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Public sector reform and performance management.

'Has the PMDS delivered? A dissertation examining a Government Department's performance management system and its effectiveness at addressing performance related issues at Clerical Officer level.'

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Abstract

The fundamental aim of this dissertation is to examine a Government Department's performance management system (the PMDS), and ascertain its effectiveness as an instrument to help manage the performance of staff at Clerical Officer level, at a time of dynamic change and upheaval in the Irish public sector The literature review demonstrates how this study relates to the work of other researchers and covers some of the key contemporary theory surrounding performance management, notably performance management in the public sector The role of the practitioner-pragmatist is adopted for the research methodology, in that the research is conducted entirely within the organisation where the researcher is currently employed while method triangulation is applied to the research using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques as research strategies i e questionnaire and semi structured interviews The findings clearly show although potentially valuable, the current PMDS is a deeply flawed system, with significant shortcomings discovered in the areas of strategy alignment and system integration, leadership and commitment, process efficiency, underperformance, incentives and reward, assessment and rating objectivity, staff motivation and training and development Finally, the assertions made in this dissertation are based on findings from a single yet notable Government Department Further research will be required to validate the findings within other organisations/Departments in the wider Irish civil service

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Abbreviations

PMDS = Performance Management Development System

HR = Human Resource(s)

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1 1   Context

During the 1990s, in what has become known as 'new public management', many services in advanced economies, such as those of the U S and U K, came under pressure to become more efficient and effective, so as to reduce their demands on taxpayers, while maintaining the volume and quality of services supplied to the public To achieve this, public sectors were subjected to the introduction of various 'private sector' management techniques in an effort to modernise, improve and change the way public sector organisations approached their work Key among these change initiatives in 'new public management' has been the approach towards performance management (Gultekin 2011, Brignall & Modell 2000)

1 1 1   The economic crisis

The economic challenges that Ireland has faced since 2008 has brought about unprecedented events Economic output has slowed considerably, many businesses have closed and a record number of people are out of work (Public Affairs Ireland 2011) The property market has collapsed and many are facing negative equity and affordability issues on properties that they acquired during the height of the boom In addition, the scale of the financial crisis facing Ireland has resulted in an effective loss of sovereignty as the State is forced to agree to a process of co-management of the economy under the Programme of Financial Support agreed with the Troika (Public Affairs Ireland 2011)

For individuals, the consequences of the downturn have been severe – reduced income, or reliance on welfare benefits in the case of someone who has lost a job, lower employment prospects for school leavers and young graduates and an increase in emigration The public sector in particular has seen significant changes in terms and conditions of employment, with pay cuts, pension levies and a prolonged freeze on pay, recruitment and promotions with

limited incentives for staff to aim for throughout the civil service at the time of writing this dissertation In light of all this, it is now evident that public sector reform in Ireland is no longer a requirement but a necessity (Public Affairs Ireland 2011)

1 1 2   The Croke Park agreement

There have been almost as many reports, plans, strategies, task forces and implementation bodies on public sector reform over the last couple of decades as there have been reforms (Public Service Agreement 2011) However, all the evidence so far is that the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 or Croke Park agreement is different, although given the perilous state of the exchequer finances, there is simply no choice but to be different That said, at least there appears to be a willingness to engage this time (Public Service Agreement 2011)

The Croke Park agreement seeks to radically reform the public sector by creating a tighter, leaner and more efficient entity, where 'more with less' becomes the mantra of the day In essence, a public sector run with a private sector philosophy (Public Service Agreement 2011) To be successfull, the agreement requires changed behaviours at every level within public sector organisations and a renewed effort by management to engage the people they are responsible for leading or there wont be enough momentum for the build up of small changes that will create the climate for the significant transformation required within the public sector (CIPD 2010) An effective performance management system will be integral to the success of this reformation The goal is to create a system where optimal performance becomes the driving force behind the 'new public sector' but this new system must be based on fairness, objectivity and consistency with inherent incentives for staff to aspire to

1 2   **The background**

The General Council are a public sector body made up of management, staff and union representatives given responsibility for improving working conditions within the public

sector and its services to the public. The implementation of an effective performance management process was central to achieving the goals set out in *Delivering Better Government* by the General Council (Report No. 1368, 2000) and was among the key objectives and specific performance indicators of the civil service modernisation programme set out in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*.

In May 2000, the General Council Report (No. 1368, 2000) introduced the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) throughout the civil service. The goal of the PMDS, as agreed in the General Council Report, was to contribute to the continuous improvement in performance for all Government Departments and Offices. The PMDS is a holistic process, bringing together many of the elements which go to make up the successful practice of performance management. From the outset, the PMDS sought to improve individual performance, learning and development throughout the various sections, divisions and Departments in the wider civil service in an endeavour to achieve its overall objective of delivering better government.

This study will be conducted within a large and high profile government Department with just fewer than 1000 staff. It is located in various areas throughout Dublin City and the country due to recent decentralisation. The various sections within the Department carry out important functions that are fundamental to the smooth running of the Irish economy. These functions include support for job creation and productivity, enhancing science, technology and innovation, consumer and competition policy, industrial relations and employment rights.

1.3 The change programme and PMDS

The PMDS is a fundamental part of the change programme established under the Strategic Management Initiative (General Council Report No. 1368, 2000). This change programme

consists of three components a strategy statement, a business plan, and performance management

Firstly, the strategy statement sets out the overall goals and objectives of the organisation for a particular period (usually 3 years) and outlines how these goals might be achieved Secondly, the business plan outlines how the goals and objectives of the strategy are to be implemented It reflects the strategy statement in the day-to-day running of the organisation through various sectional and divisional activities over a 12 month business cycle Finally, performance management is about bringing this planning one step further, from the divisional level to an individual level The PMDS is a broad term used to describe managing individuals work performance, career and development goals Each individual can come to understand what his/her role is, the goals he/she is required to achieve, and the performance standards for each activity It is a way of ensuring organisational success while at the same time contributing to each individual's personal development (See appendix I for a more detailed account of the PMDS process as of 2012)

1 4   The Mercer evaluation

In 2004, a comprehensive evaluation of the PMDS was carried out across all Government Departments by an external firm, Mercer Human Resource Consulting The Mercer evaluation (Duncan & Wiley 2004) was the first significant evaluation of the PMDS throughout the civil service Mercer carried out the evaluation focusing on staff feedback and on identifying key areas where the system might be further developed or improved The evaluation comprised of feedback from a system-wide PMDS survey, a series of focus groups, interviews, and workshops

The evaluation framework provided for the following project outputs

➢ Feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of the PMDS using the agreed evaluation framework

➢ Recommendations on developing the PMDS to make it more effective in terms of addressing and improving individual/team performance Recommendations included, leadership buy in and support for PMDS, process efficiency, improved communication and feedback throughout the PMDS process, cultural support and enhanced organisational practices, improved training and development activities and a better alignment of these activities with business performance results and finally, provisions for a robust and meaningful assessment and rating system

➢ Linking the system to other human resource initiatives - linkage and alignment of the PMDS with the overall human resource strategy, training strategy and various other human resource processes such as staffing decisions on increments and promotion was essential to secure the systems relevance and credibility

➢ A framework for future evaluation

The comprehensive evaluation focused on determining the 'as is' state of the PMDS or

Version 1 The resulting feedback and recommendations focused on suggestions for further development or improvements, which would inform PMDS Version 2 The on-going evaluation provided a framework for future evaluation and on-going monitoring of the PMDS over time (Duncan & Wiley 2004)

1 5   Recent developments for the PMDS

Between 2008 and 2010, the Department of Finance (now Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) engaged in a process of evaluating and obtaining feedback on the PMDS and how the system had progressed in the years since the Mercer evaluation   The process included

➢ Evaluation of compliance rates and ratings spreads for the PMDS annual performance appraisals across Departments

➢ Obtaining feedback from Secretary Generals and personnel units across Departments

➢ Focus groups on the management of underperformance

➢ Discussions in the PMDS subcommittee of the General Council

The outcome of this process was the approval by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform on the following five changes to the PMDS

1 Simplification of the forms and a move to electronic PMDS (electronic PMDS timetabled for 2013 - new forms in hard copy to be used in 2012)

2 Management to be made more accountable for the PMDS (Priority for all line managers to be managing the performance of their staff, sanction of a rating of 2 to apply where line manager does not demonstrate that s/he has properly operated the PMDS

3 Business goals and individual goals must be clear and aligned

4 Decisions around ratings need to be more transparent to be perceived to be consistent

5 Focused training and support for managers

The proposed changes are due to be implemented throughout 2012 and 2013 (Public Service Agreement 2011) As they are only coming into effect over the next few years, for the purposes of this dissertation, the PMDS is evaluated as it was up until 2012

1 6   Rationale for the Dissertation

The PMDS has been under the spotlight recently, with media attention being less than complementary of the process A spokesman for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which has recently taken over responsibility for the PMDS, acknowledged the system has been heavily criticised by civil servants Staff claim the system is overly

bureaucratic and lacks consistency with considerable evidence of 'grade inflation' They also maintain there has been a failure to deal with underperformance Personnel Officers argue they can no longer carry people who are not performing and that sanctions now need to be brought in to tackle underperformance Under the terms of the Croke Park agreement, public servants and their unions have agreed to work with the PMDS to address underperformance of staff and improve work practices across the civil service (Tighe 2011)

The rationale for choosing the PMDS as the focal point for the dissertation is due to its contentious reputation throughout the civil service Some see it as a central pillar of the public service modernisation programme, others see it as a purely administrative exercise What is certain is that since its inception, the PMDS has divided opinion amongst staff within the civil service It is hoped that this research brings to light some of the main attributes and/or inadequacies inherent within the current PMDS

1 7   Aim of the research

This dissertation will endeavour to establish whether or not the PMDS is a credible instrument for improving performance at Clerical Officer level and how truly effective the current system is as the much heralded cornerstone of the proposed reforms set out in the Public Service Agreement 2011 It is hoped the findings of this dissertation will help to inform any current or future proposed changes to the PMDS thereby contributing to an improved system for the entire civil service that is necessary in these challenging times

1 8   Process of the research

The process of the research will be quantitative in the form of a structured questionnaire and qualitative in the form of a semi structured interview

Chapter 2 – A Public Sector Perspective on Performance Management – Systems, Implementation and Challenges

2 1   An introduction to performance management

Much research has been conducted on performance management, a key thrust of much of this research has been on improving performance management's effectiveness and in particular its accuracy in assessing employee performance However, it seems managers are reluctant to heed the advice of researchers, consequently, there is an increasing gap between the research and practice of performance management (Redman 2006)

2 1 1   The performance management process

Armstrong (2006) maintains adequate or good performance occurs when specified, realistic objectives and standards are met or exceeded Conversely, underperformance is an ongoing failure to meet specified, realistic objectives and standards He adds, managing underperformers should be a positive process, based on feedback throughout the year and looks forward to what can be done by individuals to overcome performance problems and, importantly, how managers can provide support

The University of Bath People and Performance Model (Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton & Swart 2003) states that performance is a function of ability + motivation + opportunity To improve performance, therefore, attention has to be paid to

> ➤ Increasing ability by recruiting the right people and developing them to enhance their knowledge and skills

> ➤ Increasing motivation through the provision of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards

> Increasing opportunity by providing people with the opportunity to use and develop their skills

According to De Nisi and Griffin (2008), effective management of performance may be the differance between success and failure for organisations today Armstrong (2006, p 1) defines performance management as a

> 'Systematic process for improving organisational performance by managing and developing the performance of individuals and teams within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competencies '

Performance management is about aligning individual objectives with organisational objectives and ensuring each individual upholds corporate values The overall aim of performance management is to establish a high performance culture where each individual takes responsibility for continuous improvement within a framework provided by effective leadership Performance management is a planned process that should involve a shared vision, leadership, employee involvement, ownership, teamwork, open dialogue, feedback, positive reinforcement, training, incentives and rewards (Radnor & McGuire 2004)

Performance management focusses on future performance planning and improvement rather than just retrospective performance appraisal A single-minded focus on past performance at the expense of broader issues encourages disenchantment amongst employees Consequently, a proactive forward-looking approach is essential to motivate employees in their future endeavours This can be achieved by focussing on the positives and empowering staff to build on their successes Performance management should be seen as a natural, organic, flexible, continuous and evolutionary process, not simply as a 'system' as this implies a rigid, standardised and bureaucratic approach (Armstrong 2006) It can be described as a continuous self renewing cycle which generally follows the sequence below

Reviewing Performance Standards

Determining Performance Expectations

Reviewing & Appraising Performance

Supporting Performance

Figure 1.1   Performance Management Cycle.   Source: D. Torrington and L. Hall, *Personnel Management:Human Resource Management in Action*, 1995, Prentice Hall.

Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) maintain performance management cannot be conducted effectively without the appropriate cyclical system in place. Otherwise performance management becomes an ad hoc, mechanistic, paper exercise culminating in a single annual performance appraisal which is of no real value or benefit to an organisation. That said, the central pillar of any performance management system is generally the performance appraisal. The argument for a formal appraisal is that it provides a focal point for the consideration of key performance, motivational and development issues. It is a means for considering the future in the light of an understanding of the past by reflecting on the key issues of personal development and performance improvement (Armstrong 2006).

According to Gold (2007, p.4) the rationale and benefits of contemporary performance management for organisations are:

'the clarification of performance expectations and standards, the allocation of rewards, the identification of learning and development needs, career management and counselling, discipline, the planning of remedial actions, the setting of goals and targets, improved motivation, morale and communication and cyclical/continuous monitoring and review of performance'.

Moullin (2003) asserts the ultimate asset of any organisation is its people, thus organisations should develop employee competencies in a manner aligned with the organisations business goals and needs This can be achieved through performance management systems, which act as both behavioural change tool and enabler of improved organisational performance by being instrumental in driving change Performance management systems are an important tool for communicating priorities and for providing feedback on employee's contributions to achieving organisational goals that can stimulate employees to meet new expectations (Cheng, Dainty & Moore 2007) In addition to this, performance management systems help managers assess the extent to which they are recruiting and selecting the most appropriate employees That is, performance appraisal results should reflect the true picture of who is performing well and who is not, and they should indicate the areas of specific strengths and weaknesses for each person being rated (De Nisi & Griffin 2008)

2 2   Implementing performance management system's in the public sector

2 2 1   Strategy planning and linkage

Public sector managers need to link strategic planning and management more closely with ongoing performance management processes as a response to continued pressure for accountability as well as their own commitments to managing for results Better linkage between the overall business strategy and the performance management system will ensure strategising is aimed at defining and strengthening overall performance while performance monitoring will help to inform   strategy or even enrich strategic planning by helping organisations to 'find strategy' along the way (Poister 2010, Moynihan 2008, Mintzberg 1994) Performance management systems that are not tied to or at least consistent with the overall business strategy run the risk of maintaining and/or improving immediate performance on previously established criteria for success but increasingly miss the mark on

where the firm should be heading in the long term. As public sector organsiations shift from simply measuring performance to incorporating the information into systematic efforts to actually improve performance, performance management systems will be more effective in the long term if they are aligned with strategy and driven by strategic management processes (Poister 2010).

Radnor and McGuire (2004) argue that a lot of work still needs to be done in order for performance management to become a success within the public sector. Some of this work includes considering the organisational structure of the public sector so that better links can be made between the various elements of the performance management system, the human resource strategy and the overall business strategy. There is a fundamental need to understand the current environmental context and balance of the various organisational facets in order to allow for effective change and development to occur.

According to Radnor & McGuire (2004), the facets that need to be considered and fully integrated in order for performance management to be successful in the public sector are strategy, people, processes and systems. A strategy must be devised that allows a clear purpose to be generated in which the performance of individuals can be assessed. Current skills, experiences and motivations of people within the organisation must be understood so that the performance management system can ensure these are developed and motivated in the appropriate way and linked to current business needs. The processes and systems within the organisation must be clearly defined and the relationship between the various sub-processses understood so that meaningful feedback, targets and performance are measured and rewarded. A good understanding of organisational processes enables the development of coherent performance measures and targets that support the processes and vice versa. The last facet 'system' relates to the performance management system itself. It needs to be realistic, measure and reinforce the right targets to ensure the appropriate behaviour. In other words,

there needs to be an understanding between, the structure and behaviour that a performance management system drives (Radnor & McGuire 2004)

By understanding the various facets outlined above and ensuring there is some balance between them in relation to performance management within the public sector, it should be possible for it not to be always about developing targets, setting measures and measuring processes but rather about developing indicators, actual performance management and understanding the outcomes of performance management to support real 'organisational' needs in the current environmental context (Radnor & McGuire 2004) De Waal (2002) adds in order for synergy to become reality, the importance of leadership buy-in cannot be understated Without it, performance management tends to be fragmented and piecemeal

2 2 2 The process of implementation

Appropriately designed and effectively implemented performance management systems will significantly improve organisational performance Performance management systems that suffer from rigid top-down control, whose measures are poorly aligned to strategy, and which encourage gaming, are failures (Marchington & Wilkinson 2008) Organisations should design their own performance management systems to reflect their own priorities and drivers Any system should incorporate a feedback loop, so that performance measures monitor the implementation of strategy and, crucially, feed back into strategy formulation Only then can management ensure the organisation has the capability to deliver strategic plans, to connect up goals with outcomes (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants 2010)

According to Cheng, et al (2007), insufficient attention is paid to the implementation of performance management systems Consequently, barriers to implementation may arise such as a lack of senior management support and commitment, employee resistance to change and an absence of appropriate learning interventions to facilitate implementation These barriers

can be eradicated with support and leadership from senior management, strategic planning of the implementation process and appropriate training and education for all staff on the new system Senior management support is crucial for any change initiative until it is fully established and accepted Thus, management should ensure they have the time and resources to properly implement the system, and be realistic about the wider impact of change demands placed on their staff (Cheng et al 2007)

Implemented properly, an effective, dynamic and fully integrated performance management system will reduce the wastage of time and talent and ensure a better utilisation of human resources within the organisation Furthermore, a good performance management system will enable employees to plan their work effectively, ensuring they undertake productive activities while utilising their competencies in the best possible manner to contribute to organisational goals It should also allow employees to learn and develop their capabilities on an on-going basis The performance management system can be a great tool if designed comprehensively and implemented with the commitment of senior management The focus must be on objectivity and fairness and there can be no place for politics and manipulation (Rao 2008)

Chang (2006, p 765) states that the key to a successful performance management system is

> 'Ensuring congruence between all operational elements of the system, encompassing employees at all levels from all departments, requiring total management commitment to teamwork and fully integrated information systems'

Fryer, Anthony and Ogden (2009), identify the key features of a successful performance management system as being the alignment of the performance management system with existing systems and strategies of the organisation, leadership commitment and buy in, the emergence of a performance culture where the performance management system is seen as a way of identifying and improving good performance and not as a burden used to chastise poor performers Other key features include comprehensive stakeholder involvement,

continuous monitoring, feedback, dissemination and learning from results and finally the continuous evaluation of the performance management system (Fryer et al 2009)

According to Verbeeten (2008), a performance management system needs to be devised with the people that work with them in order to create 'ownership' Such an interaction reduces the chances that performance measures are not understood, that they are inconsistent or unfair, or that targets are set at unattainable levels Bitici, Mentibil, Nudurupati, Garengo & Turner (2006) add that it is essential that the performance management system doesn't remain static but matures as management styles and the organisational culture evolves

Harper and Vilkinas (2005) argue that a performance management system should be monitored and systematically evaluated from the moment it is implemented and subsequently on an on-going basis The real impact of a performance management system may take considerable time to be realised Decision makers in organisations need to know at a micro level what impact the performance management system has had on the attitudes and performance of staff At a macro level, they need to know the impact of the performance management system on organisational performance Fryer et al (2009) add, each organisation needs to appraise their own performance management system, identifying the problem areas and selecting the solution(s) that best fits

2 2 3   Goals and objectives

Hoque (2008) states the importance of aligning the performance management system with strategic goals of the organisation However, research has shown that goals and objectives are ambiguous in most public sector organisations, which has had adverse effects on performance (Verbeeten 2008, Vakkuri & Meklin 2006) Latham, Borgogm and Petitta's (2008) research reinforces this view claiming the specificity of a goal for evaluating and motivating private sector employees is easier to define and quantify than it is for employees in the public sector

Consequently, time must be taken to carefully define goals at the outset If done properly, Locke and Latham (2002) maintain there is a positive relationship between clear and measurable goals and good performance

Goal setting theory (Locke & Latham 1990) states that people with specific and challenging goals perform better than those with ambiguous goals Furthermore, high goals and high self-efficacy tends to energise people to search for ways to accomplish these goals A study by Wright (2004) showed that public sector organisations concerned with employee motivation should set specific tasks that challenge their employees as high goals focuses employees' attention and efforts towards the attainment of specific outcomes The findings of Verbeeten's (2008) study suggest that the definition of clear and measurable goals is positively associated with quantity performance (efficiency, output) and quality performance (accuracy, innovation, morale) Latham (2008) suggests a way to overcome the problem of vague goals by shifting the emphasis in performance management from an outcome goal to either learning or behavioural goals A behavioural job analysis is required here to define vague concepts such as managerial effectiveness, work quality, productivity and customer service best practice

2 2 4 Performance measurement and indicators

A crucial element of performance management is performance measurement monitoring that shows where change is required that should produce an improved performance going forward (Lemieux-Charles, McGuire, Champagne, Barnsley, Cole & Sicotee 2003) Performance measurement is about past results while performance management extrapolates the data from these results to provide information about the future (Lebas 1995)

Hernandez (2002) maintains that if performance measurement is viewed as a data collection and reporting exercise, it will serve little purpose to an organisation It is through analysis of

the data that performance measurement becomes a tool for continuous improvement First, one must decide what to measure and how to measure it, then the data garnered from the measures must be interpreted effectively and the results communicated objectively (Peng, Pike & Roos, 2007) Halachmi (2011) suggests that prudent application of performance measurement schemes by learned practitioners can help to reduce any possible dysfunctional consequences Tarr (2004) adds, the performance measurement system needs to be purposeful, unified, integrated and fluid ensuring all action(s) taking place under the auspices of performance management is thus informed

Moriarty and Kennedy (2002) maintain because public sector organisations operate without market competition, performance measurement is often used as a substitute for market pressures However, it is generally considered to be more challenging to develop effective measures due to the multi-faceted nature of the public sector with its multiple difficult to measure goals, lack of profit maximising focus, little potential for income generation and, generally speaking, no bottom line against which performance can ultimately be measured Consequently, it was once, and until recently, considered impossible to measure performance in the public sector (Boland & Fowler 2000) As it stands, because of their ease of use and the heavy costs associated with the development and implementation of more sophisticated performance measures, inexact, incomplete and highly subjective measures are still widely used in public sector performance management systems for inducing work and responsible management (Heinrich and Marschke 2010)

Zineldin (2006) maintains devising good indicators of quality is not an easy task To be of value performance indicators should help manager's measure things that matter most and not just those that are easy to measure Relevant insights into the performance of individuals must be extracted from performance indicators, otherwise analysis will offer little performance insight Gould-Williams (2003) shows that using too many targets can have an

adverse effect on performance while Claytonsmith (2003) highlights the importance of ensuring indicators reflect the needs of organisations own specific objectives Consequently, care should be taken to ensure the appropriate number of relevant indicators is used for performance measurement

Too often, performance indicators are focussed on short-term results, which can stifle innovation and prevent investment in long-term objectives (Allio 2006) Wilcox and Bourne (2003) argue that the data needs to be analysed in a predictive and dynamic way rather than just painting a historical picture MacPherson (2001) recommends the use of both lagging (historic) and leading (predictive) indicators in the performance management system, which gives a more realistic perspective on what has happened and what is expected going forward

Finally, performance indicators should not remain static, they should evolve with the performance management system and organisation Verbeeten's (2008) research has shown that gaming becomes more prevalent when performance indicators and measures do not change over time Combining soft indicators with quantitative indicators can provide safeguards but the best way to prevent deviant behaviour is to reconfigure indicators and measures at regular intervals and discard those that are liable to gaming and other forms of deviant behaviour over time (Heinrich and Marschke 2010)

2 2 5   Incentives and motivation

According to Bonner and Sprinkle (2002), individuals tend to have preferences for increases in wealth and leisure as well as the pursuit of self-realisation (Maslow 1943) Agency theory claims that individuals tend to shirk on tasks unless they contribute to their overall well-being, therefore, incentives play a critical role in motivation and the control of performance because individuals have utility for improvement in their overall well-being (Verbeeten 2008) Furthermore, research has shown that the majority of those in organisations believe

that their work merits reward, and if the reward is not forthcoming, they will become disenchanted (Purcell, Hutchinson & Cotton 2007)

However, the public sector has characteristics that make the design of incentive schemes a complex task, namely multiple stakeholders and the fact that performance dimensions can be hard to measure (Pollitt 2006) Wright (2001) emphasises the value of intrinsic reward, claiming public sector employees are more likely to be motivated when they see their work contributes to the attainment of organisational goals, especially if those goals are perceived to be altruistic This is because people who choose to work in the public sector often tend to do so in order to help others or society in general (Crewson 1997)

Radnor and McGuire (2004) maintain the pursuit of good performance should be reinforced through an incentive plan as employees require personal goals and objectives to work towards, however because public sector organisations have an aversion to offering financial incentives, there tends to be resistance to any kind of incentive plan Consequently, performance management is less effective as there is little to motivate employees to improve their performance, therefore, managers must become proficient at uncovering what intrinsic values to a job are most meaningful to employees and how the job can be enriched to improve employee satisfaction (Brown 2004)

Heinrich and Marschke (2010) add, a more effective performance incentive scheme can be developed for the public sector if care is taken to properly understand what motivates employees and to assign or reallocate tasks across staff accordingly Assigning work so that one group of workers perform only measureable tasks and placing the other group of intrinsically motivated workers in positions where performance is difficult to measure should exploit the motivating power of incentives for some workers and attenuate the moral hazard costs from the lack of incentives for the others The usefulness of this strategy is contingent

upon an ability to identify intrinsically motivated workers and to facilitate a structural or functional separation of work tasks, which may be more or less feasible in certain public sector settings (Heinrich and Marschke 2010)

2 2 6 Problems with performance appraisal, assessment and rating

According to Grint (1993), 'rarely in the history of business has a management tool like performance appraisal promised so much and delivered so little' The last CIPD performance management survey (2005) showed 37% of supervisors thought performance appraisal was partly effective or ineffective, and 59% of subordinates felt it was partly effective or ineffective, with problems relating to fairness, transparency, bureaucracy and time issues (Marchington & Wilkinson 2008) Besides it being almost universally disliked, there are certainly many problems with performance appraisal and it gives rise to a considerable bureaucratic burden for supervisors, particularly as spans of control grow These drawbacks ask serious questions of performance appraisal and whether it is effective at all (Marchington & Wilkinson 2008) Critics of the appraisal process argue that it is expensive, causes conflict, and despite its rhetoric contributes little to the strategic management of an organisation (Redman 2006, Delaney 2009)

Distortions in validity

Grint's (1993) classic work describes a variety of 'distortions' that may occur in assessment and rating The 'halo effect' occurs when the appraiser notes desirable traits and allows these to spread to all other attributes The 'horns effect' is the reverse, where a single negative aspect dominates the appraisal meeting The 'crony effect' is caused by the closeness of the personal relationship between the appraisers and appraised The 'doppelganger effect' is when the rating reflects the similarity between the appraisers and appraised The 'veblen effect' results in central tendencies where all appraised get C grades irrespective of their

quality of efforts The 'recency effect' is where only the events that happened recently are remembered and commented on 'Confirmation bias' is where the appraiser looks deliberately for information confirming their preconceived evaluation of the employee Finally, the 'impression effect' is where employees use effective impression management to hoodwink the appraiser into believing their performance is better than it actually is (Delaney 2009)

Conflicts of purpose

Problems surrounding assessment and rating are endemic and the development of objective rating systems has proved elusive especially when attempting measurement of behaviour and personality traits For example, when assessing 'flexibility' or 'leadership', objective measurement is near impossible and attempts to do so has led to legal challenges in the US and UK (Lee, Havighurst & Rassel 2004) Personal idiosyncrasies may feature also – supervisors may manipulate ratings for their own ends by downgrading graduates to 'show them that they don't know everything' or deliberately give high ratings in order to get rid of weak performers (Redman 2006) Boxall and Purcell (2008) suggest that some supervisors may act politically rather than rationally, they may display dysfunctional and personality syndromes such as the 'powerholic' or be intimidated and jealous of high fliers (Delaney 2009)

Redman (2006) states most supervisors are simply not good at conducting performance appraisal Lawler (1994) puts weight to this by maintaining appraisal and rating are 'unnatural acts' for supervisors, a result of which is that if they are not properly trained in the process and follow up, performance appraisal will be done poorly Poor follow up is a common occurrence and leads to indifference towards performance appraisal If the employee believes appraisals are simply put away in the filing cabinet, it will be difficult to motivate

appraisers to do a good job and it will be even more difficult to motivate the appraised to work towards improvement (De Nisi & Griffin 2008, Delaney 2009)

2 2 7 Training

Public sector organisations can use a performance management system to learn and improve individual performance The data garnered from measuring performance can indicate areas where individuals excel and areas where improvements are necessary (Verbeeten 2008) Goal setting theory comes back into play here as a coach's role is to successfully get employees to use feedback to set and pursue specific high goals they must see what behaviours and actions must stop, start or continue in order to achieve objectives and increase self-efficacy (Latham 2008) Appropriate measures and facilities should be made available to employees in the public sector to ensure they have the requisite training to help them achieve these goals

De Waal (2002) maintains those involved in the performance management system, in particular, HR and line managers need to be trained to understand the purpose and impact of performance management They should also be involved in creating and managing the performance management system As a result, the performance management system becomes something that creates improvement rather than just a blaming tool Brown (2004) adds that public sector managers have to become better coaches and be proficient at diagnosing the root causes of performance issues so that improvements can be made

Finally, Kuvaas (2007) research concludes that even though employees perceive most HR practices to be developmental, this may not necessarily translate into higher work performance In fact, results from Kuvaas (2007) research suggest that without a high quality employee-organisation relationship, developmental HR practices may actually reduce work peformance Conversely, a high quality employee-organisation relationship will allow for the development of a learning culture that should help improve organisational performance

2 3   Performance management in the public sector

Empirical large scale-evidence on the impact of various performance management practices in the public sector is limited (Van Helden 2005) Nevertheless, in the next section some of the key findings from the research that has been conducted to date on performance management in the public sector will be reviewed

2 3 1   Introduction

Despite considerable discussion and debate surrounding the importance of creating a modern and efficient public sector, the evidence suggests employers are still struggling with what is widely accepted as one of the fundamental components of improving organisational performance performance management (Brown 2004) Performance management originated in the private sector and was later applied to the public sector to challenge outdated work practices, offer efficiency, value for money and ensure greater service quality (Bach 1998, Ferner & Hyman 1992) However, after nearly thirty years in the public sector, there are still major problems with performance management initiatives Consequently, the expected improvements in performance, quality of service and accountability have yet to be fully realised (Fryer et al 2009) The question still remains as to whether performance management is applicable in the public sector and does it actually improve performance there? In his comprehensive study of performance management reforms in the public sector, Moynihan (2008) asks how important are performance management reforms to the actual management of the public sector? He concludes, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that we are betting the future of public sector governance on performance information So, while there appears to be a demand for performance management initiatives throughout the public sector, it seems the current systems in operation are either inadequate or poorly operated and require reevaluation

2 3 2   Problems with performance management in the public sector

Despite all the research, performance management has yet to become the public sector success story that had been predicted In many cases, performance management initiatives in the public sector are still rooted in outdated scientific management traditions or what is commonly known as 'Neo-Taylorism' (Burchill & Casey 1996) The characteristics of public sector organizations can result in unintended side effects for performance management practices These side effects include additional bureaucracy, tunnel vision, measure fixation, a lack of innovation and a reduction of system and process responsibility (Vakkuri & Meklin 2006, De Bruijn 2002)

Research by Rainey (2006) and Heinrich (2007) suggests that public sector performance management applications have to date met with limited success, primarily due to inadequate performance evaluation methods, underfunding of data management systems and the lack of rewards/incentives for good performance Radnor and McGuire (2004), Hatry (2002) and Poister (2010) add, within the public sector, performance management is about performance measurement not management Actual performance management, which is actively utilising performance information to strengthen policies and programs, improve performance, and maximise the benefits of public services, still appears to seriously lag behind performance measurement activity Furthermore, systems are diagnostic rather than interactive, targets are rarely considered allowing for little improvement in performance and there is a lack of ownership amongst senior staff that hampers the drive towards performance management If public sector organisations are to truly embrace performance management in an interactive way, develop a coherent and objective set of performance measures and consider tools such as the balanced scorecard then they need to embrace them on a behavioural level rather than just at an operational level and this will require the full support and commitment of senior management (De Waal 2002) Poister (2010) further asserts, meaningful performance

management rather than simple performance measurement, needs to become the rule throughout the public sector, generating incremental but ongoing improvement in the performance of public programs

According to Fryer et al (2009), three main classes of problems have hampered the evolution of performance management in the public sector Firstly, technical problems relate to indicators and the data garnered from them, their collection, interpretation and analysis The choice of indicators can have a detrimental effect on performance management, therefore, careful consideration should be given to the types of indicators employed Secondly, system problems relate to the 'big picture' issues This includes difficulty in integrating the performance management system into existing systems, a lack of strategic focus that encourages short-term outlook, ambiguity of performance objectives, sub-optimisation and the overall cost of the performance management system (Gianakis 2002, Pollanen 2005) The third class of problems relate to the softer 'people' issues and their involvement in the performance management system Of notable concern here is gaming and deviant behavior Fryer et al (2009) maintain there a number of causes of deviant behavior, namely negative feedback loops, a mismatch between the organization type and the performance management system and a general lack of professionalism Radnor (2008) presents recent examples of gaming, ranging from poorly defined performance indicators to deliberately manipulating figures to achieve the right results Additionally, a lack of involvement from key stakeholders within the organization can render the performance management system a form filling exercise (Hoque 2008)

According to Worrall, Mather and Seifert (2010) major changes to the UK's public sector over the past two decades means public sector workers are experiencing greater exploitation and alienation as a result of the realities of coercive performance management regimes, strict control of workers activities, work intensification and as a consequence of being subjected to

the false rhetoric of 'new public management' In the 1990s, New Labour's modernization agenda involved the imposition of new public sector management, based on embedding the discipline of 'the market' into public services, consequently, public sector organisations were to import managerial processes and behaviour from the private sector (Boyne 2002) It was envisaged using performance management systems in tandem with the discipline of the market would improve public sector productivity and drive up efficiency by sharpening individual and collective accountability According to Caulkin (2008), however, instead of making providers accountable to citizens, the new regime made them accountable to politicians and the burgeoning bureaucracy of performance management

Worrall et al (2010), maintain managers have assumed a more authoritative and powerful role and an ever expanding number of performance indicators have been put in place that are characteristic of a Tayloristic approach to management despite a managerial rhetoric that appears to argue to the contrary In fact, some public sector organisations have become so obsessed with government imposed performance targets, safety standards have been pushed aside by other priorities, particularly waiting time targets The much heralded 'performance culture' continues to be experienced by public sector workers as a 'measurement culture' of targets, inspections and auditing regimes leading to increased proceduralisation and standardisation in the public sector workplace (Harris 2005) Central government determines what constitutes performing 'badly' and reinforces this with harsh sanctions Chang (2006 p 74) adds, central government's performance indicators are too often being construed as being 'like a big stick to beat you up'

Geddes (2001) maintains performance management systems that are exclusively linked to quantification and measurement from a myriad of performance indicators and more coercive forms of control are failing throughout the UK public sector Vickers (2006) and Worrall et al (2010) reinforce this view claiming persistent organisational change and an over reliance

on coercive performance management systems has led to reduced worker motivation, loyalty, morale and deteriorating terms and conditions but a much sharper sense of accountability due to the development of performance targets that are imposed rather than negotiated It remains to be seen whether a similar outcome will occur in the Irish public sector but with the Croke Park agreements emphasis on efficiency, value for money and accountability at all costs, it would be wise to take heed of the lessons being learned from the UK's public sector and false promise of 'new public management'

Chapter 3 – Research Aims and Objectives

The fundamental objective of this dissertation is to establish the effectiveness of the PMDS in managing the performance of Clerical staff within the Department. There are a number of further objectives that fall out of the main objective, which are called sub-objectives. These sub-objectives are grouped into categories that will provide a general framework for the research strategies further on. They include

1 Planning and Linkage

➤ Is the data generated by the PMDS effectively used to match the skills and experiences of staff with current business needs

➤ Is the PMDS effectively integrated with other human resource processes and the overall business strategy for the Department

2 Leadership and Implementation

➤ Do senior management give the necessary support, leadership and commitment to the PMDS

➤ Is the PMDS implemented in the unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines

3 Process Efficiency

➤ Is the PMDS process straightforward and clear and does it ensure greater clarity around how performance is measured

➤ Does the current competency framework substantially add value to the PMDS process

4 Performance and Incentives

➢ Does the PMDS help implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff and does it effectively address individual underperformance

➢ Does the PMDS offer scope for reward, promotion, recognition, motivation and other incentives

5 Assessment and Rating

➢ Does the PMDS arrive at an accurate and objective assessment of performance for each employee

➢ Does the performance assessment and rating system motivate staff to improve upon their performance

➢ Is the current performance assessment and rating system effectively aligned with reward and discipline

6 Training and Development

➢ Under the PMDS, is there a fair balance between assessment and staff development

➢ Does the PMDS ensure training is carefully targeted on areas that will improve staff performance

➢ Does the PMDS help to instil a learning culture within the Department

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

4 1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy for the dissertation is oriented towards that of the Pragmatist Pragmatism argues that the most important determinant when thinking about which research philosophy one should adopt is the research question itself A pragmatist's perspective is preferred, as it proved practical and useful to work with variations in ontology and epistemology One approach is more appropriate than the other at answering particular questions and integrating different research perspectives will help to interpret the data better Tashakkori & Teddie (1998) maintain at some point, the knower and the known must be interactive with each other, while at others, the researcher must stand apart from what he is researching The research philosophy for the dissertation is part of a continuum, rather than pulling in opposite directions This mirrors a theme right throughout the dissertation, that using mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative is possible and sometimes highly appropriate in a given study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007)

4 1 1 Ontology

The ontological stance for this dissertation is initially that of the objectivist The reasoning for this is that the PMDS should have an objective reality that is separate from the supervisors that inhabit that reality This view emphasises the structural aspects of a performance management system and assumes that it works very similarly in all organisations aspects of the structure in which the performance management system operates may differ but the essence of the function is much the same for all organisations

The initial objectivist stance is blended with a subjectivist viewpoint as part of the pragmatist's research continuum This follows the interpretivist philosophy that it is necessary to explore the subjective meanings motivating the actions of social actors in order

for the researcher to fully understand these actions (Saunders, et al 2007) For the dissertation, a subjectivist stance allowed for further exploration into understanding why supervisors feel the way they do about various aspects of the PMDS, which complemented the initial objectivist stance, therefore garnering richer results for the findings

4 1 2   Epistemology

From an epistemological perspective, the stance of the 'resources researcher' is adopted initially focusing on the collection and analysis of 'facts' Consequently, the initial research for the dissertation primarily reflects the philosophy of positivism whereby the researcher has adopted the stance of the natural scientist Existing theory will be used to develop hypotheses that should help identify the appropriate research strategy to collect data required for the findings and discussion The hypotheses is tested and confirmed, in whole or part, or refuted, leading to further development of theory, which can again be tested as part of subsequent research The resources researcher is concerned with facts only, rather than impressions and should be external to the research process and data collection methods so as the research is conducted in a largely value free, scientific manner producing law like generalisations as findings The assumption is that the researcher is independent of and neither affects nor is affected by the subject of the research Positivistic research implies a highly structured methodology to facilitate replication The emphasis will be on quantifiable observations that lead themselves to statistical analysis (Saunders, et al 2007)

As part of the pragmatist's research continuum and in an effort to complement the positivistic-quantitative element of the study, the stance of the 'feelings researcher' is also adopted to further explore and understand why supervisors feel the way they do about various features of the PMDS This approach is nearer to that of the interpretivist philosophy Saunders et al (2007) maintain an interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in business

and management research because business situations are complex and unique. Interpretivists argue that rich insights into a complex world containing various phenomena can be lost if such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of law like generalisations (Saunders, et al. 2007). Fundamental to the interpretivist philosophy is that the researcher adopts a more involved and empathic stance. Much the opposite to the objective and detached positivistic philosophy, the interpretivist actively engages and interacts with their subjects in order to make sense of their world and the phenomena with which they interact (Saunders, et al. 2007).

4.2   Research paradigm

A regulatory perspective towards the PMDS is adopted for the dissertation as it is less ground-breaking compared with the radical change approach. This study did not be look to reinvent the wheel in terms of performance management within the civil service, therefore, the regulatory dimension was more appropriate as it seeks to work within and hopefully improve the existing framework of the way things are done (Saunders, et al. 2007). Working within the regulatory dimension, an integrated research paradigm will be employed.

The research paradigm is primarily functionalist as this paradigm is popular within business and management research due to its objectivist nature. Using the functionalist paradigm, a rational explanation was sought as to why there might be problems with the PMDS and tries to develop a set of recommendations to improve the system within the current structure. Burrell and Morgan (1982) state this paradigm is usually problem oriented in that it seeks practical solutions to practical problems.

Continuing with a pragmatist theme, the functionalist stance is complemented by expanding the research into the interpretive paradigm. As with the functionalist, the interpretive paradigm falls within the regulatory dimension but this time a more subjectivist stance is

adopted An interpretive approach is desired as it allows for a better understanding of the fundamental meanings attached to the PMDS and why the research subjects feel the way they do about various aspects of the system Far from emphasising rationality, the principal concern here is to discover irrationalities and to further understand and explain what exactly is going on, why and what can be done to improve things (Burrell & Morgan 1982)

4 3   Research approach

A combined research approach was employed for the dissertation Saunders, et al (2007) maintain not only is it perfectly possible to combine deduction and induction within the same piece of research, but also often advantageous to do so The study begins using a deductive approach by developing a theory and hypotheses and then designing a research strategy to test the hypotheses Subsequently, an inductive approach is employed to collect data that builds theory which often uncovers original insight into the phenomena under investigation as a result of the data analysis Continuing with the pragmatist trend, a mixed method approach was preferred, as the inductive aspect of the study complemented the initial deductive approach by uncovering more in depth and profound insights into the PMDS

The research approach is deductive initially as there is a wealth of literature currently available on performance management in the public sector from which to define a theoretical framework and hypotheses Deduction is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences and staff of the Department will be familiar with it and are therefore likely to put their faith in the conclusions emanating from this approach This deductive approach involves the collection of quantitative data, consequently, concepts are operationalised and clearly defined in order to enable facts to be measured quantitatively A highly structured methodology is used to facilitate replication and ensure reliability and validity A relatively

large sample size was chosen to ensure conclusions are generalised, a key characteristic of a deductive approach (Gill & Johnson 2002)

The deductive aspect of the research is followed up with an inductive approach Here, theory follows data rather than vice versa as with deduction Induction emphasises a closer understanding of the research context, which is important given the current economic climate in Ireland and how it is affecting the civil service and PMDS in particular Induction is a more flexible approach that allows the researcher to become part of the research process This enabled the researcher to gam a better understanding of the meanings and personal experiences that supervisors ascribe to the PMDS An inductive approach also enabled the researcher to work with qualitative data in an endeavour to develop fresh insight into the PMDS a less highly structured approach revealed alternative explanations about various characteristics of the PMDS not previously uncovered during the deductive stage of the research This data helped to garner more comprehensive results for the findings, discussion and conclusion stages of the research A smaller sample size is used here, as there is less concern with the need to generalise compared with a deductive approach (Saunders, et al 2007)

4 4   Research strategies

The role of the practitioner researcher is adopted in that the study was conducted within the organisation where the researcher is currently employed (Saunders, et al 2007) There are two key strategies to the primary research of this dissertation

1 The supervisor's questionnaire

2 The supervisor's interview

As highlighted earlier, both strategies form part of a continuum of sequential mixed methods demonstrating the axiological values held by the researcher throughout various stages of the research process (Saunders, et al. 2007). As part of the pragmatist philosophy, it was necessary to balance the initial objectivist-positivistic approach with a more subjectivist-interpretivistic stance in an effort to garner richer results and findings.

Method triangulation was used for the dissertation using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A questionnaire enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data in order to discover supervisor's attitudes pertaining to various aspects of the PMDS. The quantitative aspect of the research is complemented by a more qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to further explore and understand these attitudes towards the PMDS. Using a combination of research strategies frequently leads to a more thorough understanding of the research problem under investigation (White 2000).

4.4.1 Questionnaires

There are many ways to conduct research but for this study, a positivistic and deductive stance was adopted initially as it is largely value free and unbiased (Saunders, et al. 2007). Questionnaires are a popular and common strategy in business and management research and are most frequently used to answer the who, what, where, how much and how many questions (Saunders, et al. 2007). Consequently, a questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate and direct method of data collection in this instance, as it is objective, economical and detached, allowing for a more explanatory and descriptive study.

The questionnaire was adapted from previous research, notably from that of the Mercer (2004) evaluation on the PMDS (see chapter 1). The Mercer questionnaire is an instrument that has previously been validated, tested and used; ergo it is a 'reliable' measurement of the

phenomena that will be investigated Nevertheless, the questionnaire is tweaked to take into account the current context of this study and the various drivers that apply to the present system and the role they play in the performance management of Clerical staff Clerical Officers were chosen as the focus for the dissertation as this grade represents the largest proportion of staff within the Department

The questionnaire contains six sections (containing six questions each) targeting various aspects of the current PMDS Each section in the questionnaire mirrors the same six categories set out in the research aims and objectives in chapter 3 The questionnaire uses formal, passive questions to collect factual information concerning supervisor's perspectives towards the PMDS, which is then used in the findings chapter to determine its credibility as a useful instrument for improving performance in the Department

The questionnaire was designed using closed rating questions, seeking a positive or negative response towards specific aspects of the PMDS Closed questions allow for statistical analysis, which avoids perceptions, values or personal bias by the respondents or the researcher, which makes for a more defined and intangible study A neutral option for each question was intentionally avoided, as it tends to limit representativeness, which subsequently damages findings A comment box was included in the final section of the questionnaire in case any respondent wanted to make further remarks about the PMDS that may fall outside of the questionnaire structure (Saunders, et al 2007)

The questionnaire was Internet mediated in that it was designed using the online survey design tool 'Surveymonkey com' An e-mail was sent to the respondents containing a web link which directed them to the pre-designed questionnaire Survey monkey was used primarily because it is user friendly, highly effective and saves time Before administering the

questionnaire, permission was obtained from the Principle Officers of the Personnel and I.T. unit in order to circulate the questionnaire to supervisors throughout the Department.

4.4.2 Rationale for questionnaires

A quantitative approach was preferred using a questionnaire as the primary data collection method in order to maximise objectivity and limit bias. Implementing measures to achieve such objectivity increases confidence that the outcomes and findings from the research accurately reflect the reality of the situation being studied. The questionnaire is extremely beneficial for obtaining defined attitude and opinion that is easily quantifiable. Given time constraints, a questionnaire appeared to be a logical and economical choice due to its reliability, consistency and ability to produce results quickly (Saunders, et al. 2007).

4.4.3 Supervisor questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed to target supervisory staff (Staff Officer and Executive Officer grades only), who are primarily responsible for carrying out core elements of the PMDS with Clerical staff throughout the year and are therefore, best positioned to make judgements on the effectiveness of the system. This was done in order to obtain a better understanding of the supervisor's attitude towards the PMDS using a quantitative and highly structured format. Complete coverage of the target population was not possible due to the wide location, time constraints and limited resources. Given such constraints seventy supervisory staff were randomly selected, which constituted approximately 25% of the total Executive and Staff Officers within the Department. A 25% sample is deemed appropriate, as it is broadly representative of the target population. Initial contact was made with supervisory staff by way of an invitational e-mail in order to ascertain interest and participation in the questionnaire. This invitation was used to develop trust by stating the reasons for the study

and ensuring the confidentiality of the respondents insofar that he/she would not be identified for ethical purposes Once agreed, an e-mail was sent to the participants containing a web link to the questionnaire (See appendix II for questionnaire invitation and questions template)

4 4 4   Interviews

It was necessary to further explore and understand the reasons for the decisions the participants had made in the questionnaires Consequently, the quantitative element of the study was complemented with a more inductive and qualitative approach An interpretivist epistemology was adopted, which allowed for a better understanding of the meanings that respondents ascribe to the PMDS (Saunders, et al 2007) A semi-structured interview was deemed the most pertinent research strategy here and was designed and conducted on supervisory staff The interviews were non-standardised consisting of open-ended questions covering various aspects of the PMDS This allowed for a more exploratory study, which uncovered fresh insight into the research area The interviews were respondent in nature in that the researcher directed the interviews allowing the interviewees to respond to the questions (Saunders, et al 2007)

The interviews were deliberately conducted after the questionnaire had been closed and all responses received and interpreted As a result, the interview questions were structured in such a way as to focus on aspects of the questionnaire that delivered negative or heavily divided responses allowing the researcher to further explore and elaborate upon why supervisors felt the way they did about specific features of the PMDS

4 4 5   Rationale for interviews

The rationale for choosing a semi-structured interview was to complement the quantitative element of the study, giving the flexibility required to further explore the participant's responses to the research topic A qualitative approach ensured a deeper awareness of why supervisors felt the way they did about the PMDS The supervisory responses to questions that are directly related to the six core themes outlined in chapter threes research aims and objectives provided this deeper insight Consequently, more meaningful conclusions were made in the final chapter of the dissertation The interview samples were small primarily due to the inductive approach and time constraints but the contributors were those whose opinions and perceptions were deemed most valuable to the research

4 4 6   Supervisor interviews

Four supervisory staff were chosen for interview purposes Before the interviews commenced, it was explained to all participants the purpose of the research study and what was hoped to be achieved by it Instructions were given to each interviewee on how the interview was to be conducted (face to face) and addressed any issues of confidentiality and trust for ethical purposes The interviews were conducted with each participant in a private setting at their place of employment Privacy was assured so that conversation could not be overheard and proceedings could go uninterrupted (See appendix III for interview invitation and the questions template)

4 5   Pilot questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted among a small number of staff to test run the questionnaire A draft of the questionnaire was provided to the staff and its content was discussed with staff

members in relation to the relevance of the topics and usefulness for the dissertation In addition, there was a discussion of the format of the questions in terms of their clarity and precision Adjustments were made to the questionnaire based on feedback from the staff before the questionnaire was sent out live

4.6   Analysis and collation of data

For the questionnaire, the main method of data analysis is based on univariate statistics collated using the support of 'Surveymonkey com' Survey monkey was acquired for analysis purposes due to its highly effective and user friendly nature and also because of the time constraints for the dissertation In order to accomplish meaningful findings for the dissertation, descriptive analysis is applied using a combination of numerical and graphical methods (column charts and pie charts) to summarise and illustrate the collected data Graphical methods are better for recognising patterns in the data, whereas numerical methods were useful at giving well defined measures of some properties Cross tabulation was carried out on the data once again using the aid of 'Surveymonkey com' to isolate patterns and trends in the questionnaire responses The control variable (control question in bold) is relayed first in the findings chapter and then cross tabulated with a number of key variables (questions) highlighting interesting patterns in the research data

The interview findings were summarised from the interview transcriptions taken from a voice recorder and detail the most fundamental themes and pertinent insights taken from each question posed to the respondents The interview findings were used to supplement and augment the questionnaire findings they elaborate upon the findings of the questionnaire allowing for a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of supervisors attitudes towards the PMDS in the Department

Chapter 5 – Research Findings

5 1   Introduction – questionnaire and interview Findings

Of the 70 questionnaires issued via e-mail, 57 responded 56 questionnaires were fully completed and 1 partially completed in the given time frame of two weeks This gives a response rate of 81 5% and a fully completed questionnaire response rate of 80% Please note specific questionnaire responses were chosen for graphical presentation because of their significance to the overall research (See appendix IV for collation results of the questionnaire, response rate verification and respondent comments)

The interviews were conducted over a two week period in late May/early June 2012 The four interviewees are highly experienced supervisors with service ranging between 21 and 34 years and all have a thorough understanding of the PMDS (See appendix V for USB key containing the four interviews)

5 2   Planning and linkage findings

This section looked at the overall strategy and business planning within the Department, their relationship with the PMDS and how well the PMDS is linked with other HR processes

5 2 1   Questionnaire findings

Question 1 - There are effective mechanisms in the Department for consulting staff on the strategy and business planning process –

> Strongly agree   3 5% (2)

> **Agree**   **54 4% (31)**

> Disagree   31 6% (18)

> Strongly disagree   10 5% (6)

Question 2 - The business plan for my unit is used to define job roles and tasks –

- ➢ Strongly agree   14% (8)

- ➢ **Agree**   **73 7% (42)**

- ➢ Disagree   5 3% (3)

- ➢ Strongly disagree   7% (4)

Question 3 - The PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan –

- ➢ Strongly agree   7% (4)

- ➢ **Agree**   **64 9% (37)**

- ➢ Disagree   24 6% (14)

- ➢ Strongly disagree   3 5% (2)

Question 4 - The data generated by the PMDS about each employee is used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department such as rotation and promotion –

- ➢ Strongly agree   3 5% (2)

- ➢ Agree   21 1% (12)

- ➢ **Disagree**   **47 4% (27)**

- ➢ Strongly disagree   28 1% (16)

The data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs?
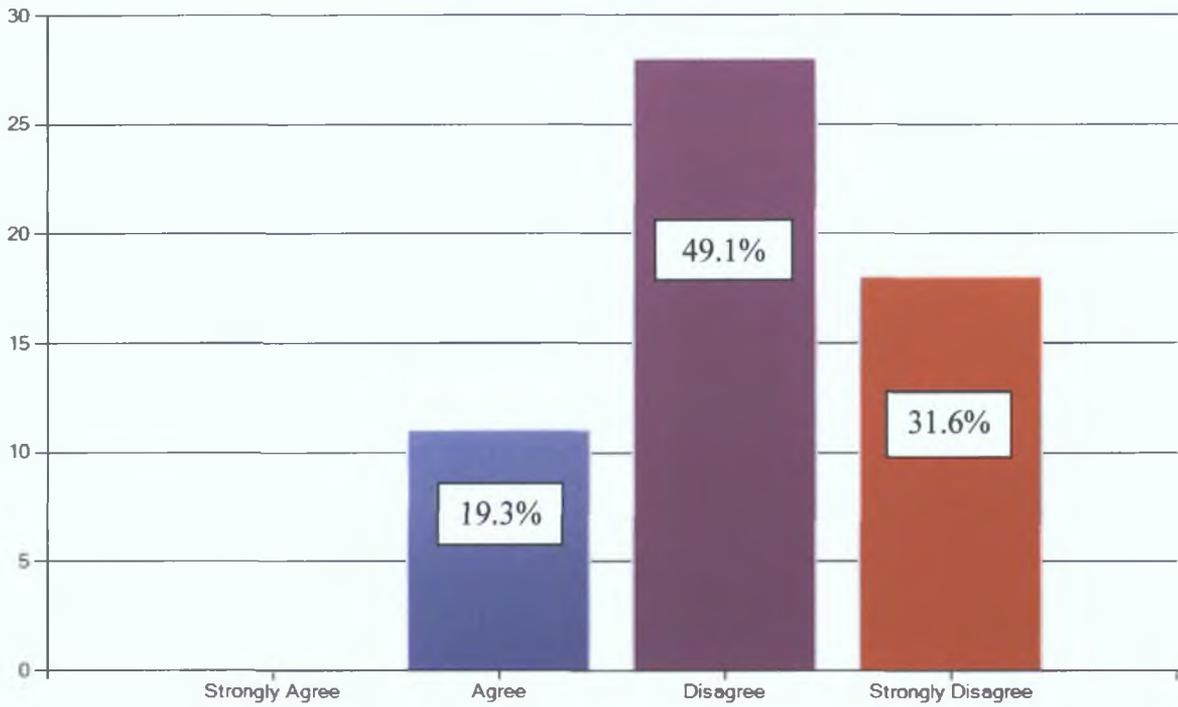
Figure 5.1 Question 5

The PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department?
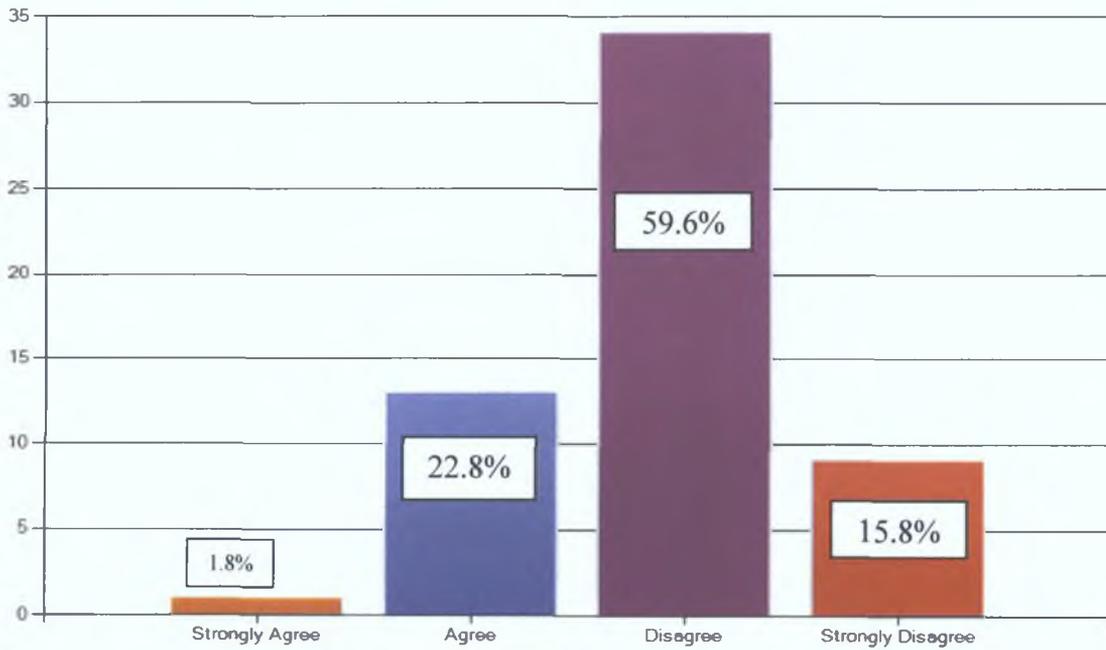
Figure 5.2 Question 6

5 2 2   Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 49 1% (28) of respondents who disagree that data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs (note 31.6% (18) also strongly disagree) 74 1% (20) also disagree that the data generated by the PMDS about each employee is effectively used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department, 74 1% (20) either disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS 74 1% (20) disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual underperformance and 85 2% (23) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future Surprisingly, 66 7% (18) either agree or strongly agree that the PMDS is implemented in their unit according to specified guidelines and 66 7% (18) also agree that the PMDS process is straightforward and clear

Of the 59 6% (34) of respondents who disagree that the PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department (note 15 8% (9) also strongly disagree) 96 9% (32) disagree or strongly disagree that data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs, 84 9% (28) disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance, 87 9% (29) disagree or strongly disagree that the current PMDS offers adequate scope for incentives to improve performance 96 9% (32) disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline and 90 9% (30) agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future, yet surprisingly, 64 7% (22) agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their units business plan

5 2 3 Key interview findings

Question 1 - Why do you think the PMDS is not effectively integrated with other human resource processes in the Department?

➢ Poor strategic planning and an ineffective human resource strategy for the Department

➢ A major disconnect between the personnel, training and development units and the various divisions/sections throughout the Department

➢ The PMDS was developed as a standalone management tool – a single assessment process that is performed in isolation - viewed by many as a box ticking exercise

➢ Few other effective HR processes available within the Department for the PMDS to be integrated with

Question 2 - What do you think are the reasons why the skills and experiences of staff are not matched up with current business needs?

➢ Business needs have changed dramatically due to current economic climate – forward planning has been replaced by short-termism – tackling HR problems in isolation and fire-fighting as opposed to looking at the overall strategic big picture

➢ Inadequate HR planning - distinct lack of workforce planning and future skills needs planning – no real strategic long term plan or focus on how to best use the human resources available to the Department

➢ Poor rotation policy – an unwillingness by the personnel unit to recognise staff with specific skills/qualifications/interests within the Department by housing them in business units of relevance to their unique skill sets where they can further hone them

5.3 Leadership and implementation findings

This section looked at the role of senior management for the PMDS and how effectively the current PMDS is implemented within the Department.

5.3.1 Questionnaire findings

Senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS?

50% (28)

14.3% (8)

32.1% (18)

3.6% (2)

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
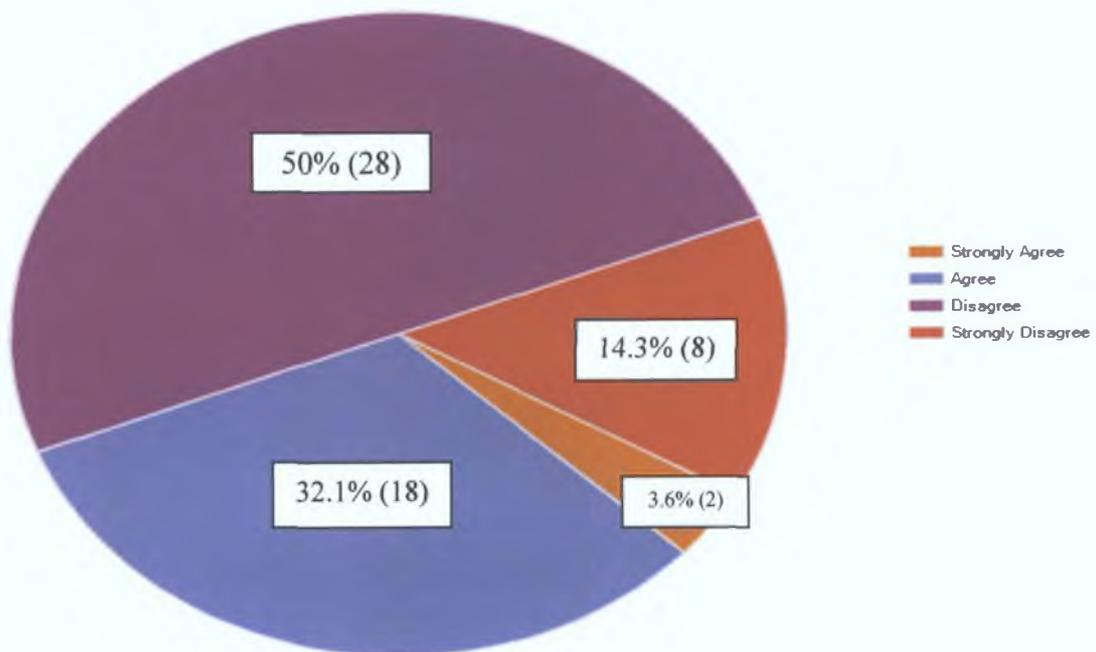
Figure 5.3 Question 7

Question 8 - Senior management take a lead role in ensuring each phase of the PMDS is carried out correctly –

- ➢ Strongly agree   1.8% (1)

- ➢ Agree   35.7% (20)

- ➢ **Disagree**   **48.2% (27)**

- ➢ Strongly disagree   14.3% (8)

Senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS?

57.1% (32)

16.1% (9)

25% (14)

1.8% (1)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
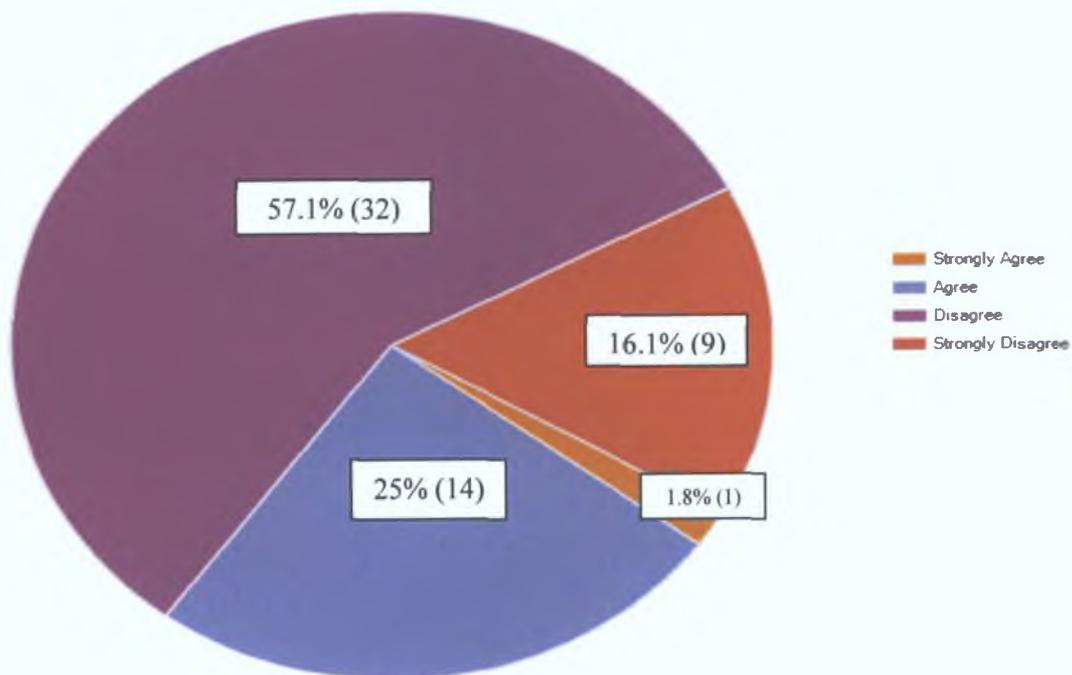
Figure 5.4   Question 9

Question 10 - The PMDS is implemented in my unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines -

- ➤ Strongly agree   3.6% (2)

- ➤ **Agree**   **62.5% (35)**

- ➤ Disagree   28.6% (16)

- ➤ Strongly disagree   5.4% (3)

Question 11 - Adequate time and resources are provided to staff to properly conduct the PMDS process –

- ➤ Strongly agree   5.4% (3)

- ➤ **Agree**   **50% (28)**

- ➤ Disagree   35.7% (20)

- ➤ Strongly disagree   8.9% (5)

Question 12 - I have the requisite skills required to conduct each phase of the PMDS effectively –

> Strongly agree   10 7% (6)

> **Agree**   **67.9% (38)**

> Disagree   21 4% (12)

> Strongly disagree   0%

5 3 2   Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 50% (28) of respondents who disagree that senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS (note 14 3% (8) also strongly disagree) 85 7% (24) also disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by PMDS is used to match the skills and experiences of staff to current business needs, 78 6% (22) disagree the PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department, 85 7% (24) disagree that senior management take a lead role in ensuring each phase of the PMDS is carried out correctly, 96 5% (27) disagree or strongly disagree that staff in general show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS, 82 1% (23) disagree that the PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff, 93% (26) disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance, 89 2% (25) disagree or strongly disagree that the current PMDS offers adequate scope for incentives to improve performance while 85 7% (24) also disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS helps instil a learning culture within the Department Surprisingly, 53 6% (15) of these respondents either agree or strongly agree that the PMDS is implemented in their unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines

Of the 62 5% (35) of respondents who agree that the PMDS is implemented in their unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines 71 4% (25) agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their units business plan, however 68 6% (24) either disagree strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS about each employee is effectively used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department while 74 3% (26) either disagree or strongly disagree that data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs 60% (21) disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS while 77 2% (27) disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual underperformance and 88 4% (31) disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline, yet surprisingly, 74 3% (26) agree that the PMDS process is straightforward and clear

5 3 3 Key interview findings

Question 3 – There appears to be a lack of leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS by senior management, why is this so?

> The PMDS should be about managing the Departments most important resource 'people' but the system is only as good as the managers implementing it – Presently, there is an institutional disbelief in the effectiveness of the PMDS from the top down

> Senior management don't buy into the PMDS as a mechanism to improve performance – they view it as a toothless paper exercise that imposes little/no reward or discipline

- ➤ Senior management operate within their own fiefdoms, often sticking exclusively to their own brief - they use the PMDS to meet their own ends resulting in a lack of consistency and transparency in the operation of the PMDS across the Department generating a widespread mistrust of the system.

b) Have senior management proactively sought to address and rectify problems/discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS?

- ➤ Senior management devolved the PMDS entirely to the personnel unit – believe they have enough of a workload without adding the PMDS – personnel unit should regularly monitor and evaluate the PMDS and address any flaws as part of its HR remit but this has not been the case.

- ➤ Little investigation/probing into why some sections produce an abundance of over/under inflated ratings for staff at the performance appraisal stage. Where investigations have taken place, there has been little follow up evaluation.

- ➤ Senior management appear unwilling to tackle tough challenges or make decisions on underperformance, especially where industrial relations issues arise - preference to avoid conflict – keep the status quo.

5.4   Process efficiency findings

This section looks at the PMDS process itself and how efficient it is.

5.4.1   Questionnaire findings

Question 13 - The PMDS process is straightforward and clear –

- ➤ Strongly agree   0%

- ➤ **Agree   60.7% (34)**

> Disagree   32 1% (18)

> Strongly disagree   7 1% (4)

Question 15 - The PMDS process has improved communication with staff –

> Strongly agree   3 6% (2)

> Agree   41 1% (23)

> **Disagree**   **42 9% (24)**

> Strongly disagree   12 5% (7)

Question 16 - The PMDS process ensures greater clarity about how performance is measured

> Strongly agree   1 8% (1)

> **Agree**   **50% (28)**

> Disagree   30 4% (17)

> Strongly disagree   17 9% (10)

Question 18 - The time and effort involved in the PMDS process is worthwhile for managing the staff of the unit –

> Strongly agree   7 1% (4)

> **Agree**   **44 6% (25)**

> Disagree   32 1% (18)

> Strongly disagree   16 1% (9)

Staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process?

Figure 5.5 Question 14

The current competency framework substantially adds value to the PMDS process?
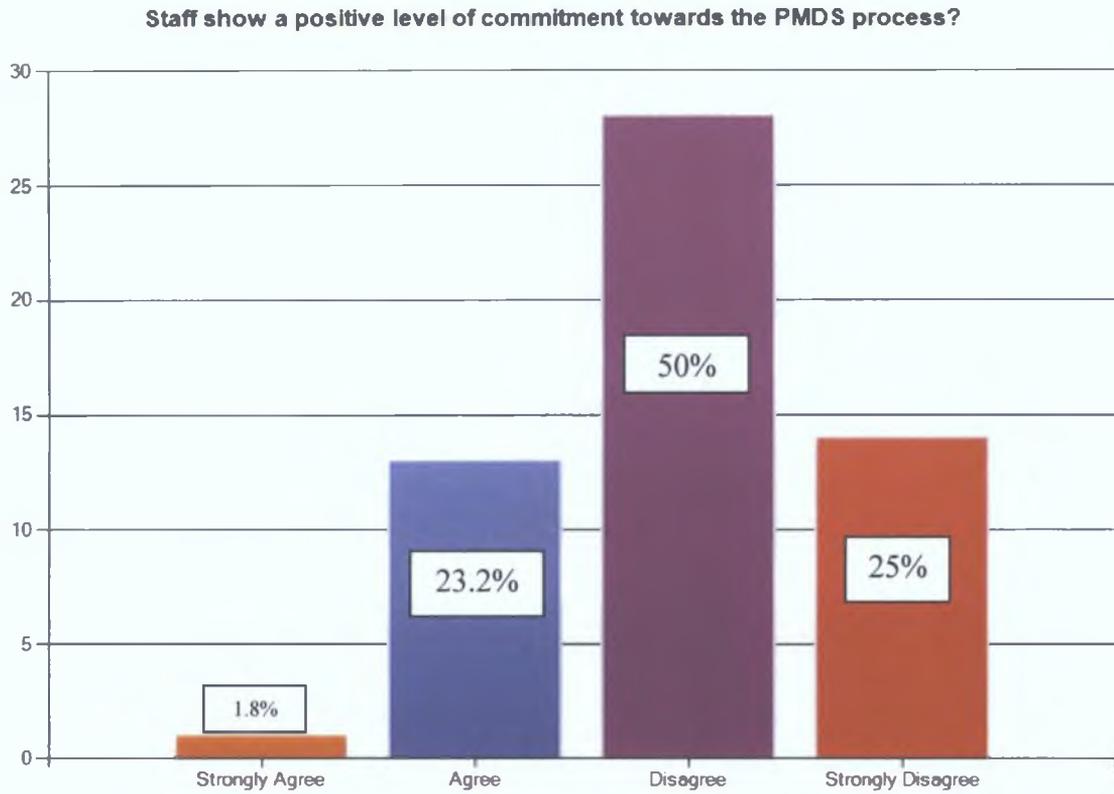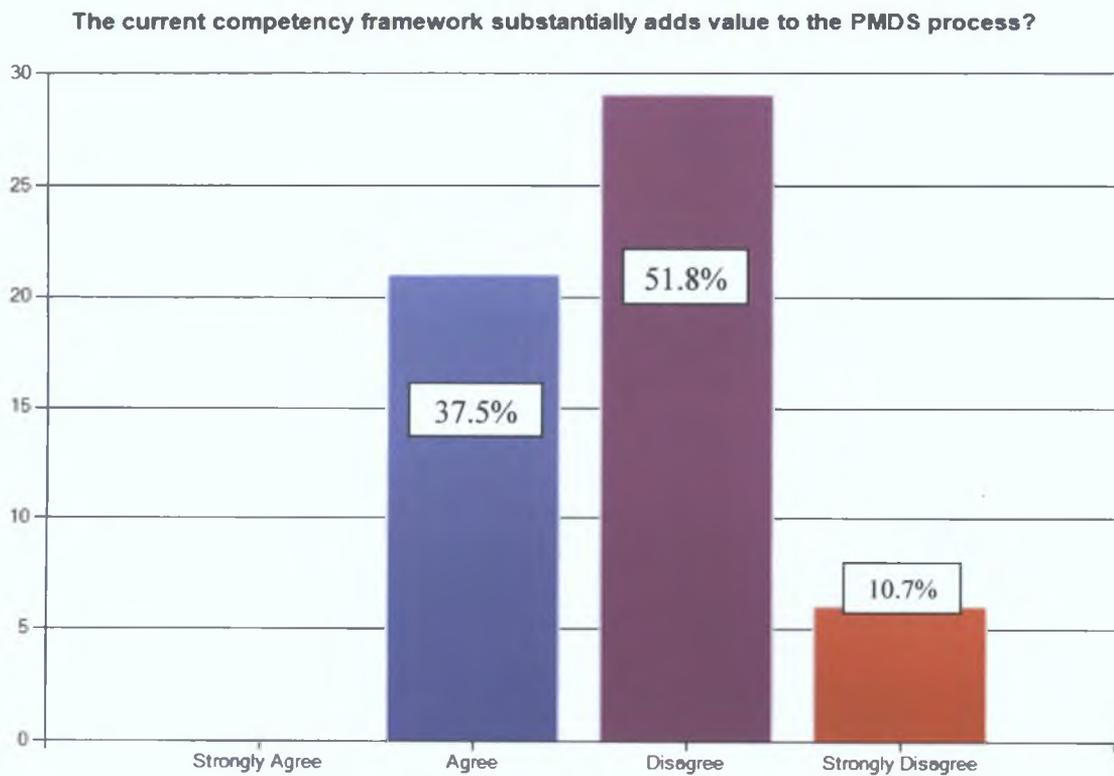
Figure 5.6 Question 17

5 4 2 Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 60 7% (34) of respondents who agree that the PMDS process is straightforward and clear 79 4% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experiences of staff to current business needs, 67 6% (23) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department, 70 6% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS 76 5% (26) agree that the PMDS is implemented in their unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines and 76 5% (26) agree that they have the requisite skills required to conduct each phase of the PMDS effectively while 67 6% (23) either agree or strongly agree that the time and effort involved in the PMDS process is worthwhile in terms of managing the staff of the unit However, 76 5% (26) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance while 85 3% (29) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline and 76 5% (26) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future

Of the 50% (28) of respondents who disagree that staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process (note 25% (14) also strongly disagree) 82 1% (23) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs, 78 6% (22) disagree that senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS, 78 6% (22) either disagree or strongly disagree that the Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff while 85 7% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current PMDS offers adequate scope for incentives to improve performance

89 3% (25) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance while 96 4% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline and 85 7% (24) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough emphasis on career development for the future

5 4 3   Key interview findings

Question 4 – There appears to be a lack of commitment towards the PMDS from staff in general, why is this?

> Negative media portrayal over the past 3-4 years

> Lack of commitment and buy in from senior management breeds apathy and negativity towards the PMDS from staff in general

> A lack of consistency from various managers in the operation of the PMDS affects how staff perceive it – staff aware of the cynical half hearted approach by some managers - they disengage because they see no real benefit to the PMDS – staff cannot put a case forward for their own development or progress themselves due to rigidity of the PMDS while some staff just see it as a potential stick to beat them with

b) Since its introduction, has the PMDS ever engaged staff?

> Following a positive rollout in 2000 and evaluation by Mercer in 2004, both management and staff have become progressively disenchanted with the PMDS as an effective tool to manage and improve individual performance – the current economic climate and poor media portrayal has accelerated this disenchantment - Increased apathy towards the PMDS means staff now views it as an added formality

Question 5 - What in your opinion are the main flaws of the PMDS process?

> System not integrated well with the overall business strategy and relevant HR processes such as planning, rotation or training and development

> The PMDS is rigid, bureaucratic and isolated – lacks fluidity and user friendliness – under pressure to assess individual staff over one year – should be an on-going fluid process rather one yearly appraisal that occurs in a vacuum with little follow up

> The PMDS lacks credibility - currently little/no reward for outstanding performance or real measures to address underperformance – consequently, why should staff be motivated to improve performance

> Rating and assessment lacks objectivity - inconsistent approaches to assessment and rating by managers – evidence of over/under inflation of ratings

> Insistence on recommended bell curve i e 60% of staff should get a 3 rating, means managers are under pressure to accommodate this requirement which may not always be a realistic reflection of staff performance

> System appears contradictory – lacks strategic focus on developing staff in their career paths which should be the fundamental focus of the PMDS

> Constrained by budgets, work and time pressures and availability of other resources

5 5 Performance and incentives findings

This section looks at the effect of the PMDS on individual performance and the incentives available to staff as a result of the PMDS

5 5 1 Questionnaire findings

Question 19 - The Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff –

> Strongly agree   0%

> Agree   26 8% (15)

> **Disagree**   **51 8% (29)**

> Strongly disagree   21 4% (12)

Question 20 - During the performance planning stage of the PMDS, staff are made clear about their role, the objectives and deliverables expected of them –

> Strongly agree   5 4% (3)

> **Agree**   **64 3% (36)**

> Disagree   21 4% (12)

> Strongly disagree   8 9% (5)

Question 21 – The PMDS enables managers to identify superior, good, average and poor performance -

> Strongly agree   1 8% (1)

> **Agree**   **55 4% (31)**

> Disagree   32 1% (18)

> Strongly disagree   10 7% (6)

Question 22 – The PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff –

> Strongly agree   1 8% (1)

> Agree   35 7% (20)

> **Disagree**   **51 8% (29)**

> Strongly disagree   10 7% (6)

The PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance?
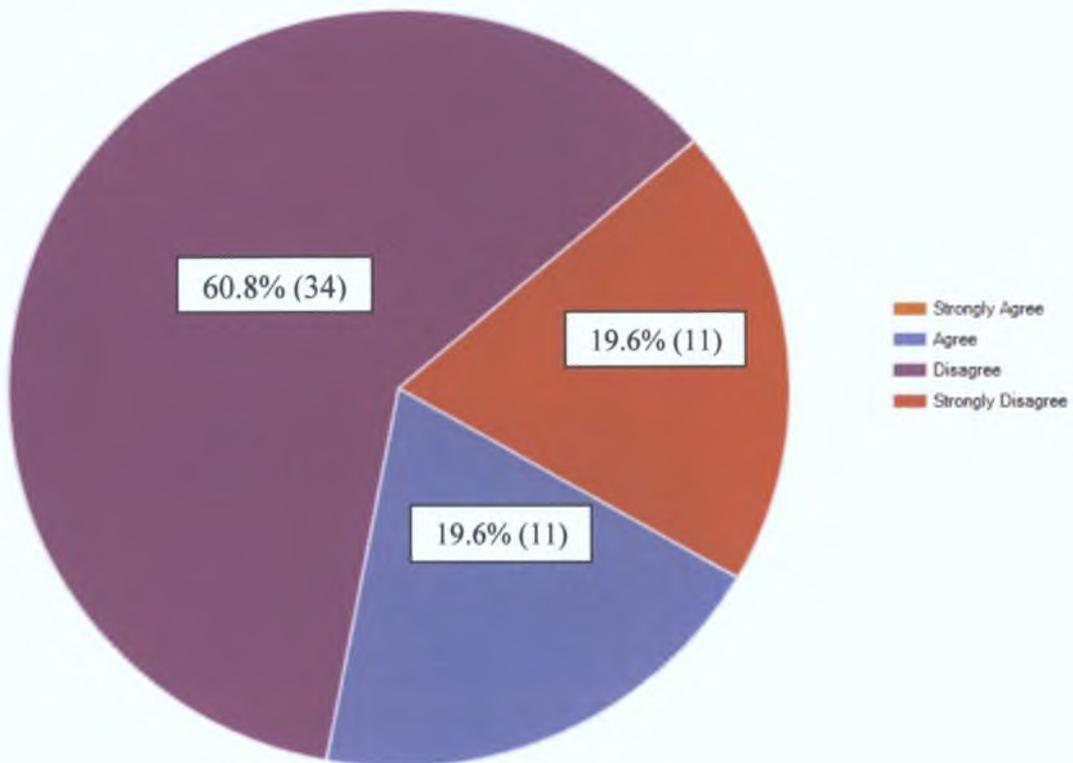
Figure 5.7 Question 23

The current PMDS offers adequate scope for recognition, reward, promotion, increments and other incentives?
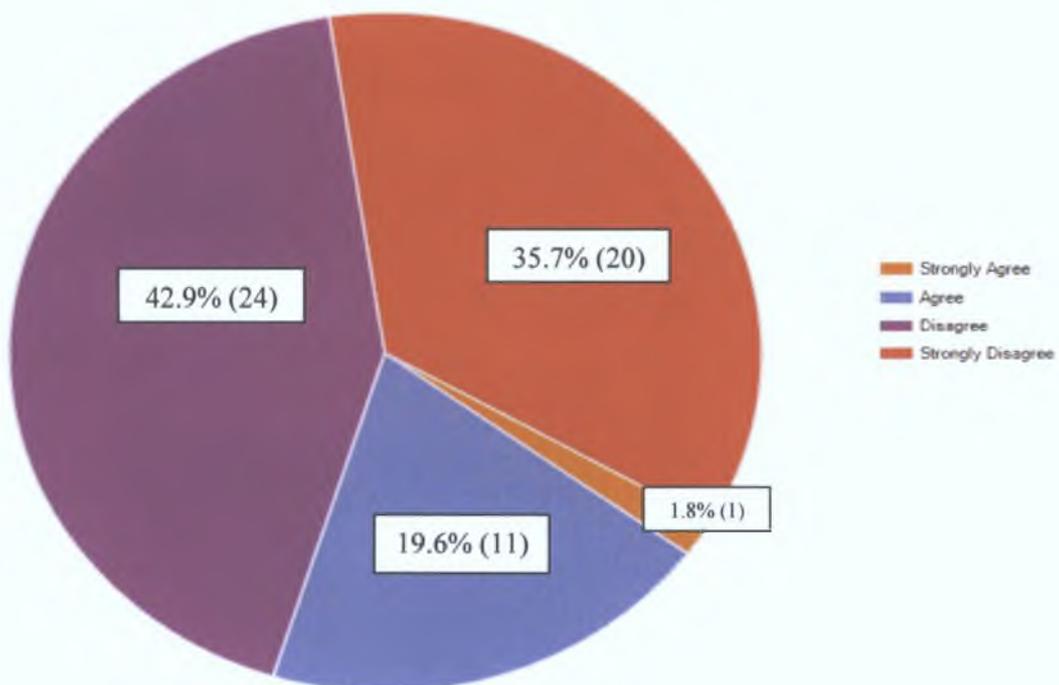
Figure 5.8 Question 24

5 5 2 Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 52% (29) of respondents who disagree that the PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff 69% (20) either agree of strongly agree that PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan 86 2% (25) either disagree or strongly disagree that data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs while 79 3% (23) disagree that senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS, 86 2% (25) either disagree or strongly disagree that staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process while 79 3% (23) either disagree or strongly disagree that the Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff 86 2% (25) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current PMDS offers adequate scope for incentives to improve performance, 93% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance and 82 7% (24) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future

Of the 60 7% (34) of respondents who disagree the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance (note. 19.6% (11) also strongly disagree) 67 6% (23) agree the PMDS helps managers deliver on their unit's business plan, 79 5% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs yet 67 5% (23) either agree or strongly agree that the PMDS is implemented in their unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines but 73 5% (25) either disagree or strongly disagree that the Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff 85 3% (29) either disagree or strongly disagree that the performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to

improve upon their performance, 94% (32) either disagree or strongly disagree that the performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline and 82 4% (28) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough emphasis on career development for the future

5.5 3 Key interview findings

Question 6 – In your opinion, why does the PMDS not effectively address individual underperformance?

- ➤ Up to management to deal with underperformance – not entirely the preserve of the PMDS – but as a performance management tool it is considerably constrained by the lack of effective measures/procedures in place to deal with underperformance

- ➤ Negative portrayal - ambiguity surrounds the PMDS and its role – should not be seen as a disciplinary tool but rather a proactive mechanism for staff development

- ➤ Where the PMDS can be valuable as a developmental tool, it falls down due to ineffective strategy linkage with the training unit thus hampering staff development and performance improvement

- ➤ General reluctance to tackle underperformers – preference to avoid conflict and possible industrial relations issues that may arise – perception that there is a lack of support from management and the personnel unit, so matters often handled locally

Question 7 – The current PMDS offers little scope for incentives to improve performance, why is this?

- ➤ No real incentives at clerical level – largely due to current climate – little rotation, pay cuts, a moratorium on promotion - extra workload due to dwindling resources – coupled with negative publicity through the media – contributing to poor morale – affecting motivation of staff – little to work towards - frustration abounds

> In the past, the only real reward at clerical level was promotion - no longer available

> Croke park agreements emphasis on increased accountability - more stringent monitoring of performance with stricter compliance policies for the delivery of objectives going forward likely to be all stick and no carrot for the foreseeable future

5 6   Assessment and rating findings

This section looks at the effectiveness of the current PMDS assessment and rating system

5.6 1   Questionnaire findings

Question 25 - Individual performance is assessed against objectives previously agreed with staff –

> Strongly agree   7 1% (4)

> **Agree**   **69 6% (39)**

> Disagree   19 6% (11)

> Strongly disagree   3 6% (2)

Question 26 – The PMDS offers an accurate and objective assessment of individual performance –

> Strongly agree   1 8% (1)

> Agree   42 9% (24)

> **Disagree**   **46 4% (26)**

> Strongly disagree   8 9% (5)

Question 27 - The current PMDS rating system is robust enough to support effective assessment of performance –

- ➢ Strongly agree   1.8% (1)

- ➢ Agree   30.4% (17)

- ➢ **Disagree**   **46.4% (26)**

- ➢ Strongly disagree   21.4% (12)

Question 28 - The current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance –

- ➢ Strongly agree   0%

- ➢ Agree   16.1% (9)

- ➢ **Disagree**   **62.5% (35)**

- ➢ Strongly disagree   21.4% (12)

The current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline?

Figure 5.9   Question 29

There is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough emphasis on career development for the future?
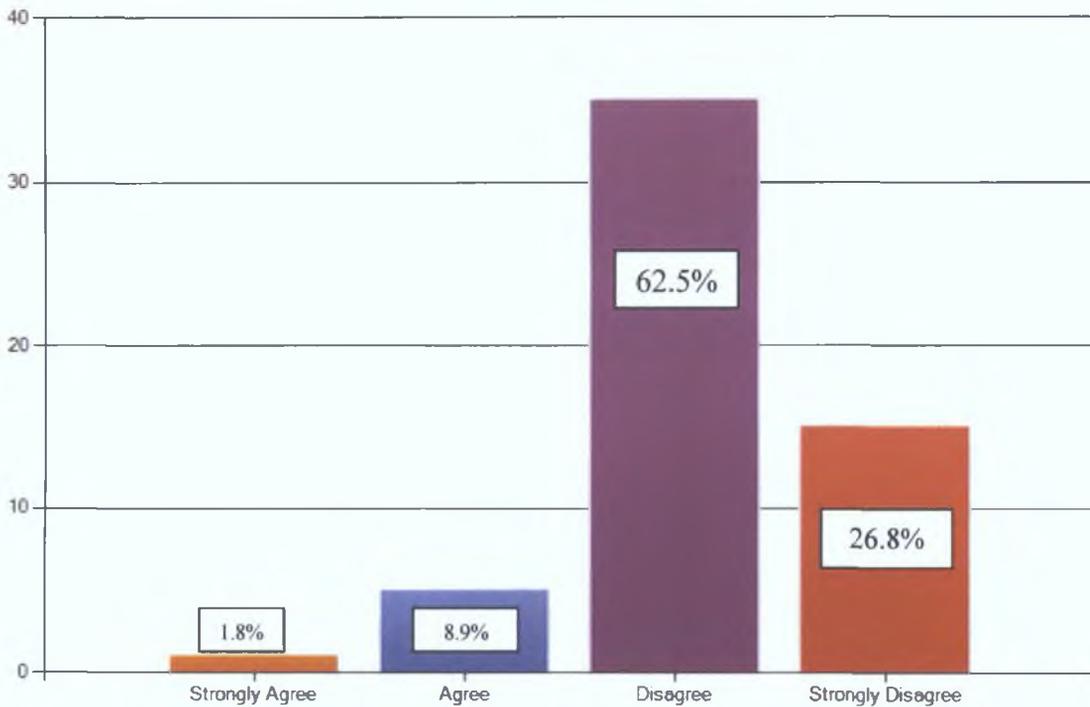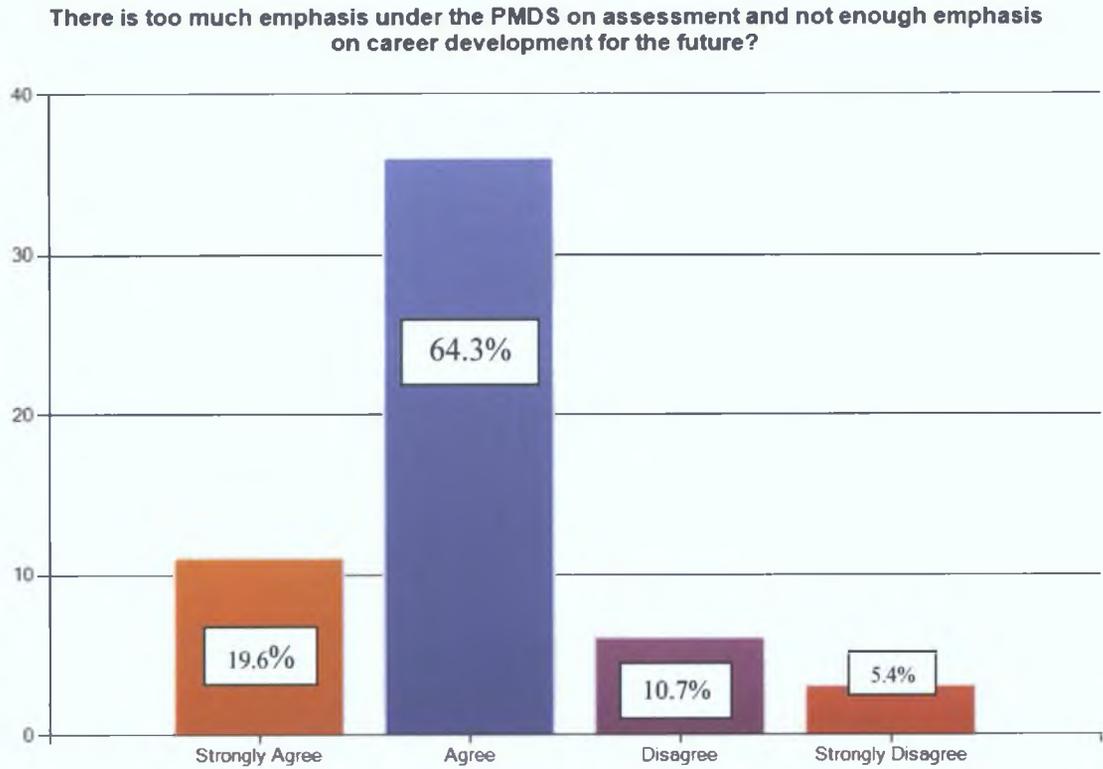
Figure 5.10   Question 30

5.6.2   Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 62.5% (35) of respondents who disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance (note: 21.4% (12) also strongly disagree): 80% (28) either agree or strongly agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan, 80% (28) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs, 80% (28) also either disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS, 77.1% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process, 77.1% (27) also either disagree or strongly disagree that the Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff. 91.4% (32) either disagree or strongly disagree that the current performance

assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline and 82 8% (29) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future

Of the 62 5% (35) of respondents who disagree that the current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline (note 26 8% (15) also strongly disagree) Surprisingly, 80% (28) either agree or strongly agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan but 68 6% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department, 68 6% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS 80% (28) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance and 80% (28) also either disagree or strongly disagree that the current PMDS offers adequate scope for incentives

Of the 64 3% (36) of respondents who agree that there is too much emphasis under PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future (note 19 6% (11) also strongly agree) 77 8% (28) agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan, 77 8% (28) either disagree or strongly disagree that data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs and 75% (27) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department 80 6% (29) either disagree or strongly disagree that staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process, 72 2% (26) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance while 66 6% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS helps instil a learning culture within the Department

5 6 3   Key interview findings

Question 8 – The PMDS assessment and rating system does not appear to have a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance, why is this?

➢ No matter how hard you work, nothing happens – one gets a grade and it is filed away by the personnel unit – no incentive to get higher than a 2/3 rating, so why try harder

➢ No real penalty/reprimand for underperformance

➢ Unwillingness by managers to simply commend initiative and good performance

➢ Hard to get motivated when there is no real reward/incentives currently available to clerical staff unless one is naturally intrinsically motivated

➢ The leadership needed to motivate staff in these challenging times is lacking – up to managers to try to motivate staff intrinsically (in the absence of extrinsic motivators) but this is not happening

➢ Subjectivity, discretion and gaming by some managers in their assessment and rating of staff can have a negative effect on good performers leading to apathy or disillusionment with the PMDS further negatively impacting their motivation

Question 9 - The assessment and rating system does not appear to be effectively aligned with reward and discipline, what effect is this having on the PMDS?

➢ System lacks credibility as an instrument for improving staff performance because it is poorly linked to reward and discipline

➢ Poor alignment renders the PMDS a box ticking exercise – one gets their rating – assessment is then filed by personnel unit with little follow up or consequence for underperformers – managers too often powerless to engage – little centralised support

➢ Poorly aligned but important to remember it is not the private sector – reward and discipline need to be addressed in a different manner to the private sector – don't have same pressures or targets to meet, hence little justification for extrinsic reward at clerical level – reward needs to be more intrinsic

➢ With moratorium on promotion, – better acknowledgement of a job well done from managers, more work rotation for developmental purposes and increased autonomy in ones work would help to keep staff motivated – but this is in short supply

➢ Should be little room for discipline in the PMDS –a strong focus on discipline will be counterproductive – problematic staff should be dealt with in an isolated fashion – need to strike a balance between carrot and stick - the PMDS is best utilised as a developmental tool to help manage and improve staff performance

b) What effect is supervisor discretion and subjectivity having on the current rating system?

➢ Renders it futile – leads to over/under inflation in ratings - too often, ratings don't give a true representation of yearly performance

➢ Operated by managers with varying management styles – some managers use it to their own end leading to gaming and deviant behaviour – personal relationships with staff can also come into play – evidence of distortions in validity discussed by Grint (1993) with notable similarities to the recency, veblen and impression effects occurring at appraisal stage - all resulting in considerable inconsistency with ratings

➢ Suggested bell curve marking scheme heavily influences manager's ratings which therefore may not reflect reality

➢ Difficult to give a genuine representation of one's yearly performance with such a vague and restricted marking scheme

➢ Nearly impossible for the PMDS assessment and rating system to be entirely objective if it is being operated by people

5 7 Training and development findings

This section looks at how individual performance is improved by the various training and development activities highlighted during the PMDS and how well these activities are aligned with real business needs of the Department

5 7 1 Questionnaire findings

Question 31 – The PMDS ensures training activities are carefully aligned with current business needs

- ➤ Strongly agree   5 4% (3)

- ➤ **Agree**   **51 8% (29)**

- ➤ Disagree   35 7% (20)

- ➤ Strongly disagree   7 1% (4)

Question 32 - Staff receive adequate coaching, mentoring or on the job guidance they require to improve their performance –

- ➤ Strongly agree   1 8% (1)

- ➤ **Agree**   **48 2% (27)**

- ➤ Disagree   39 3% (22)

- ➤ Strongly disagree   10 7% (6)

Question 33 – The PMDS ensures training is carefully targeted on areas that will improve staff performance –

- ➤ Strongly agree   7 1% (4)

- ➤ Agree   41 1% (23)

- ➤ **Disagree**   **44 6% (25)**

- ➤ Strongly disagree   7 1% (4)

Question 34 - Training and development needs identified through the PMDS are acted upon and supported –

> ➢ Strongly agree   7.1% (4)

> ➢ **Agree**   **51.8% (29)**

> ➢ Disagree   30.4% (17)

> ➢ Strongly disagree   10.7% (6)

Training activities are carefully monitored and measured for their utility and quality?

Figure 5.11   Question 35

The PMDS helps inculcate a learning culture within the Department?
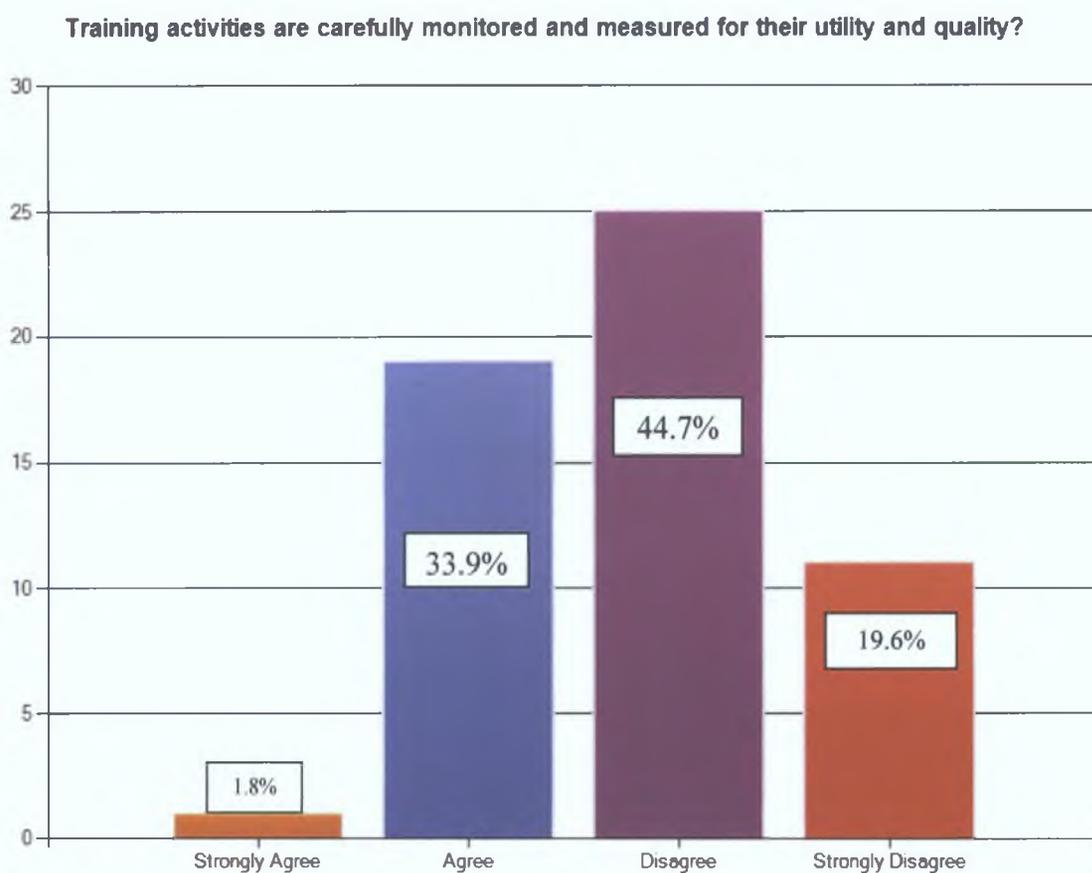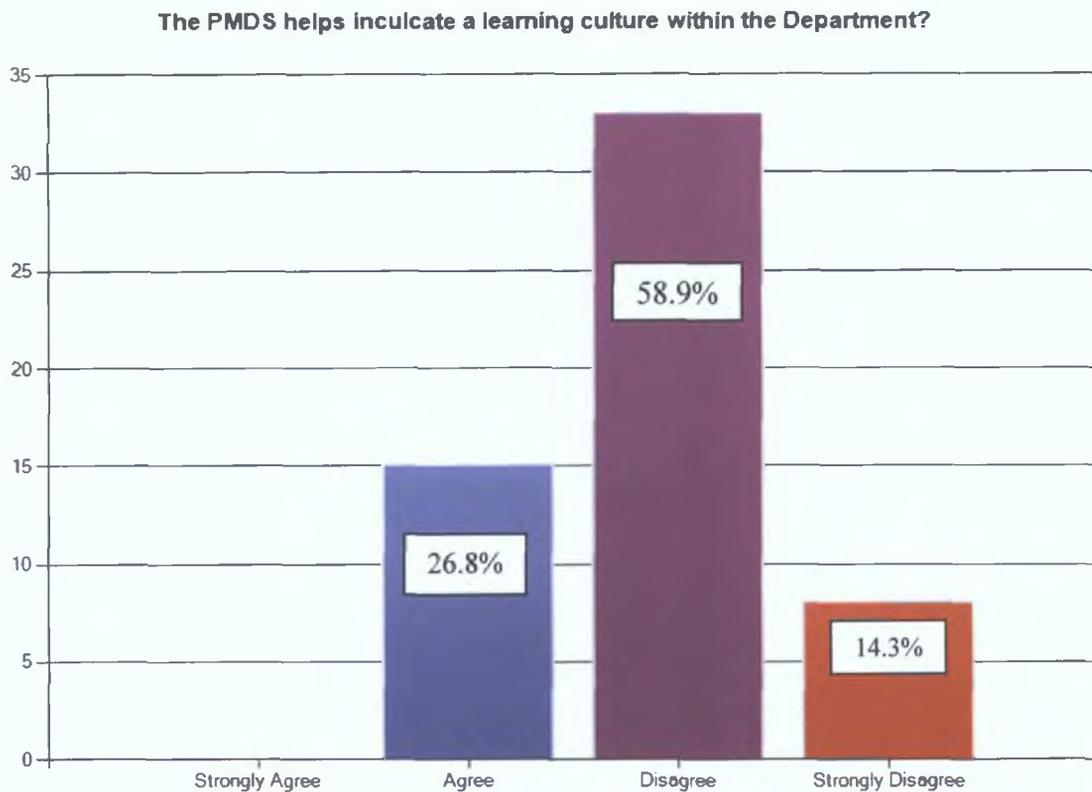
Figure 5.12   Question 36

5.7.2   Notable trends using cross tabulation

Of the 51.8% (29) of respondents who agree that the PMDS ensures training activities are carefully aligned with current business needs: 82.8% (24) also agree or strongly agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan but 72.4% (21) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS about each employee is used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department and 69% (20) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs. 72.4% (21) disagree and strongly disagree that the PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance while 86.2% (25) either agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future but 79.3% (23) agree or strongly agree that training and development needs identified through the PMDS are acted upon and supported.

Of the 58 9% (33) of respondents who disagree that the PMDS helps inculcate a learning culture within the Department (note 14 3% (8) also strongly disagree)

Surprisingly, 72 8% (24) agree that the PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan while 69 7% (23) also agree or strongly agree that during the performance planning stage of the PMDS, staff are made clear about their role, the objectives and deliverables expected of them but 87 9% (29) either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS about each employee is used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department, 81 8% either disagree or strongly disagree that the data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs and 81 8% (27) also disagree or strongly disagree that senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS while 72 8% (24) either disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff 84 9% (28) agree or strongly agree that there is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough on career development for the future while 66 6% (22) disagree or strongly disagree that the PMDS ensures training is carefully targeted on areas that will improve staff performance

5 7 3   Key interview findings

Question 10 – Under the PMDS, there appears to be too much emphasis on assessment of current performance and not enough emphasis on career development for ones future, why?

> From its inception, misguided portrayal of the PMDS by the personnel unit and senior management - on-going development should be the essence of the PMDS contributing to proficiency and performance improvement – in reality, the PMDS lacks emphasis on staff development e g training section of the performance appraisal left till end of the form, should be at the forefront

➤ Inadequate training on the PMDS for managers – poor understanding/interpretation of what the PMDS is looking to achieve – reflection needed on what exactly the PMDS is there for

➤ Staff development is not a top priority – primarily due to current economic climate budgetary, time and HR constraints

➤ Disconnect between training and development unit, personnel unit and various sections within the Department needs to be addressed – working against one another – better linkage needed between training and development and the PMDS with a far more open and positive emphasis on staff development going forward

b) Why is this hampering a learning culture from developing in the Department?

➤ Major advantage of the PMDS is training and development – potential to make the system invaluable – yet it is not highly prioritised – contradicts what system is about - inhibiting a learning culture from developing within the Department – further contributing to negative perception of the PMDS

➤ Mismatch of skills/experiences of staff with current business needs is impeding staff development

➤ Tunnel vision focus on tackling underperformance Albeit it poorly

➤ Short term outlook preferred over a long term strategic view - overemphasis on assessment means a lack of workforce/future skills needs planning and a strategy for up-skilling is hampering the developmental potential of the PMDS

Question 11 – Why might the training and development needs identified through the PMDS fail to improve staff performance?

➤ A poor liaise between personnel, training unit and various business units – better engagement required from all parties and improved strategy alignment between the PMDS and the training unit

➢ Not always possible to follow through on training due to work pressures in business units As a result, training doesn't always happen

➢ Training unit budget slashed due to current climate – many notable courses now unavailable Some available courses may lack utility

➢ Need for better access to courses available – requirement for training and development unit to sell the menu through more frequent advertisement of courses

➢ Where training has taken place – little follow up/refresher courses to see if it has been effective

(

Chapter 6 – Discussion

6 1   Discussion of findings – Introduction

The discussion that follows interprets and relates the research findings to the published

literature outlined in chapter 2 and the research aims and objectives set out in chapter 3 The

researcher has clarified and synthesised the results and presents the discussion in a logical

and integrated framework based on the overall research using the six core themes used

throughout this dissertation This should provide practical meaning to the Department

6 2   Planning and linkage

According to Duncan and Wiley (2004), performance management is a core business process

that ensures people and organisational needs are aligned and systems and culture support the

achievement of business objectives Consequently, linkage of the PMDS with the overall

Departmental strategy, HR strategy and processes, and staffing decisions such as rotation,

increments and promotion, will be essential to its vitality and credibility This will reduce

overlap between systems, minimise paper flows and ensure the PMDS process becomes a

central mechanism for making people management decisions (Duncan & Wiley 2004)

Although the majority of respondents surprisingly agreed that the PMDS helps managers to

deliver on their unit's business plan, they also highlighted significant flaws with the PMDS

when it comes to it helping to inform HR planning decisions, matching the skills and

experiences of staff to current business needs and integration of the system with other HR

processes in the Department that may paradoxically scupper the successful delivery of their

unit's business plan

Contrary to what Radnor and McGuire (2004) strongly recommend, the current skills,

experiences and motivations of the Departments staff do not appear to be well known or

understood by the personnel unit Consequently, the PMDS cannot be utilised to its full

potential by ensuring the skills and experiences of staff are developed and motivated in the appropriate way and effectively linked to real current business needs Inadequate HR planning caused by a distinct lack of succession/future skills needs planning and the absence of a sound rotation policy appears to be the main catalyst for this problem Poor strategic focus is encouraging a short term outlook fire fighting and tackling HR problems in isolation seems to take precedence over long term workforce planning and a primary focus on how best to utilise the human resources available to the Department

The findings clearly indicate the PMDS is poorly integrated with other HR processes Ineffective linkage of the PMDS with the HR strategy and overall Departmental business strategy is resulting in poor strategic long term planning for the PMDS This situation corroborates Poister's (2010) assertion that performance management systems which are not effectively linked to the overall business strategy run the risk of maintaining performance based on previously established criteria for success but miss the mark on where the firm should be heading in the long term Poister (2010) adds, performance management systems will only be effective in the long term if they are linked to the overall business strategy and driven by strategic management processes This does not appear to be the case with the PMDS, which seems to be operating as a standalone management tool performed largely in isolation, contrary to how the process should be conducted Poor integration of the PMDS with other HR processes and alignment with the HR and overall business strategy appears to be the result of a disconnect between the personnel and training units and the various business units throughout the Department which is rendering the PMDS a mere box ticking exercise thus stymieing the system from reaching its optimum potential and helping to improve staff performance as was intended

6 3   Leadership and implementation

Duncan and Wiley (2004) maintain senior management must remain a visible role model for the PMDS and must be seen to support the PMDS and be committed to its success in the short and long-terms This will involve ensuring that the PMDS remains a priority in the midst of dynamic change and has the resources needed to sustain it With restructuring and other changes (such as those espoused by the Croke Park agreement) occurring simultaneously with the PMDS, it is important that decisions regarding these and other change initiatives take account of and ensure the continual and timely implementation of the PMDS process Thus, senior management should ensure that the PMDS is monitored and maintained as Department wide changes are implemented

De Waal (2002), Radnor and McGuire (2004) emphasise the importance of leadership commitment and buy in for performance management systems Without senior management support, performance management tends to be fragmented and poorly integrated as part of an overall HR strategy hampering the system from becoming fully accepted and established in an organisation This appears to be the case for the PMDS as the findings clearly demonstrate a lack of leadership, support and commitment for the system from senior management which is having a knock on effect for all staff in the Department resulting in a general mistrust of the system There appears to be an institutional disbelief in the effectiveness of the PMDS from the top down as senior management don't buy into it as a valuable strategic mechanism for helping improve individual performance, rather they appear to view it as a toothless paper exercise that imposes little/no reward or discipline As a result, senior management are reluctant to play a visible leaders role in the acceptance and establishment of the PMDS, nor do they appear willing to help tackle some of the more testing challenges highlighted by the PMDS i e underperformance, which is clearly negatively impacting the credibility of the system throughout the Department Furthermore, senior management play no real part in

helping to address any discrepancies highlighted in the system The PMDS is devolved and entirely the remit of the personnel unit, who's lack of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the system in the past has meant that any flaws and/or discrepancies inherent within the system are too often overlooked or ignored

Cheng et al (2007) maintain, too often insufficient attention is paid to the implementation of performance management systems Consequently, many barriers to implementation may arise, most notably a lack of leadership and support from senior management Although the findings surprisingly indicate a positive response towards the PMDS being implemented in the respondents respective units according to specified guidelines and deadlines, the lack of senior management support and commitment highlighted earlier and myriad of further problems to be discussed below will surely negatively impact how well the PMDS is implemented overall Implementation problems also result as a consequence of insufficient time and resources being made available to properly implement and conduct the PMDS and inadequate training for managers and staff on the system

6 4   Process efficiency

The PMDS should be seen as a process for establishing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved, and for managing and developing people so as to increase the probability of achieving business objectives In this regard, it is essential that managers understand the importance and interdependence of the core PMDS process elements from the business planning stage to the role profile and reviews while demonstrating consistent practices across each stage of the process linking the evaluations and subsequent staff decisions with real business needs (Duncan & Wiley 2004)

While respondents feel the PMDS process itself is relatively straightforward and clear Further research findings conflictingly show that significant flaws attributed to the current system are hampering the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the PMDS, calling into

question the clarity and simplicity of the process Integration problems highlighted earlier means the system is isolated, often viewed as just a paper exercise leaving the process overly rigid, bureaucratic and lacking in user friendly characteristics, much the opposite of the natural, flexible and evolving performance management process espoused by Armstrong (2006) or fluid cyclical system discussed by Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) The PMDS can only be as good as the managers implementing it and the inconsistent approach to the process as evidenced by the research findings means subjectivity and discretion abounds when it is objectivity and consistency that is necessary to ensure the systems credibility This reinforces Heinrich and Marschke (2010) assertions that highly subjective performance measures are frequently used in public sector performance management systems thus preventing greater clarity about how performance is measured

According to the research findings, the competency framework doesn't add value to the PMDS, indicating the existing competency framework for the Department needs to be re-examined For it to add value, Moullin (2003) maintains organisations must develop competencies in a manner aligned with its business goals and needs Rao (2008) adds, a good performance management system ensures staff undertake productive activities while utilising their competencies in the best possible manner to contribute to organisational goals The research findings also highlight the paradoxical nature of the PMDS in that it lacks a strategic focus on developing staff in their career paths which should be a fundamental prerequisite of any performance management system As well as the developmental aspect, the teamwork, improved communication, shared vision, employee involvement, leadership and ownership necessary for a performance management system to flourish according to Radnor and McGuire (2004) appear to be in short supply for the PMDS Consequently, staff are becoming increasingly apathetic towards the system, viewing it as an added formality that is of little benefit All of the above are adding to the negative perception and general mistrust of

the system throughout the Department which is severely impacting the PMDS process and its effectiveness as a mechanism for improving individual performance This further demonstrates why respondents seem so divided on how worthwhile the PMDS process is in terms of managing the staff of their respective units

6 5 Performance and incentives

Unless managers manage performance, the PMDS becomes a paper exercise in which a large expense is incurred with little gain Consequently, a manager's ability to effectively communicate and plan performance with staff, identify superior and poor performance, address underperformance constructively via recommended progressive discipline (penal) and/or positive discipline (developmental) and recognise staff for a job well done is critical to embedding and progressing the performance management system (Gold 2007, Duncan & Wiley 2004) Some form of incentive scheme is also necessary and should be run in tandem with the PMDS rewarding outstanding performance

As a tool, the PMDS must help managers to manage performance However, with the exception of the initial performance planning stage, there appears to be major shortcomings inherent within the current system that are impeding the PMDS from reaching its potential According to Rao (2008), a strong focus on objectivity and fairness is imperative to ensure the effectiveness of a performance management system Unfortunately, the majority of respondents felt performance standards were unfair and lack consistency and that the PMDS failed to implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff This lack of fairness and consistency is damaging the PMDS and its ability to help managers improve staff performance on an on-going basis

Although there are many reasons for staff underperforming, it is the responsibility of managers to manage poor performance and the PMDS should facilitate them in effectively addressing underperformance According to Gold (2007) some of the key attributes of

effective performance management are identifying learning and development needs, career management and counselling, discipline when necessary and a plan for remedial action It appears the PMDS is lacking in these attributes as respondents felt the current system is particularly weak at helping to tackle underperformance This is as much an indictment on management as it is on the PMDS itself as the system is considerably constrained by the lack of effective procedures in place to address underperformance resulting in a general reluctance by management to tackle it A continuing failure to handle underperformance will undermine the PMDS and its credibility as an effective mechanism for managing performance

Considerable ambiguity surrounds the PMDS and its role According to DeWaal (2002) and Fryer et al (2009), performance management systems should be seen as a mechanism that helps to create continual performance improvement for staff and not as a blaming tool or burden used to chastise poor performers A bully's charter is unlikely to invoke a positive perception of the system so it is important for the PMDS to be seen as a dynamic and invaluable process in order for it to be fully embraced This does not appear to be the case however, as staff perceive it as a disciplinary tool as opposed to a proactive mechanism for staff development Furthermore, where a combination of progressive and positive discipline is recommended (Gold 2007), the current PMDS appears to be advocating more progressive than positive discipline which is affecting morale, resulting in a negative perception of the PMDS and hindering performance improvement

The PMDS is also weak at helping to recognise and reward those who perform well This is unsurprising, given that the current system is not effectively linked to decisions on increments, promotions, career development and assignment Incentives play a pivotal role in the motivation and control of performance because staff have utility for improvement in their overall wellbeing (Verbeeten 2008) However, the characteristics of the public sector make the design of incentive schemes a complex task, notably due to performance dimensions

being hard to measure and a general aversion to financial reward Consequently, performance management tends to be less effective as there is little to motivate staff to improve their performance (Pollitt 2006, Brown 2004) This definitely appears to be the case for the PMDS where the current economic climate and spectre of the Croke Park agreement are contributing to a significant lack of real incentives for staff at Clerical level Pay cuts, limited rotation, moratoriums on promotion, extra workloads due to dwindling resources and negative publicity from the media are creating major morale issues throughout the Department leaving staff increasingly frustrated because they have little to aspire to And with the Croke Park agreements main focus on increased accountability through more stringent monitoring of performance, it looks likely to be all stick and no carrot for the foreseeable future A prospect that is unlikely to please Clerical staff, who will hardly be motivated to go that extra mile with so little to work towards

6 6 Assessment and rating

Defining performance precedes performance review and serves as a solid base for establishing an assessment and rating system Performance should be defined in such a way that it indicates what results are expected from the role and what behavioural competencies would be demonstrated to achieve business results To be more robust, the assessment and rating system needs to be meaningful, support constructive feedback during reviews, enable managers to accurately distinguish different performance levels, support appropriate employee recognition and reward, and be able to facilitate decisions around underperformance or discipline when necessary (Duncan & Wiley 2004) De Nisi and Griffin (2008) maintain assessment and rating should reflect the true picture of who is performing well and who is not, indicating specific strengths and weaknesses for each person being rated Rao (2008) adds, the focus must be on objectivity, consistency and fairness and there can be no place for politics or manipulation

The findings indicate the PMDS lacks accuracy and objectivity in assessing performance and the rating system is not robust enough to support effective assessment of performance This reflects Lee, Havighurst & Rassel's (2004) view that problems surrounding assessment and rating are endemic and the development of objective rating systems has proved elusive especially when attempting measurement of behaviour and personality traits It has proven even more challenging developing objective and accurate measures for rating systems in the public sector due to its multifaceted nature, difficult to measure goals, lack of profit maximising focus, little potential for income generation and no real bottom line against which performance can be measured As a result, inexact, incomplete and highly subjective rating measures are still widely used for public sector performance management systems (Moriarty & Kennedy 2002, Heinrich & Marschke 2010) The findings confirm this to be the case with the PMDS, where considerable supervisor discretion and subjectivity in assessment and rating is resulting in frequent manipulation of ratings and situations arising where many assessments don't truly reflect an individual's annual performance As the system is operated by managers with varying management styles, an element of subjectivity is inevitable However, some managers are using it for their own ends while others are letting personal relationships with staff become a factor leading to considerable inconsistency with assessment and rating Consequently, the PMDS is susceptible to the type of gaming and deviant behaviour discussed by Fryer et al (2009) as well as the conflicts of purpose and distortions in validity talked about by Grint (1993) In fact, the findings suggest substantial evidence of the recency, veblen and impression effect occurring during assessment and rating (Grint 1993) Such a vague and restricted rating scheme is preventing the PMDS from becoming the objective and robust system that Rao (2008) recommends it should be further damaging the systems credibility

In addition, the findings clearly show the assessment and rating system doesn't motivate staff to improve upon their performance, nor is it effectively aligned with reward and discipline This highlights a major shortcoming in the PMDS, as staff motivation is inextricably linked with incentives and reward (Maslow 1943) Insufficient incentives coupled with scant consequence for underperformance means there is little to motivate staff to try harder at work Consequently, poor alignment with reward and discipline is rendering the PMDS a bureaucratic box ticking exercise where assessments are subsequently filed away by the personnel unit with little/no follow up This reflects De Nisi & Griffins (2008) assertion that poor follow up is a common occurrence leading to indifference towards performance management systems if appraisals are simply put away in a filing cabinet, it will be difficult to motivate appraisers to do a good job and even more difficult to motivate the appraised to work towards improvement

Understandably, the approach to reward and discipline must be different than in the private sector With less pressure and targets/deadlines to meet, there is little justification for monetary reward at Clerical level However, research by Purcell, Hutchinson and Cotton (2007) indicates the majority of employees believe their work merits some form of reward, and if the reward is not forthcoming, they become disenchanted The findings reflect this, as it is proving increasingly difficult to motivate staff given the distinct lack of reward/incentives currently available to Clerical Officers unless they are intrinsically motivated Unfortunately, the necessary leadership required to intrinsically motivate staff during these challenging times appears to be also lacking The findings also suggest there should be little room for excessive discipline as part of the PMDS and problematic staff should be dealt with in an isolated manner A strong focus on discipline will prove counterproductive for the PMDS only further cementing its unpopular status

6 7 Training and development

Rao (2008) states, a good performance management system should allow staff to learn and develop their capabilities on an ongoing basis As a result, training and development is an essential ingredient for the ongoing success of the PMDS Training is needed to promote greater levels of shared performance accountability and ownership The PMDS must ensure individual training and development plans reflect a balance of business needs and personal needs, where competency acquisition and the application to support talent management yield real business performance improvements (Duncan & Wiley 2004) For this to happen, the training and development unit has a pivotal role to play in ensuring all training activities are relevant and delivered in a timely manner with the requisite follow up and ongoing communication with staff, managers and business units key to success Only then can a learning and performance culture emerge throughout the Department

For the current PMDS, findings show there is an overemphasis on assessment and under emphasis on career development for ones future Respondents feel ongoing development should be the essence of the PMDS contributing to competency development and proficiency and performance improvement but this is not the case The current economic climate, poor communication and inadequate training for managers on the PMDS and its role are all contributing to the misguided portrayal and operation of the system Most notably though, it is the disconnect between the training and development unit and the various business units throughout the Department that is stifling the PMDS from reaching its true potential as a development tool to help manage and improve staff performance on an ongoing basis (Rao 2008) Better linkage between the training strategy and the PMDS is necessary going forward so as both inform one another resulting in a more open and positive emphasis on staff development

Respondents feel staff are not receiving adequate coaching, mentoring or on the job guidance required to improve performance nor is the PMDS ensuring training is carefully targeted on areas that improve staff performance Again, a poor liaise between the training unit and various business units within the Department is primarily the cause, meaning training activities are not sufficiently linked to business plan objectives and individual role profiles With the training budget slashed due to the current economic climate, many notable courses of the past are unavailable and those that are appear to lack quality signalling poor monitoring and evaluation of available courses for relevance and utility Furthermore, respondents feel staff require better access to available courses and where training does take place, better follow up is required to see if it has been effective as suggested by De Nisi and Griffin (2008)

Training has the potential to make the PMDS invaluable but it is not sufficiently prioritised The problems discussed throughout this discussion are inhibiting a learning and performance culture from developing within the Department, signalling the presence of a low quality employee-organisation relationship previously discussed by Kuvaas (2007) that is damaging the developmental aspect of the PMDS This contradicts what the PMDS is about the system has become more of a blaming tool as opposed to a developmental mechanism that creates continual performance improvement as was originally intended (DeWaal 2002) Furthermore, an overemphasis on assessment and short-termism means there is a distinct lack of workforce planning, future skills needs planning and a strategy for up-skilling which is severely impacting the PMDS as a developmental tool resulting in a mismatch of staff skills and experiences with current business needs and ineffective training plans that don't 'bridge the gap' where skills shortages have been previously highlighted

Chapter 7 – Conclusions

7 1   Principal features of the study

This research examined a Government Departments performance management system 'the PMDS' to determine its effectiveness at addressing performance related issues during these challenging times of dynamic change throughout the public sector Having reviewed some of the key contemporary theory surrounding performance management in the public sector, the study was conducted from within the organisation where the practitioner researcher is employed Method triangulation enabled the researcher to combine research strategies using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques Consequently, the research and its findings are a representation of collated questionnaire and interview findings that are centred around six core themes (below), each of significant relevance to the PMDS

> ➤ Planning and linkage

> ➤ Leadership and implementation

> ➤ Process efficiency

> ➤ Performance and incentives

> ➤ Assessment and rating

> ➤ Training and development

7 2   Summary of key findings

Research findings suggest

> ➤ Poor linkage of the PMDS with the overall business and HR strategies and ineffective integration of the PMDS with other HR processes and systems throughout the

Department which is isolating the system, resulting in the lack of a long term strategic focus for the PMDS, damaging its utility and credibility

➢ There is an institutional disbelief in the PMDS from the top down Consequently, the leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS from senior management necessary to drive and sustain the system is absent, meaning the PMDS is often perceived as a toothless paper exercise invoking apathy and disenchantment from staff in general

➢ Significant shortcomings attributed to the current PMDS are severely hampering the efficiency and effectiveness of the process The system is detached, meaning the process tends to be overly rigid and bureaucratic as opposed to fluid and continuous Furthermore, the current competency framework needs to be re-examined so that it adds value to the PMDS

➢ Performance standards need to be re-examined while the PMDS fails to implement continuous performance improvement or effectively addresses underperformance This may be due to the ambiguity surrounding the PMDS and its fundamental role in the Department Furthermore, the absence of incentives linked to the PMDS is leaving staff frustrated as they have little to aspire to This highlights major shortcomings in the current system in helping managers to manage performance further impeding the PMDS from reaching its potential

➢ The assessment and rating system lacks objectivity and consistency and isn't robust enough to support effective assessment of performance Supervisor discretion/subjectivity results in frequent manipulation of ratings and situations where assessments don't reflect reality The rating system fails to motivate staff to improve and poor alignment with reward and discipline means the PMDS amounts to a box ticking exercise where assessments are regularly filed away with little/no follow up

➢ There is too much emphasis on assessment and too little on staff development The PMDS needs to be about improving and developing performance rather than just an annual performance assessment A disconnect between the training and development unit and the various business units within the Department is preventing the PMDS from reaching its potential as a developmental tool Consequently, staff receive insufficient training targeted to help improve performance which is hampering the development of a learning and performance culture throughout the organisation

7 3   Relationship of findings to research aims and objectives

With the exception of certain aspects of planning, implementation and process efficiency, the research findings were predominantly negatively correlated to the research aims and objectives set out in chapter 3 Notable areas of concern for the current PMDS surround system integration, leadership, commitment from management and staff, the current competency framework and performance standards, underperformance, incentives, assessment and rating objectivity, staff motivation, an overemphasis on assessment as opposed to staff development, insufficient training activities and the absence of a learning culture throughout the Department

7 4   Appropriateness of the chosen methodology

The researcher is confident the correct research methodology and strategies were chosen for the dissertation The research philosophy, paradigm and approach were carefully thought out allowing for a pragmatists style that enabled the use of mixed methods Method triangulation using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques proved practical and beneficial enabling the researcher to further explore and appreciate supervisor perspectives on the PMDS resulting in a more thorough understanding of the research problem under investigation The researcher took time to carefully develop and prepare both

the questionnaire and interviews As a result, the research strategies employed worked well for the researcher garnering rich and at times surprising results The researcher found 'Surveymonkey com' extremely useful in helping design, administer and analyse the questionnaire Perhaps, given more time, the researcher may have undertaken focus groups as part of the research strategy as they allow for increased interaction with group participants, gathering data on emotive issues, reaping valuable input and insight for the research

7 5   Validity of the research

The researcher believes the research design and strategies were well planned out and fully address the questions and objectives of the study Furthermore, it is felt that the chosen methodology and subsequent analysis of the data produced an accurate reflection of the effectiveness of the PMDS at addressing performance related issues at Clerical Officer grade Consequently, the aims and objectives set out in chapter 3 have been sufficiently answered to justify the validity of the research

7 6   Reliability of the research

The findings indicate respondent perceptions of the PMDS as a tool for helping manage performance from a chosen sample Through method triangulation, the researcher blended the more quantitative objective approach using a structured questionnaire with a more qualitative subjective approach using a semi structured interview The researcher believes this was done to good effect, as close analysis of the questionnaire findings enabled the researcher to structure the interview questions in such a way as to probe around specific areas of concern with the PMDS previously highlighted in the questionnaire responses The researcher is confident that the appropriate research strategies were applied and should another researcher have chosen the same research design, they would obtain similar findings This suggests the dissertations reliability and consistency is high

7 7   Limitations of the research

This dissertation is concerned specifically with the credibility of the PMDS as a beneficial instrument for improving performance in a notable Government Department The study did not focus on every aspect of performance management, only those aspects deemed most pertinent to the Departments PMDS process Another limitation relates to the ability to draw descriptive or inferential conclusions from sample data about a larger group In this instance, due to the considerable size of the Government Department, a sample percentage of employees were chosen from the Staff and Executive Officer grades only, which are primarily responsible for conducting a range of key PMDS activities with Clerical Officers throughout the year It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to take into account staff views on the PMDS from other/all grades or from other Departments in the wider civil service Finally, it is impossible to ascertain for certain, how much of the findings were contingent upon supervisors own experiences of the PMDS being conducted on them rather than their views of the PMDS and its effectiveness on Clerical staff as was intended This suggests, there may be values, perceptions and other issues that may have had an effect on the outcome of this research on a personal level from respondents

7 8   Practical implications of the research

The main implication for performance management and those that operate performance management systems throughout the public sector is that there is a requirement to evaluate their own position and the current systems future as a tool for managing performance The findings of this research can be used to enhance the PMDS within the civil service However, failure to acknowledge the findings will only serve to undermine the system's ability to move forward further damaging its reputation and stifling the opportunity to meet its potential

7.9   Implications for future research

The public sector is a relatively difficult environment to implement change Consequently, the process of successfully implementing a performance management system in the public sector is under researched (Cheng et al 2007) This research has endeavoured to highlight some of the shortcomings of a government Departments current performance management system in the holistic sense Future research may focus on more specific aspects of a performance management system, such as why there is a lack of objectivity in assessment and rating, why there are HR integration problems or why some public sector organisations have vague 'difficult to measure' goals while others have 'clear and measurable' goals In a broader sense, further research needs to be undertaken to help bridge the gap between performance management research and practice with particular emphasis on why the gap still persists today and where the root cause of the disconnect lies An investigation into why much of the performance management literature is predominantly divorced from considerations of power and the uses and limits of managerial prerogative may help shed light on some of these issues

7 10   General conclusions

The current PMDS is a potentially valuable but deeply flawed system Significant shortcomings highlighted throughout the findings and discussion exemplify how poorly designed and operated the system is This has contributed immeasurably to the negative perception of the PMDS and overall lack of commitment towards the system from management and staff alike throughout the Department In order for the system to become more positively received and trusted, suggested improvements include

> ➢ More clarity surrounding the PMDS and its critical role in performance management

➤ Redefining and integrating all parts of the PMDS into a cohesive, well defined system that is effectively linked with the Departments other strategies, systems and processes

➤ Minimising the bureaucracy of the process

➤ Looking at the structure of motivation and incentives within the PMDS

➤ Less room for discretion and more room for objectivity and consistency

➤ Less focus on assessment and more focus on staff development

➤ Ongoing monitoring and more frequent systematic evaluation of the PMDS

➤ Promote the PMDS as 'the way we work' so there is a focus on day to day performance management

If these improvements are applied correctly, the PMDS should become more effective at improving performance at Clerical Officer level and at all other grades, which should have positive implications for staff and the Department going forward

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Appendix I – The PMDS process up until June 2012

PMDS is a civil service wide system It provides a framework which

(i)   Assists in the improvement of individual and team performance in order to achieve the Departments strategic goals, and

(ii)   Monitors that performance and the achievement of those goals (Human Resource Management Handbook 2007)

From a performance management perspective, PMDS –

- Monitors progress in achieving goals and objectives,

- Aligns jobholders goals with the goals of the Department,

- Affords an opportunity to jobholders to give constructive feedback to managers on how they are being managed, how their section/umt/division is being run and how PMDS is being implemented,

- Provides a structure within which manager's work with staff to set goals and monitor their achievement (Human Resource Management Handbook 2007)

Effective implementation of PMDS should result in benefits for the individual jobholder and the Department – the individual benefits from enhanced abilities, greater motivation and personal satisfaction while the Department benefits from excellent job performance and a quality service delivered to our customers (Human Resource Management Handbook 2007)

Divisional Monitoring Groups and a Department Monitoring Group monitor the implementation of the PMDS throughout the Department Since 2007, PMDS has been formally integrated with other human resource systems thus formally linking performance as

reviewed under the PMDS system to the grant of increments and eligibility for consideration for promotion (Human Resource Management Handbook 2007)

The 3 stages of PMDS are

(i) **The Planning Stage** – this stage of the PMDS enables a manager and the jobholder to identify what the job is all about, identify ways to improve how the job is done, set objectives/targets and agree a development plan All of this information is recorded on a Role Profile form, completed by mid-February

(ii) **The Ongoing Management Stage** – this stage of PMDS involves regular, informal communication between a manager and a jobholder to review the jobholder's performance in the light of the contents of the Role Profile form In addition to ongoing, informal dialogue between manager and jobholder, all staff must participate in one informal Interim Review meeting during the PMDS cycle The outcome of the formal interim review meeting is recorded in the Interim Review Form, which must be completed before mid-September

(iii) **The Annual Review Stage** - This stage is the central pillar of the PMDS cycle Providing an opportunity for jobholders to gain feedback on their performance throughout the year and encouragement from their managers going forward There are two parts to the annual performance appraisal Part 1 helps the manager and jobholder to prepare for the appraisal meeting In part 2 the jobholder's performance is formally assessed and rated Forms are retained locally and forwarded to the Records Section of the Departments Personnel Unit where it is reviewed for the purposes of salary increment and promotion eligibility (Human Resource Management Handbook 2007)

Appendix II – Questionnaire invitation

Dear colleagues,

I invite you to take part in a survey/questionnaire relating to the PMDS

Background As part of the final year of College, I must complete a dissertation on a topic that is relevant to the course I am pursuing The title of the research is

> *"'Has PMDS delivered? A dissertation examining a Government Departments performance management system and its effectiveness at addressing performance related issues at Clerical Officer grade"*

I will be circulating a questionnaire seeking an overall perspective on the PMDS The questionnaire consists of 6 brief sections and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete

I am aware of the impending changes to PMDS due to come into effect throughout 2012/2013 However, due to the timing of this dissertation I have had to ignore these changes as it would be impossible and unfair to evaluate an upgraded system that is only coming on line, therefore, the questionnaire and overall research will evaluate the PMDS retrospectively and up until 2012 (Before the changes fully come into effect)

The questionnaire is designed to target Executive and Staff Officers only, who are the grades primarily responsible for carrying out core phases of the PMDS with Clerical staff during the year (while beneficial, it is not essential to have conducted a particular stage of the PMDS with staff at some point – it is your general views on PMDS that are critical)

Given the time constraints, a 25% sample is deemed appropriate, as it is broadly representative of the target population Clerical Officers were chosen as the focus for the dissertation as this grade represents the largest proportion of staff within the Department A high response rate is necessary to have any chance of achieving a genuine representation of the population for the findings, discussion and conclusion Consequently, I would genuinely appreciate it if you could take the time to complete this short questionnaire

Permission Before administering the questionnaire I sought and received permission from the Principal Officers of the IT Unit and Personnel Section respectively I designed the questionnaire using the online survey design tool 'Surveymonkey com ' This website is not

restricted by the Department The questionnaire was designed using my own secure private account, which can only be accessed by me and all information submitted will be treated in the strictest of confidence

Confidentiality The information obtained during the said questionnaire will be used to develop findings for the dissertation and for this reason only

All responses are strictly <u>CONFIDENTIAL</u> and will not be traced to any individual completing this questionnaire Furthermore, all data from this questionnaire will be reported as aggregate rather than individual data

The questionnaire will be administered using a web link, which I will send via e-mail to you on Monday 16thth April 2012 The e-mail will contain some brief instructions and the web link that will take you directly to the questionnaire for completion The closing date for completion of the questionnaire will be Friday 27th April.

If **you do not** wish to participate in the survey please return a short e-mail to me requesting I take you off my mail list

Once the dissertation has been completed a copy of it will be available on my desk for any staff that wishes to review it

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your time and cooperation If you wish to contact me, please feel free to do so

Kind regards

Colin ext 3144

Questions Template

Planning and Linkage

There are effective mechanisms in the Department for consulting staff on the strategy and business planning process

The business plan for my unit is used to define job roles and tasks

The PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan

The data generated by the PMDS about each employee is used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department such as rotation and promotion

Data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to real business needs

The PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department

Leadership and Implementation

Senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS

Senior management take a lead role in ensuring each phase of the PMDS is carried out correctly

Senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS

The PMDS is implemented in my unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines

Adequate time and resources are provided to staff to properly conduct the PMDS process

I have the requisite skills required to conduct each phase of the PMDS effectively

Process Efficiency

The PMDS process is straightforward and clear

Staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process

The PMDS process has improved communication with staff

The PMDS process ensures greater clarity about how performance is measured

The current competency framework substantially adds value to the PMDS process

The time and effort involved in the PMDS process is worthwhile for managing the staff of the unit

Performance and Incentives

The Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff

During the performance planning stage of the PMDS, staff are made clear about their role, the objectives and deliverables expected of them

The PMDS enables managers to identify superior, good, average and poor performance

The PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff

The PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance

The current PMDS offers adequate scope for recognition, reward, promotion, increments and other incentives

Assessment and Rating

Individual performance is assessed against objectives previously agreed with staff

The PMDS offers an accurate and objective assessment of individual performance

The current PMDS rating system is robust enough to support effective assessment of performance

The current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance

The current assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline

There is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough emphasis on career development for the future

Training and Development

The PMDS ensures training activities are carefully aligned with current business needs

Staff receive adequate coaching, mentoring or on the job guidance they require to improve their performance

The PMDS ensures training is carefully targeted on areas that will improve staff performance

Training and development needs identified through the PMDS are acted upon and supported

Training activities are carefully monitored and measured for their utility and quality

The PMDS helps inculcate a learning culture within the Department

Appendix III – Interview invitation

Dear Colleague,

Sincere thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview

Background· As part of the final year of a College course, I must complete a dissertation on a topic related to my course The title of my research is

"'Has PMDS delivered? A dissertation examining a Government Departments performance management system and its effectiveness at addressing performance related issues at Clerical Officer level"

Your answers to the 12 questions that I ask are to be included in my research as an interview detailing a supervisor's perspective on the current PMDS I will record by voice recorder and transcription at the interview and may require further consultation with you after the interview for clarification purposes

It is hoped the interview will give more in depth sentiment on the PMDS, which will allow me to elaborate on the findings of the questionnaire (which has already been circulated and is now closed)

(IMPORTANT) The interview questions have been structured around the questionnaire responses (notably those questions that garnered a negative response) and ask you to elaborate on why you think these responses were so negative towards certain aspects of the PMDS

Sensitivity I endeavoured to structure the questions as sensitively as I could but I also had to take into account that the research involves a critique of the PMDS process As a result, I would genuinely appreciate your true feelings and opinion with regard to each question

Confidentiality Just to reiterate that this research is being carried out to complete a mandatory final year college dissertation The information obtained during the said interview will be used to develop findings for the dissertation and for this reason only

All responses are entirely <u>CONFIDENTIAL</u> and will not be traced to any individual completing this interview A number will be assigned to each interviewee to conceal identity No names will be referred to for confidentiality and privacy purposes

Please see below the 12 questions that will be asked at the interview If you have any queries or need clarification about any questions, feel free to ask me

Finally, thank you again for taking part in this interview Your participation will be of great benefit to the findings of this study On completion, I will make a copy of the report available to those who wish to view it

Colin Delaney ext 3144

Interview questions template

How long have you been in the civil service?

Q1 – Why do you think the PMDS is not effectively integrated with other human resource processes in the Department?

Q2 - What do you think are the reasons why the skills and experiences of staff are not matched up with current business needs?

Q3 – There appears to be a lack of leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS by senior management, why is this so? b) Have senior management proactively sought to address and rectify problems/discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS?

Q4 – There appears to be a lack of commitment towards PMDS from staff in general, what do you think are the reasons for this? b) Since its introduction, has PMDS engaged staff?

Q5 - What in your opinion are the main flaws of the PMDS process?

Q6 – In your opinion, why does the PMDS not effectively address individual underperformance?

Q7 – The current PMDS offers little scope for incentives to improve performance, why is this? b) Would better incentives help to improve individual performance?

Q8 – The PMDS assessment and rating system does not appear to have a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance, why is this?

Q9 – The assessment and rating system does not appear to be effectively aligned with reward and discipline, what effect is this having on the PMDS? b) What effect does supervisor discretion/subjectivity have on the current rating system?

Q10 – Under the PMDS, there appears to be too much emphasis on assessment of current performance and not enough emphasis on career development for ones future, why? b) Why is this hampering a learning culture from developing in the Department?

Q11 – Why might the training and development needs identified through the PMDS fail to improve staff performance?

Q12 – Are there any further comments you would like to make about the PMDS in general?

Appendix IV – Collation results and respondent comments

SurveyMonkey

1. There are effective mechanisms in the Department for consulting staff on the strategy and business planning process?
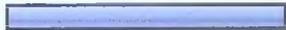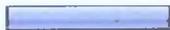
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	3.5%	2
Agree	54.4%	31
Disagree	31.6%	18
Strongly Disagree	10.5%	6
answered question		57
skipped question		0

2. The business plan for my unit is used to define job roles and tasks?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	14.0%	8
Agree	73.7%	42
Disagree	5.3%	3
Strongly Disagree	7.0%	4
answered question		57
skipped question		0

1 of 23

3. The PMDS helps managers to deliver on their unit's business plan?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		7.0%	4
Agree		64.9%	37
Disagree		24.6%	14
Strongly Disagree		3.5%	2
	answered question		57
	skipped question		0

4. The data generated by the PMDS about each employee is used to inform human resource planning decisions in the Department such as rotation and promotion?
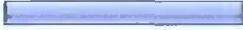
		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		3.5%	2
Agree		21.1%	12
Disagree		47.4%	27
Strongly Disagree		28.1%	16
	answered question		57
	skipped question		0

5. The data generated by the PMDS is used to match the skills and experience of staff to current business needs?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		0.0%	0
Agree		19.3%	11
Disagree		49.1%	28
Strongly Disagree		31.6%	18
	answered question		57
	skipped question		0
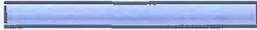
6. The PMDS is integrated effectively with other human resource processes in the Department?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		1.8%	1
Agree		22.8%	13
Disagree		59.6%	34
Strongly Disagree		15.8%	9
	answered question		57
	skipped question		0
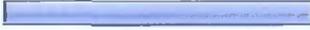
7. Senior management give the necessary leadership, support and commitment to the PMDS?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	3.6%	2
Agree	32.1%	18
Disagree	50.0%	28
Strongly Disagree	14.3%	8
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

8. Senior management take a lead role in ensuring each phase of the PMDS is carried out correctly?
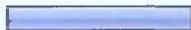
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	35.7%	20
Disagree	48.2%	27
Strongly Disagree	14.3%	8
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

9. Senior management proactively seek to address and rectify any discrepancies highlighted in the PMDS?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		1.8%	1
Agree		25.0%	14
Disagree		57.1%	32
Strongly Disagree		16.1%	9
	answered question		56
	skipped question		1
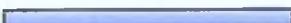
10. The PMDS is implemented in my unit according to specified guidelines and deadlines?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		3.6%	2
Agree		62.5%	35
Disagree		28.6%	16
Strongly Disagree		5.4%	3
	answered question		56
	skipped question		1

11. Adequate time and resources are provided to staff to properly conduct the PMDS process?
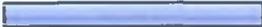
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.4%	3
Agree	50.0%	28
Disagree	35.7%	20
Strongly Disagree	8.9%	5
answered question		56
skipped question		1
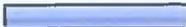
12. I have the requisite skills required to conduct each phase of the PMDS effectively?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	10.7%	6
Agree	67.9%	38
Disagree	21.4%	12
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		56
skipped question		1
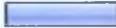
13. The PMDS process is straightforward and clear?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
Agree	60.7%	34
Disagree	32.1%	18
Strongly Disagree	7.1%	4
answered question		56
skipped question		1

14. Staff show a positive level of commitment towards the PMDS process?
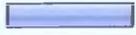
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	23.2%	13
Disagree	50.0%	28
Strongly Disagree	25.0%	14
answered question		56
skipped question		1
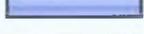
15. The PMDS process has improved communication with staff?
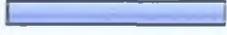
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	3.6%	2
Agree	41.1%	23
Disagree	42.9%	24
Strongly Disagree	12.5%	7
answered question		56
skipped question		1

16. The PMDS process ensures greater clarity about how performance is measured?
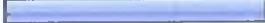
		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		1.8%	1
Agree		50.0%	28
Disagree		30.4%	17
Strongly Disagree		17.9%	10
		answered question	**56**
		skipped question	1
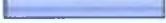
17. The current competency framework substantially adds value to the PMDS process?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		0.0%	0
Agree		37.5%	21
Disagree		51.8%	29
Strongly Disagree		10.7%	6
		answered question	**56**
		skipped question	1

18. The time and effort involved in the PMDS process is worthwhile in terms of managing the staff of the unit?
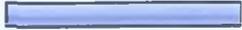
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.1%	4
Agree	**44.6%**	**25**
Disagree	32.1%	18
Strongly Disagree	16.1%	9
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

19. The Department ensures performance standards are fair and consistent for all staff?
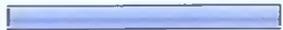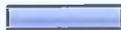
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
Agree	26.8%	15
Disagree	**51.8%**	**29**
Strongly Disagree	21.4%	12
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

20. During the performance planning stage of PMDS, staff are made clear about their role, the objectives and deliverables expected of them?
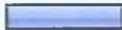
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.4%	3
Agree	**64.3%**	**36**
Disagree	21.4%	12
Strongly Disagree	8.9%	5
answered question		56
skipped question		1

21. The PMDS enables managers to identify superior, good, average and poor performance?
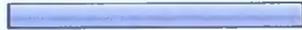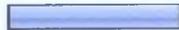
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	**55.4%**	**31**
Disagree	32.1%	18
Strongly Disagree	10.7%	6
answered question		56
skipped question		1

22. The PMDS helps implement continuous performance improvement amongst staff?
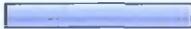
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	35.7%	20
Disagree	51.8%	29
Strongly Disagree	10.7%	6
answered question		56
skipped question		1

23. The PMDS effectively addresses individual under-performance?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
Agree	19.6%	11
Disagree	60.7%	34
Strongly Disagree	19.6%	11
answered question		56
skipped question		1
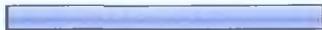
24. The current PMDS offers adequate scope for recognition, reward, promotion, increments and other incentives?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	19.6%	11
Disagree	42.9%	24
Strongly Disagree	35.7%	20
answered question		56
skipped question		1

25. Individual performance is assessed against objectives previously agreed with staff?
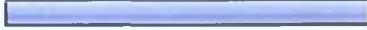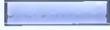
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.1%	4
Agree	69.6%	39
Disagree	19.6%	11
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2
answered question		56
skipped question		1

26. The PMDS offers an accurate and objective assessment of individual performance?
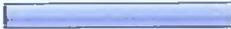
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	42.9%	24
Disagree	46.4%	26
Strongly Disagree	8.9%	5
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

27. The current PMDS rating system is robust enough to support effective assessment of performance?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	30.4%	17
Disagree	46.4%	26
Strongly Disagree	21.4%	12
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

28. The current performance assessment and rating system has a motivational effect on staff to improve upon their performance?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		0.0%	0
Agree		16.1%	9
Disagree		62.5%	35
Strongly Disagree		21.4%	12
		answered question	56
		skipped question	1
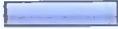
29. The current performance assessment and rating system is effectively aligned with reward and discipline?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree		1.8%	1
Agree		8.9%	5
Disagree		62.5%	35
Strongly Disagree		26.8%	15
		answered question	56
		skipped question	1
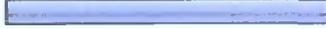
30. There is too much emphasis under the PMDS on assessment and not enough emphasis on career development for the future?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	19.6%	11
Agree	64.3%	36
Disagree	10.7%	6
Strongly Disagree	5.4%	3
answered question		56
skipped question		1
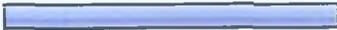
31. The PMDS ensures training activities are carefully aligned with current business needs?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.4%	3
Agree	51.8%	29
Disagree	35.7%	20
Strongly Disagree	7.1%	4
answered question		56
skipped question		1

32. Staff receive adequate coaching, mentoring or on the job guidance they require to improve their performance?
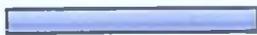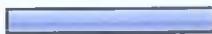
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	48.2%	27
Disagree	39.3%	22
Strongly Disagree	10.7%	6
answered question		56
skipped question		1

33. The PMDS ensures training is carefully targeted on areas that will improve staff performance?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.1%	4
Agree	41.1%	23
Disagree	44.6%	25
Strongly Disagree	7.1%	4
answered question		56
skipped question		1

34. Training and development needs identified through PMDS are acted upon and supported?
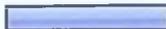
	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.1%	4
Agree	51.8%	29
Disagree	30.4%	17
Strongly Disagree	10.7%	6
answered question		56
skipped question		1

35. Training activities are carefully monitored and measured for their utility and quality?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.8%	1
Agree	33.9%	19
Disagree	44.6%	25
Strongly Disagree	19.6%	11
answered question		56
skipped question		1
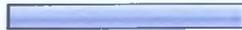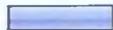
36. The PMDS helps inculcate a learning culture within the Department?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
Agree	26.8%	15
Disagree	58.9%	33
Strongly Disagree	14.3%	8
	answered question	56
	skipped question	1

37. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any further comments on the PMDS and the process involved, please feel free to enter them in the comment box below.

	Response Count
	18
answered question	18
skipped question	39

1	PMDS has the ability to become an excellent measurement of staff performance on paper. Hoever, when you consider that invdividual managers are more/less harsh at marking and staff can be more/less successful at negotiating higher or lower marks, it is down to individual strength of character to succeed in higher marking. Currently there are no provisions in place to reward exceptional staff or to discipline non-performing staff. There is not a lot of faith in the system as any more than a "paper excercise" and there is very little matching of people to skillsets or areas of interest. Training is good - but not applied when budgetary factors and/or pressures of work preventing release are taken into account. From the framework, PMDS has the potential to be effective, however, it requires alot more standardisation and ACTUAL penalties and/or rewards to provide incentives to perform to adequate levels.	Apr 27, 2012 4:45 PM
2	The PMDS process is a restrictive measure of an individuals performance. Greater scope needs to be taken in order to give an accurate reflection of individual performance, highlighting short comings, adeqaute performance and excellent performance in a broader range which will give a better overall picture of the individual and their capabilities. Exceptional performance needs to be given more reward than just allowing an individual apply for promotion.	Apr 26, 2012 1:38 PM
3	Some of my responses were to 'disagree' whereas if there had been a neutral or neither agree nor disagree I might have gone for that in some instances	Apr 24, 2012 6:05 PM
4	Assessment and the marking system is subjective - one person performing exceptionally well may receive a 5, while another receives a 3. Poor performance should result in a 1 or 2, but managers are reluctant to give this mark, especially is the person is on low wages and needs their increment (these marks will result in no increment). PMDS currently is seen as a means of punishment - there are no rewards, promotions etc., just the possiblity of being marked down if achievements are not met. With the current increase in workload it is increasingly difficult to exceed requirements, which will not reflect well in the marking system.	Apr 24, 2012 11:38 AM
5	In my opinion, PMDS is only mildly effective. Its very much dependent on individual managers and the various personalities within Units. There is a lot of scope withing PMDS to have an effective system in place for recognition of high and low performers but in my experience, these are not always addressed due to fear of negative consequences re upward feedback, tackling a difficult staff member etc. These can be difficult situations for any member of staff.	Apr 24, 2012 9:13 AM
6	I acknowledge that your study is based on the older system, but it might be worth noting that the new system is less intuitive and seems to require staff to have a greater understanding of the business planning process so that they can capture their key activities within 5 goals (one of which is already specified). Best of luck in finalising your thesis.	Apr 20, 2012 2:21 PM
7	Where the whole pmds process has its positive side. The amount of time consumed completing this process twice in the year is an added burden to Supervisors especially when some areas have more then 15 staff to complete this process for.	Apr 20, 2012 2:01 PM

20 of 23

8	I have a very negative view of PMDS. I do not see it implemented properly in this Dept. It is a cynical exercise in lip-service to preformance accountability and there is no consistency in the ratings. Exceptional work in one section will be consider "normal", i.e worth a 3 whereas adequate work in other sections is given 5. The implementation of the system in this Dept is inherently unfair in that there is no actual management of consistency in delivery. It demotivates staff and creates dissension and disharmony in many sections of the dept.	Apr 18, 2012 2:51 PM
9	PMDS is a good idea that should befit everyone. The current system, approach and institutional support for the process encourages a non confrontational approach that many regard as a box-ticking exercise.	Apr 18, 2012 2:00 PM
10	I based my responses on the new PMDS forms and procedures.	Apr 16, 2012 2:51 PM
11	I do not feel PMDS is implemented equally and fairly in the Department, it does not take into account the technical nature of some jobs which require a higher level of performance than other positions at that grade, but which may result in the same rating. Also the implementation of PMDs varies depending on the managers involved and their perspective of what level of work results in a rating of for example 3. I believe there should be a clearer definition of what is required from each grade, this would make it easier to identify under performance as well as exceptional performance, and would be less reliant of the managers perception of performance for that grade.	Apr 16, 2012 2:11 PM
12	I am in my 10th year in Department, had approx. 10 PMDS reports. Most were fine- I got a 4. On 2 occasions I got a 3, a respectable grade BUT I was marked down to 3 by a HEO or AP who simply had problems with aggression and wanted to have a go at me. Shocking lies were told on these PMDS occasions- it's a tribute to my hard work and efficiency that these vicious individuals never did manage to make me go below a 3. On 1 occasion I appealed- the grade stayed the same, the 2nd occasion I won't bother appealing At times in PMDS, vindictive individuals are allowed to have a go at any worker they think is soft enough to take it, Even very good worker s like myself, YET the real issue of Serious Underperformance is Never addressed- I.e. slackers who do nothing and are often aggressive and unpleasant to work with will still be awarded 3 or 4!I think the Real issue for this Department however is not PMDS, which is really of no use AND as I have observed myself has been used as an instrument of abuse and vindictiveness.The REAL issue is workplace aggression: I am from NI and worked 5 yrs. in NI civil service. I have never seen workplace aggression like here- and I worked for years(17 elsewhere- and 15 here in ROI) in NI, England, Jersey, Guernsey and a few months in USA. In fact a NI solicitor told me this country's employers spends more time trying to sort out disputes than any other in EU- no wonder! I am continually astounded that aggressors (of any grade) are treated like Gods- no censure at all, far from it, pretty much allowed to have their way. Oh and when the victim complains it is them who is vilified. I have often worked with very good HEOs (and a few very bad ones) but its senior managers who are culpable for all this carry on- they seem only to care to pick up a big salary – no interest in telling stroppy/ disagreeable. / Aggressive staff to desist- and no support at all to victims. And if your HEO is an aggressor, then heaven help you at PMDS! Vast improvements needed in workplace behaviour in this country- in 32 yrs. of working I have Never seen anything like it anywhere elsewhere: IE, here workplace aggression is Encouraged more than anything and sheep like co-	Apr 16, 2012 2:11 PM

workers/ mangers bow down to aggressors and shaft the victims.

13	Many view PMDS as giving someone both a rope to hang you with and if that fails a stick to beat you with. In effect a bullys charter.	Apr 16, 2012 1:09 PM
14	In the current economic climate PMDS has become irrelevant. Most staff particularly at the lower grades are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage. They see noimprovement in the future for them. They know promotion will not happen and pay may be cut again. They cannot be motivated in the circumstances they are in and some actually resent going through the motions of the PMDS system.	Apr 16, 2012 1:09 PM
15	From my experience I think that there is little evidence of any support for the PMDS process as it currently exists from either senior management or staff in any area of this Department that I have worked in. I would go so far as to say that it has a negative effect on individual performance.	Apr 16, 2012 12:20 PM
16	Some of my answers may seem contradictory but there is a reason for this PMDS as I know it to be implemented in the majority of areas elsewhere in the Department has a lot of merit and potential to help managers manage. However, in sections where it fails, it fails badly and that is a very big reputational risk for the Department. I work in a section where the system falls down. Lip service is paid towards setting tasks in the role profile, reviews are only ever performed when staff complain about missed increments. The senior manager involved is unable to take on board the lessons to be learnt from the non-achievement of objectives because of personal bias, meaning the business plan is not affected by underperformance. There are serious concerns about time committed to PMDS, and it demoralises the staff to have PMDS constantly long-fingered. There is no 'reward' associated with ratings. Because of the non-suitable intervention of a certain manager, high ratings are rarely received. While one could say that ratings are sometimes overinflated elsewhere, in this section they do not reflect the level of effort and achievement by the individual staff. The mediocre range of ratings, in fact, is a reflection of an inability to set proper goals in business planning. I welcome the developments in the new PMDS forms - especially giving an automatic 2 for managers not completing the forms. I do, in a general sense, question the restrictions in the range of training available to staff and would hope that the Department realises that a staff member will find it hard to convince a manager to get training committed to PMDS when it doesn't relate directly to their current role – i.e. there is a restriction on the 'development' aspect preparing staff for higher or different roles. In short, I think there is a deliberate fuzziness in the minds of some senior and middle managers as to the purpose of PMDS, the way to rate staff, the lessons to learn from PMDS annual reviews and what a training and development plan can entail. I know all too well about the PO network and how this should have addressed some of these issue. However, I don't think it has. I would implore the Department to have a fully functioning Change Management Unit put in place to require senior managers to implement the system evenly and fairly – and to make it a functional tool in the rational policy maker's arsenal.	Apr 16, 2012 12:14 PM
17	PMDS needs more commitment form senior management. There is currently little incentives for staff to work towards. As such, it seems like all stick and no carrot!	Apr 16, 2012 12:00 PM

18   I think the PMDS has been used by some managers as the stick rather the   Apr 16, 2012 11:59 AM
      carrot it was supposed to be. In addition I believe some managers are not
      open for discussion on work issues and dictate their own personal opinion
      which they do not want to argue. Also, I believe the rating system is an area
      of dissent rather then a helpful tool