of the EFQM model for excellence (AFI 007775: 1 –2). The South African Air Force (SAAF) altered their approach in 2001 when the SAEM was elected as the excellence model (Gagiano, 2001: Presentation). Personnel in the SAAF approached the process with scepticism as no significant changes occurred after the implementation of the EFQM model (Gagiano, 2001: Inspector General Report). The majority of the managers underwent training on the model, but the training concentrated on explaining the various elements of the model, conducting self-assessment, compiling reports on the current management processes, and the general functioning or structure of the model (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). The problem was therefore not ‘what’ to implement, but “how” to implement the model.

The South African Navy (SAN) and South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) initiated the implementation of the SAEM in 2001 to monitor effectiveness, and during 2002 the South African Army (SAA) initiated the implementation of the SAEF model (Prinsloo, 2004: Interview). The gap in the training was found to be in the implementation of the model and the ability of managers to adapt the existing management system to address or coincide with the various criteria of the model (Prinsloo, 2004: Interview). The model did not represent a new management process, but rather a measurement tool to objectively and scientifically obtain results on the effectiveness of the organisation (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). The inherent capability promoted by the SAEF model is the afforded opportunity to evaluate or benchmark on the organisation's own effectiveness against other organisations, competitors or best-in-class organisations (Bond, 2004: Interview).

The implementation of the EFQM and the SAEF models in the SANDF was based on the theoretical knowledge of the various models and how to conduct self-assessment within the organisation (Bond, 2004: Interview). Trained SAEF executive facilitators that provided the theoretical training to future assessors, failed to provide the trainees with a strategy to implement the SAEF model within the organisation (Prinsloo, 2004: Interview). During self-assessment evaluations various problem areas (known as areas for improvement) were identified and indicated. The subsequent failure to rectify the problems, led to some bases not altering their internal practices. As a result these bases remained at an embryonic level (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). The solution to this problem is probably that training in the model should include the emphasis on creating a link between the theory of the models and the actual implementation of a continuous improvement programme within the organisation.

## **Organisational learning**

Easterby-Smith (1997: 1085 - 1113) indicated that one of the reasons behind the lack of consensus regarding organisational learning can be related to the fact that organisational learning has been studied from a number of different disciplinary perspectives. According to Argyris & Schon (1978: 19) organisational learning occurs when individuals identify problems and take action to rectify the problems. Palmer & Hardy argue that

(O)rganizational learning involves systematic problem-solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from experience and best practice, and transforming knowledge quickly and efficiently through the organization in ways that manifest themselves in measurable output (2000: 210).

These statements imply that organisational effectiveness depends on



the effective integration of theory with the activities of an organisation. It can be deduced that the development of a commonly accepted model for organisational change could be almost impossible and that organisation development models should be designed according to the organisation's requirements.

Organisation development is, according to Beckhard:

...an effort planned, organization-wide, and managed from the top to increase organization effectiveness and health through planned interventions in the organization's processes with behavioural knowledge (1969: 19).

According to Cummings & Worley organisation development is

...a system-wide application of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures, and processes for improving and organization's effectiveness (1993: 2).

Palmer & Hardy (2000: 170 – 171) argue that organisation development has attracted considerable attention by authors and practitioners, but further argues that many change models continue to adhere to the classic three-phase model advocated by Lewin (1947: 5-41), i.e. unfreezing, changing and refreezing. These arguments suggest generic steps or phases need to be used in the development of an organisation's unique improvement model and that the process requires being formalised, and planned.

Gibson *et al.* define organisation development as

...a planned, managed, systematic process to change the culture, systems and behavior of an organization, in order to improve the organization's effectiveness in solving its problems and achieving its objectives (1991: 638-641).

According to Schultz *et al.* the challenge for managers and leaders is

... to determine where they want to take the organisation to, develop a strategy to reach that destination, get buy-in from all stakeholders, give momentum to the process and measure progress and success on a continuous basis (2003: 249).

Gibson *et al.* (1991: 640) point out that organisation development is a planned process that takes place over a period of time and that must be justified in terms of organisational effectiveness. This argument is supported by Harvey & Brown (1996: 4), who also emphasise that the OD process aims at addressing the organisation's processes, structures and systems in anticipation of changes in the environment. The implementation of an integrated organisation development programme should form part of the SANDF strategy and should use results obtained from the SAEF model, as the primary measuring tool for the South African National Defence Force. The ensued benefit is that it could contribute to affect the required changes within the boundaries of the DOD Strategic Direction process, to ensure continuous performance improvement in the SANDF.

According to Dunbar, Garud & Raghuram organisations need to 'deframe' in the approach to change and further argues that

...this does not imply that we must obliterate all previous ways of thinking....what it does imply is the need for an ability to step back from a reliance on the particular frames we currently rely on (1996a: 26).

The underlying themes of organisation development is therefore based on planned change, enhanced by self-renewal or organisational learning, focussed on changing the organisations' culture, processes and structure by means of a system of action research (Palmer & Hardy, 2000: 173 - 174). The implementation of change activities within the SANDF cannot be based on a theoretical measurement model only without integrating the model into the organisation's strategic management process.

In conclusion, it can be argued that no single organisational change model can therefore be used as the sole means to change the organisation, and change should be based on a combination of models and processes to attain the desired affect. Furthermore, the effective use of data may contribute to management being able to make informed decisions to improve organisational performance.

## **Data analysis in performance improvement**

The rationale of data analysis is to capture both the strengths and the areas for improvement of the organisations involved in the implementation of excellence models. By analysing the areas for improvement, it may be possible to identify potential inhibiting practices that are commonly experienced within organisations. These inhibiting practices can be addressed in the intended model to minimise the effect of the inhibiting factors. Reducing or minimising the impact of inhibiting factors an improvement in the organisation's effectiveness could therefore be expected. This argument is based on the assumption that, contributing factors negatively impacting on processes are identified and eliminated through the implementation of a pro-active organisation development strategy.

Contributing factors are according to SAEF (SAEF Book Y2001/1, 2001: 3-4) obtained through a process of self-assessment (also referred to as 'Organisation Assessment', 'Quality Fitness Review', 'Business Management Assessment', and 'Quality Value'). The factors contributing to ensure continuous performance improvement may furthermore, be defined as either strengths or positive factors, or negative factors, which are called 'areas for improvement' (SAEF Y2001/1, 2001: 5 - 6). The South African Excellence Foundation refers to strengths within the enabler criteria as being a 'systematic and prevention based approach', with regular 'reviews' to be able to

implement 'improvements' into the 'normal operations' (SAEF Y2001/1, 2001: 5-17). Strengths within the results criteria may include concepts such as 'positive trends', 'continuous good performance', 'understanding negative trends and taking appropriate action', and the 'ability to sustain its performance' (SAEF Y2001/1, 2001: 5-17).

The term 'areas for improvement' is according to SAEF, activities that are not in place that are expected to be in place (Bond, 2004: Interview). Areas for improvement also include phrases such as 'not involved', 'not in place', 'no evidence', and 'not available' (SAEF Y2001/1, 2001: 6-17). Bond (2004: Interview) indicated that the process of identified 'strengths' and 'areas for improvement' are the critical areas to affect organisational effectiveness. According to Bond (2004), the neglect of 'strengths' results in an 'area for improvement' and therefore negatively influences the organisation's results. Attending to, and rectification of 'areas for improvement' will conversely result in the increase of organisational effectiveness, better results and higher scores during evaluation. Obtaining the results of the strengths in successful organisations will result in the identification of generic factors, linked to the specific criteria that could probably contribute, if implemented by other organisations, to continuous improvement strategy. Strengths can also be utilised as benchmarking factors, against which other less successful organisations can measure themselves in order to implement them as part of their organisation development process. However, benchmarking and the identification of 'areas for improvement' could result in measures instituted by the observing organisations, to prevent ineffectiveness and processes that prevent 'continues performance improvement'.

The value of benchmarking is to maximise best practices, but also to reveal the factors that prevent the organisation from being even more effective (Basson, 2004: Interview). The dilemma of benchmarking is that some organisations tend to present or produce only the information that will improve their perceived image (Eksteen, 2004: Interview). This is normally done by means of favourable feedback from customers or suppliers, presented on public display areas such as general notice boards (Brand, 2006: Interview). The principal problems are seldom displayed, resulting in the presentation of a distorted view of the organisation to external observers (Eksteen, 2004: Interview).

The most probable solution to address continues performance improvement in the SANDF, is to establish a centralised directorate to monitor the performance in the Department of Defence. This directorate could function to augment the inspection function conducted by the inspector generals. The purpose will be to identify trends in the performance of the respective SANDF Services and to provide advice on how to address the deviations from the planned objectives. The benefit of establishing such a directorate is to overcome the tendency

to rely entirely on individuals residing on units to 'drive' performance and effectiveness. The transfer of individuals from these units will not result in the collapse of the performance 'drive' but will ensure that continuity will be retained. The basis of this directorate is to place motivated performance oriented personnel, passionate about excellence in this directorate and to transfer individuals who are passionate about performance improvement to the directorate.

Performance excellence is an essential element of a long-term organisation strategy and should not be based on the premise that '*principles*' of excellence will ensure excellent performance. The neglect of 'strengths' could result in these strengths reverting to 'areas for improvement'. The SANDF have excellent processes in place to ensure continuous performance improvement; however, failing to effectively manage these processes, will result in a failure to improve and perform. Excellence should not be managed as an 'over-and-above' task, but should form an intrinsic part of the management task and processes.

## **Conclusion**

Since 1997, when the South African central public sector identified the value of improving service delivery to the South African public by introducing the *Batho Pele* principles, no visible and lasting improvement in excellence was observed. The SAAF and later the remainder of the SANDF initially implemented the EFQM model and later the SAEF model, to manage and improve organisation effectiveness; however, similar to the central public sector, no visible or continued performance improvement is observed.

The failure of the majority of SANDF departments, bases and units, to persevere with continuous performance improvement, could be attributed to a 'missing link' within the overall organisation improvement process. This was probably due to the absence of an integrated process to complete organisation measurement and the ensuing results with a process to address and improve the areas identified for improvement. The missing link was not the direct result of ignorance by management, but may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the literature does not clearly address the complete process of measure, analyse, change, implement and measure. The missing link in the process could be ascribed to the failure to include the respective business and management processes as part of an integrated organisation development process.

Research in continuous performance improvement in the SANDF focussed on obtaining information from various private and public sector organisations with regard to their successes and/or failures

during the implementation of the SAEF model. The analyses of the information attempted to observe specific generic issues/ problems/ elements that can be used as the basis to develop an integrated process to ensure continuous improvement in the SANDF.

Essentially the integrated model, suggested for use in the SANDF, will embed specific intervention processes that can be utilised to minimise potential pitfalls during the public sector implementation process. Important issues to understand include:

The reasons for success and/or failure;

The organisation development process; and

The functioning of the SAEF model and knowledge regarding these elements, could probably contribute to the development of an integrated organisation development model for the SANDF.

The integrated model could then be implemented to support continuous performance improvement and excellent service delivery to the South African public.

However, the fundamentals of SANDF excellence highlight a concern regarding the reliance on individual members to drive excellence. Excellence in the SANDF should be based in a central directorate, manned by SANDF personnel who are passionate about excellence. The principle of this concept will allow the free rotation of individuals through this directorate, but without causing the central theme – excellence – being omitted or depleted. Furthermore, this approach will not replace the inspectorate function, but simply augment it to ensure continuous performance improvement in the SANDF.

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