

## *Original Paper*

# Results Based Management (RBM) as a Tool for Good Governance

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### ***Abstract***

*Governments and other public institutions worldwide are facing increasing demands for good governance and the achievement of sustainable socioeconomic development. They are thus seized with searching for the appropriate strategies albeit with considerable difficulties. Literature shows that several nations that adopted and effectively institutionalized the Results Based Management approach have managed to meet the demands with relative ease. This study sought to investigate the linkage between the institutionalization of RBM and the improvement in good governance as well as the delivery of development results. The findings are aimed at contributing to literature on good governance, RBM and development program management in general. Premised upon a qualitative approach, data for this study were gathered through the review of print and electronic documentation on good governance and RBM, primarily relating to Malaysia Rwanda, nations that have registered marked improvements in good governance, implementation of RBM as well as the delivery of development results. Analysis of data showed that RBM is an effective for good governance that can lead to the successful delivery of development results. The effective implementation of the approach is therefore highly recommended as is further research on the relationship of the two notions.*

### ***Keywords***

*good governance, results based management, planning, monitoring and evaluation, performance management, socioeconomic development*

## 1. Introduction

The requirement for governments and organizations to be more responsive to the demands for good governance, by internal and external stakeholders, is increasingly gaining momentum across the globe (Mayne, 2008). The term stakeholder refers to any entity that is affected by a decision or is interested how such decision is made and implemented. Literature shows that good governance, demonstrated through enhanced accountability, transparency, greater participation and development effectiveness, and embodied in an effective state, is essential for achieving sustainable socioeconomic development (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Although such achievement is a primary goal for every nation, many governments and organizations fall short on this notion, to the extent of regarding it as an ideal that cannot be easily achieved, thus making socioeconomic development significantly inaccessible (UNDP, 2011). However, several nations, including Malaysia, Rwanda, Mauritius, Kenya and South Africa, that adopted and institutionalized the Results Based Management (RBM) approach have improved their rankings in good governance and also registered success stories in the implementation of socioeconomic development and transformation programmes. In fact, Malaysia is deemed to be a leader in regional and global public sector governance initiatives (World Bank Group Global Knowledge and Research Hub, 2017) while Rwanda was ranked ninth, in a group 54 African countries, by the 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) based on data for the period 2008-2017 (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2018). This study sought to establish if adoption and institutionalization of RBM could help to explain the improvement in good governance and ultimately the achievement of organizational and societal goals.

Good Governance, an approach to government, entails commitment to utilizing best possible processes for making and implementing decisions pertaining to the conduct of public affairs towards improving the wellbeing of stakeholders (UNDP, 2011). It relates to authority, decision-making and accountability and facilitates the creation and sustenance of effective, responsive and accountable institutions which are capable and empowered to deliver quality public services (Ibid).

Relatedly, RBM, an approach to project and programme management, helps to improve decision-making that drives important changes in work and management practices, particularly the definition and tracking of target results throughout the development projects or programme life cycles (ILO, 2011). It primarily focuses on improving livelihoods through a consistent focus on measurable target positive changes in the lives of stakeholders as well as improvement of organizational functions. From the definitions, as well as the major characteristics discussed in the literature review section, both RBM and Good Governance aim at closely meeting the needs and improving the wellbeing of a wide range of stakeholders.

Globally, governments are seized with addressing the demands, from a wide range of stakeholders, through the utilization of highly participatory processes to efficiently and effectively translate political ambitions to results (World Bank, 2014). The stakeholders, encompassing citizens' groups, civil society,

the private sector, funders and the media are demanding management reforms that increasingly challenging states to improve their entire governments performance and underwrite good governance (Kusek & Rist, 2004). RBM, with its key elements has proved to be one of the best strategies for demonstrating development results. Such elements encompass the identification of clear and measurable changes in people's lives (results), continuous performance measurement and use of the derived information, to inform decision-making, towards continuous learning and improvement.

According to the United Nations, good governance is measured by eight factors, which are also its major characteristics, namely participation, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, and rule of law. Literature shows that the key elements of RBM relate closely to these characteristics as demonstrated in the ensuing paragraphs.

Participation, a fundamental requirement for good governance, means all stakeholders, particularly the most vulnerable, have reasonable access to the systems of government and have the opportunity to participate in processes for making and implementing decisions that are relevant to them. Such broad participation, can be direct or through legitimate representatives. Associated strategies include contribution to the actual decision-making processes as well as the provision of information following requests for opinions and/or recommendations. Meaningful participation is built on effective information sharing underpinned by freedom of expression and persistent concern for the best interests of the organization and the society.

A basic element of RBM is its emphasis on meaningful participation by the widest range of stakeholders in all project processes that include planning, performance measurement and learning. During planning, communities are afforded an opportunity to articulate their needs, rather than having the same assumed by politicians or other entities with vested interests, while feedback from the same is also regarded as an essential input for performance measurement and learning. According to Kusek and Rist (2004), RBM systems provide vital information for improving decision-making to the extent that, in democracies, such information constitutes a normal input into government processes.

Accountability, another key tenet of good governance, compels institutions to be ultimately accountable to all their stakeholders, to one another and to the applicable rules of law. That is, the institutions have an obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the consequences of their decisions regarding the utilization of state resources. In the context of RBM linkages between expected results and resource allocation are clearly defined thus enhancing this notion of accountability regarding decisions on the utilization of resources. Accountability is also enhanced as programme implementers are answerable for both their actions as well as contribution to the achievement of desired results, unlike traditional approaches where the accountability is confined to their actions only. In addition, results based monitoring and evaluation processes, constituting the performance measurement function, entail the provision of feedback from beneficiaries relating to outcomes and consequences of governmental

actions.

Responsiveness is where organizations and their processes are designed to appropriately serve the needs of all stakeholders, while timeously balancing competing interests. The general principles of RBM encompass focusing on results that matter to the people where decisions are guided by the achievement clear and measurable changes in the lives of targeted stakeholders. Accordingly, a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly end-users of project deliverable, actively participate in the planning and performance measurement. Such practice helps to close the gap between the supply and demand of development project deliverables thus significantly influencing the levels of responsiveness.

Efficiency and Effectiveness relates to a situation where decisions are implemented to produce results that closely meet the needs of stakeholders while also making the best use of available resources. The RBM focus on the achievement of clearly defined results, with such results also being the basis for the allocation of resources, enables the most effective choices among competing possibilities which leads to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of development projects (ILO, 2011).

Transparency is built on the free flow of information where institutions, processes and information are readily accessible to stakeholders enabling them to understand and monitor the related policies, projects and practices. In addition, all decisions taken and their enforcement ought to be in compliance with established rules and regulations. Again the RBM focus on results, the associated measurement towards their achievement and accountability compels stakeholders, including politicians, bureaucrats and voting citizens to be more distinct about the objectives of government plans and services (Kusek & Rist, 2004). That is, lawmakers are also key stakeholders and hence ensure that their interests are considered in the definition of results as well as in projects processes aimed at achieving those results.

Equity and inclusiveness entails improvement of the well-being of all stakeholders through affording them the opportunity to participate as well as derive satisfaction from the consideration of their interests during decision-making processes. The notion primarily depends on ensuring that all individuals and groups within a community, particularly the most vulnerable, feel included and empowered to improve or maintain their wellbeing. Active, meaningful stakeholder participation as well as continuous learning and improvement sponsors ownership of processes and ensures a balance of interests, elements that have a significant bearing on the levels of equity, inclusiveness as well as sustained wellbeing of stakeholders (UNDP, 2009).

Furthermore, RBM through learning that entails incorporation of best practices and lessons learned, contributes to the building of institutional capacity, again furthering a primary goal of good governance and effectiveness necessary for achieving sustainable development, as does good governance. The approach thus significantly influences the quality of management decisions as well as the factors relating to goods governance notably accountability, efficiency and effectiveness as well as transparency in the performance of organizations and nations.

The need for poverty reduction is dire, as demonstrated by its dominance on both the Millennium and the ensuing Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs and SDGs). Accordingly, stakeholders are compelled to continuously seek effective strategies to achieve these goals. The pressing demands from stakeholders embracing the growing emphasis on expanding accountability and transparency in the use of public funds add to this impetus. This study started with the assumption that the coincidence relating to the prevalence of the two in successfully growing economies and the close similarities can imply an equally close relationship that may prove to be useful for enhancing socioeconomic development and transformation. It, therefore, seeks to confirm or refute this assumption.

There are several studies that have been conducted, and outcomes recorded, on both good governance and RBM, in different nations and organizations. However, there are limited studies that directly link the two notions indicating the existence of a gap in the body of knowledge. This study is expected to contribute to the strengthening of strategies and entities within the development sector, notably governments, as well as the building the body of knowledge on good governance, RBM and socioeconomic development.

## **2. Method**

The study was qualitative in nature and employed the document review strategy. The documents reviewed included reports on the good governance and RBM notably a 2017 UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Hub report, “Malaysian Good Practices” as well as a 2017 World Bank Group Global Knowledge and Research Hub report entitled “Driving Performance from the Center Malaysia’s Experience with PEMANDU”. For Rwanda, data were obtained from two documents namely the Results Based Performance Management for Rwanda Policy Paper prepared by Ministry of Public Service and Labor and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning as well as the Joint Governance Assessment report adopted by the Rwanda Cabinet in 2008. This governance assessment project was implemented jointly by nation’s development partners following a request by the President.

Malaysia and Rwanda were selected for this study because of their high ranking in terms of good governance, successful socioeconomic transformation programmes and leadership in the adoption and institutionalization of RBM. The researcher notes that official documents, such as those used for this study, are ordinarily known to reflect an official position rather than the reality thus posing the risk of compromising the quality of data. To improve on the quality of data, research papers, books, newspaper and internet articles as well as professional journals were also used as a basis for comparison and support. Content analysis of existing documents provided an opportunity for the researcher to evaluate relevant data from a wide range of elements.

There were the usual limitations inherent in research particularly the time constraint and the need to de-limit the area of research where some elements were not considered. Consequently, the sample may

not be fully representative of the population being studied. Therefore, as with all research methods, the generalization of findings is made with caution. Recommendations for further research are provided to assist in addressing these limitations.

### 3. Result

Malaysia had a pervasive culture of results since the 1960s to support the efficient and effective delivery of public services. This helped the nation to register steady economic growth, over the past decades, which significantly improved the well-being of its people. Similarly, Rwanda introduced and operationalized RBM as a policy to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, ownership, inclusiveness, evidence based learning, transparency and entrenchment of a culture of results promote within the public service.

Both nations used RBM systems that fostered maximum possible collaboration, between key stakeholders, within and outside the government with interaction that extended beyond mere consultation or one-way communication from the governments. These systems were designed to proactively gather input and feedback from the stakeholders through strategies that included open days, surveys, workshops as well as focus discussion groups, and direct contact via the internet and Short Message Services (SMS). These data were gathered from stakeholder groups including the public sector, private sector and civil society. For example, results-oriented plans were formulated at all levels with input solicited for and received from beneficiaries. The input incorporated defined strategies, initiatives, targets and outcomes as well as in-built monitoring and evaluation frameworks focused on results. Soliciting the voices of stakeholders helped to promote ownership and inclusiveness as well as build consensus among the communities.

Additionally, Rwanda used participatory performance evaluation tools that included citizen report cards based on user surveys and structured questionnaires and community scorecards as an additional element of accountability towards end-users of project deliverables. Beneficiaries provided data on the levels of effectiveness, inclusiveness, participation and accountability demonstrated in the implementation of government programmes and actions and also how knowledgeable citizens are about their rights. The use of measurable results and provision of associated performance data significantly reduced chances for corruption and also availed substantial evidence for course correction whenever necessary. Results based monitoring evaluation thus helped to promote good governance through heightening almost all the characteristics of the latter notably the levels of participation, accountability, project efficiency and effectiveness, inclusiveness and transparency.

Additionally, in Malaysia the levels of results delivered by each ministry were made available for all other ministries to review before they are forwarded to the Prime Minister for scrutiny. Such practice helped to further the notions of accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and ultimately

good governance.

In line with RBM principles, stakeholders in both nations were obliged to ensure that every decision was evidence-based with research results and information from rigorous monitoring and evaluation as bases. This arrangement offered credible answers for addressing the accountability concerns of stakeholders regarding progress toward the achievement of stated targets and goals. It also helped to further advance the meaningful use of stakeholder input into decision-making thus promoting good governance and development effectiveness.

Government ministers and employees in both Malaysia and Rwanda signed performance contracts where each unit was responsible and accountable for the delivery of agreed targets, a model that again improved the levels of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. In both nations, the success of transformation programmes were partly attributed to the associated enhancement of good governance. This practice led to a marked reduction in opportunities for corruption in Rwanda. The nation also went further to effectively use RBM frameworks for implementing governance initiatives. For example, changes in homicide rates per population were used as a quantitative measure while perceptions of beneficiaries provided a qualitative measure for security conditions symbolizing the factor of ruling justly

#### **4. Discussion**

The implementation of RBM can, therefore, effectively promote good governance because it encompasses generally accepted principles of the latter and also improves managerial and organizational functions. Its adoption and full institutionalization, across all government institutions, with solid support from the highest levels, is highly recommended for the successful implementation of development programmes and, consequently, the improvement of livelihoods. Despite the inherent limitations, this study opens up a number of possibilities for future research on RBM and good governance. Such research can be conducted in different organizations or the same samples with different methodologies.

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