

MAIN ARTICLES

AN OVERVIEW OF PRODUCTIVITY MANAGEMENT IN GHANA

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Abstract

Improving productivity at the individual, enterprise, and national levels is the surest and quickest way to create wealth and enhance the competitiveness and agility of indigenous enterprises. This paper evaluates the extent to which productivity management has made positive impacts on the growth of economies and poverty alleviation. It also identifies stakeholders' roles and strategies in productivity movements in Asia, Europe, Botswana, and Ghana. Results of the study show that Ghana has relatively lower productivity indices than Asian countries. This accounts for one of the factors responsible for the slow growth rate of the Ghanaian economy and the uncompetitive nature of its indigenous enterprises. Recommendations are made to improve productivity levels in Ghana to catalyze the country's efforts towards the attainment of middle-income economy by 2015.

Key Words Used: Productivity Management, Attitude, Economic Growth, Competitiveness, Employment Opportunities, Wealth Creation, Productivity Movements.

Introduction

The importance of productivity management to the growth of an economy and wealth creation has received much support and recognition worldwide (Dordunoo et al.; 1995). Studies revealed that nations that attach less importance to

crippling debt burden, high unemployment, poverty, and high business death rates (Agoro, 1987; Ndu, 1987). Productivity management therefore, offers opportunity for countries to improve their citizens' standard of living (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001). In spite of its important role in improving and sustaining economic growth and wealth creation coupled with benefits associated with productivity management, researchers, practitioners and policy makers have paid less attention to it in Ghana.

Objectives Of The Study

This paper discusses productivity management, and productivity indices in Ghana relative to Asian countries. It also deals with the importance of and benefits derived from increased productivity, constraining factors to increased productivity management, and lessons that can be learnt to improve Ghana's productivity indices.

Methodology

This study is an empirical qualitative one and is based purely on secondary data sources. The researchers assessed secondary data from the following sources: published articles, journals, proceedings on productivity improvement workshops, and books on productivity management issues across the globe. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which focused on percentage scores and ratios.

Literature On Productivity Improvement Activities In Ghana

Research work on productivity measurement in Ghana dates as far back as April 1973 by the Management Development and Productivity

Institute (MDPI) as contained in the 1967-69 Industrial Statistical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service (MDPI, 1974). The finding shows that labour productivity growth rates were 3.8% and 0.4% for 1967/68 and 1968/69 respectively. In 1990, another study was carried out under the joint sponsorship of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Ghana. It identified low productivity indices in Ghana. The study urged the Government to strengthen the institutional capacity of the MDPI and resource it to carry out its functions in the areas of management development and productivity training, consultancy and research to enable stakeholders to devise strategies to improve productivity.

In 1993, Heldane-Luttererodt undertook another study and also recommended the need for a coordinated effort to improve productivity in Ghana (T.K.A. Bibilazu, Personnel Communication). Thereafter, there have been several studies on productivity management in Ghana and all their findings stress the need to identify economic sectors of high growth potential to improve upon their productivity levels to form a basis and guideline for the government to formulate national employment and wealth creation policies (Ankoma, 1994).

One significant productivity measurement study by Dordunoo et al.; (1995) under the sponsorship of the UNDP/ILO on sustained employment generation sampled a total of 23 industries covering 12 sub-sectors located in Accra-Tema metropolitan area. Finding of the study in respect of total productivity, value added, wage, and profit rates revealed the following:

- ⚡ Overall average productivity level was 1.70 times for the sample. This figure was far lower than the level of productivity of industries in some Asian countries, which average about 4 to 5 times per annum;
- ⚡ Labour productivity index was negative 0.18 (-0.18) per annum in Ghana

compared to recorded index of over 1.5 per annum in some Asian countries;

- ⚡ Highest productive enterprises in the sample were the foreign/multinational companies, followed by national private firms, then the public and indigenous enterprises;
- ⚡ The private sector is relatively more productive than the public sector; and
- ⚡ Value added and profit margins were negative depicting very low levels of productivity of all factors of production.

The study identified challenges constraining productivity management as: inaccessibility and high cost of credit, lack of long-term credit facility, irregular supply of and high cost of raw materials and spare parts, obsolete technology and machinery, overstaffing in some enterprises, as well as excessive dumping and inflow of imported goods due to over liberalization of the Ghanaian economy. The study recommended the following strategies to address the challenges: privatize the affected relatively low productive enterprises;

- ⚡ banks offer long term credit facility and business advisory assistance to productive enterprises;
- ⚡ retrench labour in over staffed enterprises;
- ⚡ human resource development programmes; and
- ⚡ local enterprises to undertake market research to have access to information that can facilitate provision of quality service to their valued customers.

Finally, the government was encouraged to adopt prudent fiscal policy to achieve macro-economic stability to spur the growth of the private sector, identified as an engine of growth.

After a decade of the productivity measurement

study and subsequent publication of the recommendations to policy makers and practitioners, productivity indices reflected in the rate of growth of the economy has been disappointing (The State Of The Ghanaian Economy Report, 2002). The report attributed the slow rate per income growth rate of the Ghanaian economy to low total factor productivity rather than unavailability of production inputs for the past decade. It urged policy makers and productivity management stakeholders to identify innovative strategies to improve Ghana's total factor productivity if it intends to enhance its competitiveness and the agility of its local industries in the global market.

Definitions, Perceptions, And The Concept Of Productivity

"Productivity" is probably one of the most over-worked words in our vocabulary. Hardly a day passes without a policy maker, public servant or parties to salary negotiation process emphasize the need to improve productivity at the workplace. Productivity is a tangible matter that is measured in concrete terms in a farm, or at the office of a bureaucrat, a politician or the worker in the public or private sector. Productivity seems to connote different definitions, meanings, and expressions to different people and in different countries embarking on productivity improvement programmes. For instance, the European Productivity Agency, established in 1959 defines productivity as "A state of the mind... an attitude that seeks the continuous improvement of what exists; is a conviction that one can do better today than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than today".

The Singapore National Productivity Board defines productivity as: "An attitude of the mind that strives for and achieves the habit for improvement, and development of system and set of practices that translate that attitude into action characterized by constantly upgrading the citizens' competencies, promoting teamwork, and

continuously learning to enhance competitiveness of their enterprises through cost reduction, waste elimination, high-quality product and services, a bigger market share and a higher standard of living. Japan Productivity Centre also defines productivity as: "A mental attitude that leads to practical action, resulting in real improvement for everyone".

Technically, productivity is defined as: "The relationship between outputs of goods or services generated by an enterprise using inputs (both human and material) utilized to create this output." Thus, basic productivity concept always shows the relationship between output and input used to produce that output. However, in layman's language, productivity is about working smarter to produce high quality goods and/or services at relatively lower cost for higher customer value. Higher productivity means output increasing faster than input; input decreasing more than output; producing the same output with fewer inputs; or getting more output from the same inputs (Personal Communication, A.W.C.K. Caiquo, 2005)

Productivity management is primarily concerned with improving operations, processes, and procedures as well as monitoring performance to enhance the competitiveness and agility of an individual, enterprise, or a nation (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001). To achieve productivity management goals, one needs to measure how much output is obtained for every unit of input pumped in. Consequently, productivity measurement helps every nation, enterprise or individual to know where they stand at present. As a decision making tool, it is used extensively to analyze effectiveness, efficiency and trend of performance over a defined period as well as in comparison with competitors locally or abroad.

Productivity measurement involves dividing output by input to arrive at a ratio, indicator or value, examples include value-added per employee

employee or profit per employee. At the company and national levels, Value-Added and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are used to measure productivity levels respectively. There are various ways of measuring productivity and can cover only one input – land, labour, raw materials, energy, machinery, etc and in this case, it is known as partial productivity. On the other hand, Total Factor Productivity (TFP) captures all the factors of production and covers output generated per unit of all inputs or resources used to generate that output. TFP is more reliable and covers complete measurement of productivity.

Importance Of Increased Productivity In Wealth Creation In Ghana.

The level of productivity has remained persistently low and probably accounts for one of the causes of Ghana's "vicious cycle" of underdevelopment, high incidence of poverty and uncompetitive nature of indigenous enterprises in the global market. Symptoms of the low productivity in Ghana include:

- Poor quality of output (goods and services) which invariably compel consumers preference for imported products over locally produced items;
- Prevalence of high prices of outputs in our local market which are relatively more expensive than their imported counterparts from Asia, Europe or South Africa. Typical examples are poultry and meat products, rice, textiles and garments, hotels, road construction, etc;
- Lack of competitiveness of indigenous Ghanaian products in international markets resulting in persistent and growing trend of balance of trade deficits. In this context, Ghana has trade deficit with almost all her trading partners in America, Europe and Asia;
- Wholesale marketing of imported products, manifested in shops (petty trading, hawking, streetism,) spread out in all corners of the country; and

- Poor competency in managerial and supervisory practices in state-owned and indigenous enterprises.

These observations were echoed by the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing, Hon. Hackman Owusu-Agyemang when he signed management contracts with two institutions – Vitens International of the Netherlands and the Rands Water Services Pty of South Africa to productively manage Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) under a five year management contract (Daily Graphic, Wednesday, November 16, 2005).

In their contribution towards increasing productivity in Nigeria (Agoro, 1987; Ndu, 1987; Bolaji, 1987) mentioned that there is hardly any developing country that does not exhibit the above-mentioned socio-economic characteristics. Nevertheless, these challenges are generally absent or less pronounced in advanced economies where productivity management is part of their political, economic, socio-cultural, and organizational culture. The removal of these unproductive attitudes in the Ghanaian business environment through increased total factor productivity will go a long way to create wealth, sustain economic growth, and enhance the competitiveness of Ghanaian local small and medium-scale enterprises.

Benefits Derived From Improved Productivity Programmes And Movements.

The main goal of productivity management is to raise the standard of living of the employee, the customer, the employer, and the nation in general (Adekoya, 1987; Ucher, 1987). Productive nations, companies, and individuals are more profitable, produce competitive and quality products and services, and win customer loyalty. These increase their market shares in both local and international markets. Workers in such productive enterprises take home relatively more pay and pension scheme;

enjoy better job security and training; and career development opportunities. The cost of savings made is passed on to their customers through consumption of better quality products and services for the same or at even relatively lower prices (higher purchasing power and customer value). In economies where productivity is low, indigenous enterprises are uncompetitive as reflected in higher prices of goods and services charged relative to imported items of the same brand. This is demonstrated by customers lodging bitter complaints bitterly about persistent and rising cost of living. In Accra, just imagine the frustration one goes through in long queues at banks, post offices, lorry stations, traffic jams, paying utility bills, or the nightmare of buying products that always break down just a few days after usage in the midst of absence of product systems. These are symptoms of low productivity in developing countries (Urestsone, 1987). The Asian tigers have moved away from these symptoms of low productivity with sound policy framework, programmes and strategies they adopted to enhance their economic development.

Asian Countries Productivity Management Gains: Lessons Learnt

In recent times, Asian countries have achieved significant progress in their economic development due to efficient and effective utilization of their economic resources to create wealth through productivity movements. The countries institutionalized productivity movements that catalyzed them to move away from low value-added peasant agriculture to high value high-tech manufacturing and agro-based processing industries (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001). These were possible primarily because the governments' policies and regulations created the enabling environments that did not interfere with market structures, promoted productivity movements at the work places, supported and resourced their respective productivity management organizations, and fostered healthy relationships among

employers, entrepreneurs, management, and labour.

These initiatives led to the establishment of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) in 1961 with 8 founding members – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Nepal. By 2001, membership in the APO's had increased to 18 (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001). Japan initially provided the financial means to develop and implement productivity programmes in Asia after establishing the Japan Productivity Centre in 1955. Japan used the quality circle concept to eliminate waste, reduce cost, and improve efficiency and effectiveness. It also initiated new work technologies that created opportunities for employee creativity, teamwork, motivation, and positive attitudes.

The establishment of the Asian Productivity Organization has contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of the member states. When APO was established in 1961, the GDP per capita of the eight economies ranged from US\$ 70 to US\$ 500. By 2001, the GDP per capita ranges between US\$1,200 and US\$24,000. Asia's economic growth in the past four decades is attributed to a combination of economic, social, and political factors. On the economic front, 3 key factors have been critical: abundance of hard-working human resources, availability of capital (both domestic savings and foreign investments), and a strong focus on productivity improvement techniques. The, fastest growing economies in Asia are those that have invested adequately in productivity management and are reaping desired pay-offs. Two typical member states with recognizable achievements in productivity growth and competitiveness are China and Singapore.

China's post-1978 growth was propelled by productivity increase of 9.6% per year during 1979-94, compared to 1% before 1978. This resulted in faster economic growth, of which more than 50% was accounted for by productivity

improvement creating vast difference to the Chinese society in the area of poverty reduction. According to the World Bank, China was among the world's poorest countries in 1978, with 80% of her population had income less than US\$ 1 a day and only a third of the adults were literates. Ten years later, only 12% of the Chinese lived with incomes of less than US\$ 1 a day and illiteracy rate was down to 7% (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001).

In September 1981, Singapore took a giant step to raise the standard of living of its people through the formation of productivity movements. The movement took the form of national campaign that encouraged an active and widespread commitment of all Singaporeans to productivity management. The results were phenomenal and fantastic between 1981 and 2001. They were characterized as:

- In 1990, 90% of workers were able to relate productivity indices correctly compared to 40% in 1986;
- In 1990, 90% of workers took action to improve productivity compared to 54% in 1986;
- Number of disputes referred to the Industrial Arbitration Court fell from 122 in 1980 to less than 20 in 1993;
- Number of training places supported by the Skills Development Fund increased from 36,000 in 1981 to 630,282 in 2000;
- Average annual GDP growth rate and average annual productivity growth rate were 7.20% and 3.8% respectively;
- Per capita income grew from US\$ 11,067 in 1981 to US\$ 37,433 in 2001;
- Average monthly earnings increased from US\$ 736 in 1981 to US\$ 2,819 in 2001;
- Number of labour force increased from 1.15 million in 1981 to 2.12 million by 2001; and
- Home ownership moved from 63% of the working population in 1981 to 92% of the population in 2001.

Productivity movements have not only been used to improve productivity in Asia but in America and Europe. The European countries started productivity centres using the Marshall Aid. These centres initiated productivity drive in Europe by organizing study missions to study productivity principles and techniques in the United States of America. The European countries, together established the European Productivity Agency in 1953 to share their technical know-how and best practices in productivity management. The European Productivity Agency, now called the European Association of National Productivity Centres (EANPC), located in Brussels, is committed to seeking cooperation among all countries aimed at improving productivity and competitiveness in European Union.

Africa has not been left out in productivity movements (Productivity and Quality Forum, 2005). The success story of Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC) in spearheading productivity movement in Botswana is instructive and inspiring. In 1996, under the assistanceship and guidance of Singapore, Botswana launched its national productivity movement based on the concept derived from Singapore. A three-year Singapore/Botswana bilateral agreement on technical cooperation was signed to build capacity and capability of the Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC), established by the Act of Parliament. The initial induction and training of BNPC staff was done in Singapore. Thereafter, the BNPC and productivity movement were officially launched by the President of the Republic of Botswana in August 1995. Following the official launch of the movement, Botswana has enjoyed tremendous pay-off manifested in these observations:

- Productivity awareness had risen from 7.7% in 1996 to 51% by end of 2001;
- Has the fastest growth in per capita income in the world with per capita nominal GDP in 2003/4 estimated at US\$ 4,736;

- Economic growth averaged over 9% from 1966 to 1999 with nominal GDP in 2003/4 estimated at US\$ 8.33 billion;
 - Earned the highest sovereign credit rating in Africa and has stock piled foreign exchange reserves over US\$ 5.3 billion in 2003-2004 amounting to almost two years of current imports;
 - World Economic Forum rates Botswana as one of the two most economically competitive nations in Africa; and
 - In 2004, it was once again assigned “A” grade credit ratings by Moodys Investors Service and Poor's ranking Botswana as by far the best credit risk in Africa and on par or above many countries in central Europe, East Asia and Latin America;
 - Transformed its economy from “Least Developed Countries” status at the time of independence (United Nations rating) to a “middle income” category.
- Inadequate human resource competency and capacity building in respect of technical, professional and managerial best productivity management practices;
 - Lack of government policy direction, resources and legislation on human resources development programmes, with emphasis on productivity management and improvement practices;
 - Stakeholders' limited knowledge about the benefits, roles and importance of productivity management in enhancing the competitiveness of local Ghanaian businesses;
 - Bankrupt management practices and supervisory skills of entrepreneurs and managers in organizations characterized by inefficient use of technology and obsolete machinery coupled with low utilization capacity, poorly trained and unskilled labour force.
 - Unproductive and negative attitude of workforce manifested in the form of indiscipline, insobriety, mental laziness, apathy, irresponsibility, lateness, corruption, absenteeism, pretend sickness, pilfering, industrial dispute and work stoppage.

Factors That Inhibit Productivity Improvement Efforts In Ghana

While productivity is receiving increased attention and recognition in advanced countries, the underling problem of improving it is still meeting mixed reactions in developing economies, including Ghana (T.K. A. Bibilazu; Bagu, 1987; Ndu, 1987). In these conditions pleas for productivity management and improvement programmes are met with excuses or reactions such as crippling national debt, lack of resources including time, confusion as to where and how to start, apathy and indifference. Nevertheless, amidst these varying attitudes and reactions, the nation, companies or individuals stand to benefit significantly if productivity management practices are improved.

Various studies have revealed some constraining factors to increased productivity programmes in developing countries (Agoro, 1987; Bolaji, 1987; Dordunoo, et al.: 1995). These include:

Productivity Management: Stakeholders' Roles And Strategies:

In general, productivity management aims to enhance the capacities and capabilities of employees, enterprises, and nations in general to promote their competitiveness and agility. Two basic conditions must be satisfied to achieve key goals of productivity management. First, stakeholders must play their respective roles; and secondly, productivity management factors must be available in the right quantity, quality, and timely. It must be utilized judiciously and intelligently.

Stakeholders of productivity management identified are governments and their agencies, employ-

ers, entrepreneurs, managers, employees, political parties, consumers, religious groups, NGOs, professional bodies, the media, civil society and social development parties (A.W.C.K. Caiquo). After studying productivity in Nigeria, Adekoya, (1987) and Bolaji, (1987) cited the role of government as creating conducive environment towards productive growth; providing infrastructure, knowledge, laws, policies, and ensuring incentives to enable each stakeholder to play its role effectively and efficiently.

Employers must be interested in productivity improvement programmes, and allocate resources and motivate employees to implement them successfully. Political parties should first and foremost incorporate productivity improvement programmes in their manifestos to guide them to design strategies to alleviate poverty and create wealth among the citizens. All professional bodies must be interested in productivity management through research and development initiatives, workshops, and human resource development programmes.

Productivity management factors identified are capital investment, management, human resources, organizational culture - system and policies, work methods and technology, materials, energy, land, time, etc. The role management plays in productivity management is described as a pivotal point around which other factors are evolved (Lawler, 1985). Managers create enabling organizational culture and effectively allocate resources for successful productivity management. Besides, management initiates productivity management programmes; introduces better work technology and methods; trains and retrains; rewards and manages employees' performance; and above all, measures productivity indices to make effective decisions to guide the growth and competitiveness.

Managers of enterprises have a responsibility to build a healthy organizational culture and

workable system that assist employees to realize their potential and utilize their capabilities to build their self-esteem through the provision of quality customer service. The role of trade unions and employees in productivity management has been adequately and extensively researched (Bagu, 1987). Employees must be willing to improve performance, have positive attitudes towards the work, and recognize management's role in productivity enhancement efforts. They must be prepared to work in quality circles and willfully contribute their competencies towards productivity improvement programmes. Besides, they must be willing to undergo training and development programmes initiated by management. Furthermore, workers must make significant contributions to higher productivity by abstaining from absenteeism, alcoholism, mental lateness, idleness, running personal business from work or moonlighting, etc (Lawler, 1985).

Steps Taken By Some Countries To Increase Their Productivity Levels

Countries that have benefited immensely from productivity management programmes utilized the following strategies to achieve their results (Asian Productivity Organization, 2001; Productivity and Quality Forum, 2005):

- Inculcation of positive work-related and competitive attitudes and discipline among all stakeholders who are able to identify business opportunities and exploit them to create wealth;
- Disposition of entrepreneurs and companies towards competing on the international market resulting in enhancing competitive edge of local enterprises;
- Review of bureaucratic policies and procedures as well as provision of incentives that promote businesses to access resources for growth;

- Development of the human capital through training, retraining, and skills upgrading in management development and productivity programmes;
- Institution of compensation systems that focus substantially on employee performance, motivation, and innovation, as well as problem solving competencies rather than on employees' number of years of active service;
- Development and implementation of productivity management with technical support, assistance and training programmes from countries with superior track records;
- Usage of quality circles and productivity movements at the enterprise level where all stakeholders are actively involved in building of work-related positive attitudes, waste elimination, cost reduction, efficiency improvement, initiation of new work methods, value engineering, value analysis, etc;
- The government should come out with comprehensive policy direction and legislation on human resources development programmes, with emphasis on productivity management and skills training;
- The government should develop and integrate productivity movements (a national campaign) into the country's educational and training institutions with support from the GETFund;
- The government should, as matter of urgency, institute Skills Development Fund Act where private and public enterprises contribute funds to train and retrain workers in Ghana in best management and productivity improvement practices;
- National workshops on productivity management should be organized involving all stakeholders to champion a new course to improve productivity levels in Ghana. The workshop should identify resources, assistance, support, roles, responsibilities, challenges and strategies to boost productivity. Identifiable stakeholders expected in participate are government and its agencies, entrepreneurs, employers, management, workers, academicians, civil society, political parties, religious bodies, private sector, professional bodies, students, farmers, the media, etc;
- Implementation of productivity management programmes with technical support, assistance, and training programmes from countries with superior track records such as United States of America, Europe, Japan, Singapore, India, Malaysia, etc;
- Restructure the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth, and Employment to devise effective institutional and policy framework as well as programmes in human resource management services for

Recommendations

From the foregoing discussion, it is inferred that Ghana's productivity level is relatively lower than her Asian counterparts. This probably accounts for the numerous challenges confronting the economy in respect of poor competitiveness of local enterprises, limited employment opportunities, relatively low salary levels, and high incidence of poverty. Thus, it is time all Ghanaians pay attention and devote adequate resources towards productivity management and improvement programmes. Subsequently, the following recommendations are made:

- Institutional strengthening and capacity building of the Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI) to carry out management development and productivity improvement programmes and activities;

both private and public sector organizations including the youth aimed at enhancing their productivity, competitiveness and agility. The ministry should be adequately resourced with effective capacity building programmes effected to play its new challenging roles in global employment environment. Currently, majority of the departments and institutions under the ministry – MDPI, Labour Department, Factories Inspectorate, Social Welfare, Community Development, etc are inadequately resourced with inadequate budgetary allocations. Currently, the Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI) is housed in wooden structures and poorly resourced to effectively champion any meaningful productivity improvement programmes aimed at positively influencing the average Ghanaian to be productive and competitive in the global market.

Conclusion

It is established that countries that invest adequately in productivity management reap benefits derived from wealth creation and enhanced competitiveness. The Asian countries' economic performances are classical examples and lessons to be learnt. The study has revealed that our local enterprises and the public sector are unproductive compared with our European and Asian counterparts. The study has noted a strong linkage between Ghana's low productivity on one hand and its slow economic growth rate, high incidence of poverty, and limited employment opportunities for the young polytechnic and university graduates.

If Ghana truly intends to raise its per capita income to US \$ 1,000 (middle-income economy) by 2015, enhance the competitiveness of its local

businesses, create more jobs for the graduates, and improve upon her citizens' standard of living, then it is time all Ghanaians allocate substantial resources to create awareness about benefits to be derived from increased productivity and encourage all stake-holders to play their respective roles in improving productivity. Through this, Ghanaians may become productivity conscious in their business dealings to positively change their work attitudes and create organizational culture to enhance employee, enterprise, or national productivity. Finally, the report is intended to raise productivity and quality awareness in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy, facilitate an opportunity for organizations and individuals to reflect on their performance, and identify new areas for improvement and economic and business growth.

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