

Investigation into the Effectiveness of Staff Appraisal in the Job Performance in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Performance appraisal has become a major human resource management tool in secondary schools as it enhances performance and productivity of employees. More often than not, the school management ignores this major activity and later experiences decreased productivity resulting from lack of recognition and appreciation.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of appraisal programs adopted by secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive research design by way of survey. Data was collected from across section of schools by use of questionnaires and interview guides. Data was statistically analyzed and the results discussed in a narrative way.

The study found out that very few school managers conducted performance appraisal of their employees. The main fear being tedious procedures involved. It was also realized that most appraisals done in schools were informal.

The study concludes that performance appraisal is an important tool which improves the school chances of attaining key operational goals. The study recommends that proper appraisal techniques be adopted. This will assist the appraisee to appreciate their performance and improve in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives

Keywords: Staff appraisal, Employee performance, Motivation, Appraisal ratings, Feedback process, Evaluation

Introduction

Performance appraisal is a tool used to evaluate employee's job performance. It is part of career development and consists of regular job evaluation within the organization; it also evaluates the behavior of workers in their working stations. It involves both quantitative and qualitative aspect of job performance. It is the most important aspect of organizations routine activities.

This study revealed that most staff would wish their manager to list the performance objectives more specifically and clearly. In most schools, however there is either no staff performance appraisal or where it is, it is never used to the satisfaction of all staff. It was found that most managers make wrong use of appraisals and clearly on the halo effect. It is used as punitive tool rather than a tool to help improve performance. Educational institutions need to carry out performance appraisals as a matter of importance.

The current performance appraisal requires qualified staff to perform it every three years. (Ontario report 2006) If the rating is unsatisfactory, the principal and the staff must prepare an improvement plan identifying the steps that the staff should undertake to improve performance. If staff appraisals were to be improved, weaknesses established in the systems need to be addressed. According to MOEST (2005) teachers promotion and deployment have not been based on the performance but on academic qualifications which bring about internal inefficiency

Theoretical framework.

The Goal setting Theory It states that staff gets motivated to work in the organization when they are given specific and pronounced goals to achieve and that hard goals produce higher level of performance than easy goals. The study used this theory since goal setting and explanation creates confidence in staff. The most performing staff is goal directed because set goals in a school allow schools vision, aim and strategic objectives to be realized. When schools' goals are clearly explained to all the staff, that is teaching and non-teaching will have a clear view on what the school would like to achieve since each understand what is expected from them and how they are to be met and the time limit.

The other theory was **Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory.**

It is based on the assumption that people are motivated to act in ways that will be followed by valued and desired outcomes. It says that an employee might be motivated when there is belief that a better performance will result in a good performance appraisal which will help in the realization of personal goals. In a school, environment, the staff, all of whom works to get something whether monetary or material at the end of a specified period. This is a personal goal. One can be motivated to achieve the personal goal once they achieve organization goals since expectancy is the different level of expectations as well as confidence regarding one's capability. Staff believe that these create a motivational force.

Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- To find out if school managers set out goals and objectives to the staff.
- To find out if managers in schools use performance appraisals to appraise their staff.
- To investigate the school managers knowledge of performance appraisals systems.
- To identify the staffs opinion on the use of Performance Appraisal Systems to promote or reward.
- To investigate whether Performance Appraisal Systems affect employees' motivation.
- To find out if staff get feedback on Performance Appraisal..
- To identify measurement of performance against competence.

Questions

The study was guided by the following questions.

Research questions

1. How are goals and objectives set in schools?
2. Which tools, techniques are used for the analysis and evaluation of performance?
3. How is performance appraisal used as a way of assessing the staff?
4. What is your opinion on Performance Appraisal Systems to reward or promote?.
5. What effect does Performance Appraisal Systems have on motivation?
6. How is feedback on Performance Appraisal given to the staff?
7. What are the measurements of performance and competence?

Literature review

Performance Appraisal Systems

Performance Appraisal System is a component of performance management. It checks the individual's achievements in view of set goals and target of the school or organization. All the year round, managers execute important work and managing employee's performance is one of major things they do.

According to Grole (2002) performance appraisals is a management tool that is used to evaluate the workers performance quality. It also helps in identifying and developing human performance. According to Karol (1996) Performance appraisal include communication session planned between a manager and the worker for the purpose of assessing the employee's previous performance and establishing ways for further improvement.

Performance management system (PMS)

Techniques have to be developed to appraise in order to determine if performance has succeeded. In many organizations today, performance management (PM) is one of ways used to manage workers performance. It is a practice used by managers to make sure that employee's actions and outputs delivered are consistent with the organizations' goals. The concept of Performance Management has been widely used in organizations with a view to obtain better results and improved performance from the work force, where goals are set well in order to get expected outcomes. Performance is both behavior and results. According to Brumbrach 1988, as cited by Armstrong 2000, behavior comes from the performance and transforms performance from abstraction to action. Behaviors are also outcomes in their own right, i.e. the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks and can be judged independent of results.

Performance is also undertaking particular action to successfully complete set goals while at the same time, taking into consideration the given time frame and constraints of the performer and the situation.

Modern staff appraisal

Performance appraisal process is a more planned and formal process which is used as a means which help identity and compare employees/staff performance. Employees are making use of the appraisal results to raise salaries, rewards and promotions. Feedback is the result of the one-one discussion between supervisors and subordinates through the feedback process. This process other than reinforcing relationships with the supervisors can enhance communication through the organization which subsequently helps staff to feel that they matter and their needs are being considered.

Purpose of performance Appraisal Systems

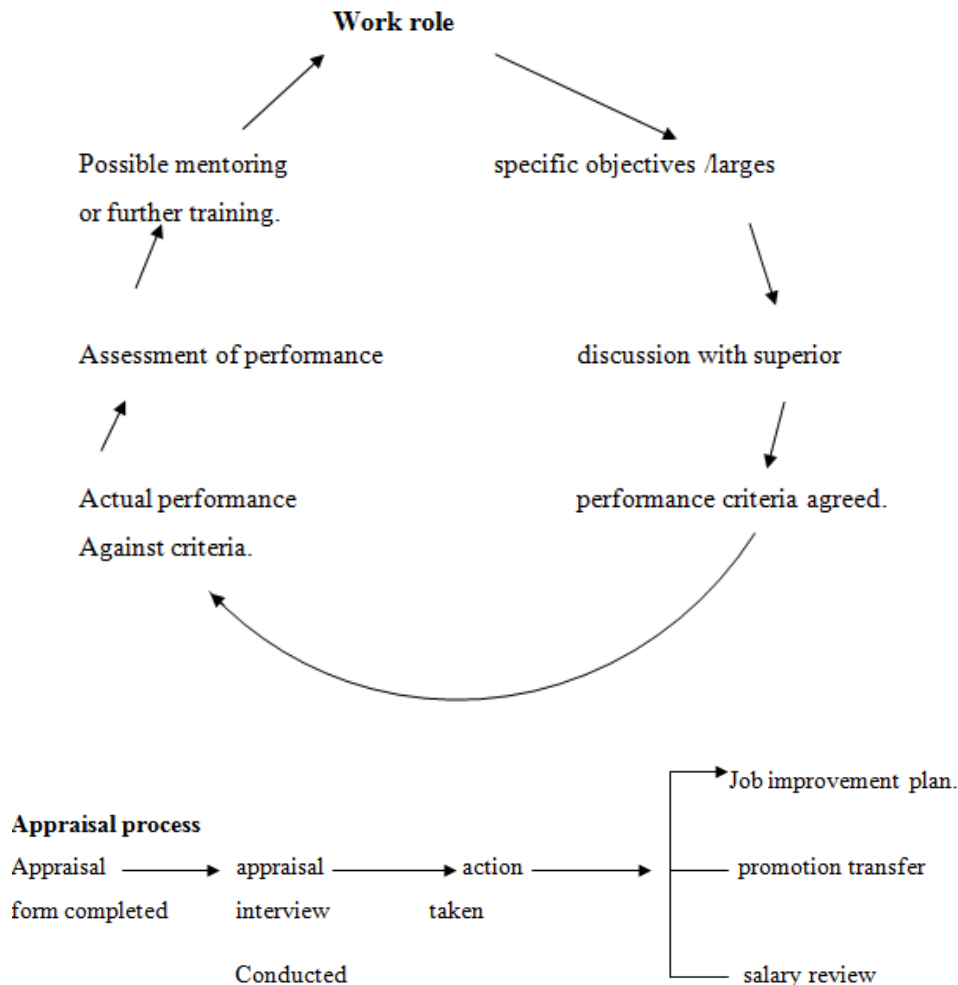
The most paramount purpose of performance appraisal is to improve performance of individuals from an organizations point of view. This is according to Cumming and Shwab (1974) Performance appraisal is also meant to maintain organizational control and also measure the efficiency with which the organization of human resources is being utilized.

Generally, Performance Appraisal is used to estimate the employee's worth. Here, the immediate superior report on the performance of his subordinate during the past year. Performance appraisal has many other purposes and benefits. They are that it alerts the employees on their strength /weaknesses threats and opportunities/(SWOT) in performance during the past year so as to take steps accordingly. Morale and motivation of top performers is very high as they feel appreciated and try to perform even better in the next evaluation. Low performers

appreciate their areas of weakness which make them careful not to repeat in the next evaluation. Again, the existence of Performance appraisal indicates to employees that the organization is genuinely concerned with their individual performance and advancement; this translates into staffs' sense of worth, commitment and belonging. The performance appraisal (PA) offer a chance to focus on employment activities and objectives, to spot and correct existing problems and to enhance favorable future performance, subsequently enhancing the performance of the whole organization.

Performance appraisal provides employees with knowledge for their work efforts. Any kind of results bring them satisfaction. Most staff would actually prefer negative recognition than no recognition at all.

Model of staff appraisal



Reasons for appraisal

The following are the reasons for performance appraisal;

- to determine an individual's current level of performance
- to establish the level of strengths and weaknesses of the employees.
- to improve employees job performance.
- to establish a basis for rewarding employees in relation to their contribution to organizations performance.
- to establish training and development requirement in an organization.
- to determine performance potential of employees in an organization.

Staff performance appraisal is part of a manager's job, Indeed unless he appraises himself, he cannot adequately discharge his responsibility for assisting and teaching his staff, according to Drucker (1954- 70)

He views managers as responsible for achieving results which are obtained from management of human, material and financial resources, all of which must be monitored and appropriate action taken.

Appraisal programmers are designed to provide a systematic control of behavior of both staff and their superiors according to the McGregor (1960)

This supports management style theory which assumes that people are unreliable and irresponsible and therefore require close supervision and control. The current approach into Performance Appraisal takes the criteria of SMART.

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time

Appraisal procedure

- a) **Completion of appraisal forms**; this is done by the staff to complete details on personal attributes, technical attributes. The other section relating to performance is completed by the staff and the manager and it concerns results achieved by the worker. The rating scale is agreed upon by the appraisee and appraiser.
- b) **Appraisal interviews**: this takes the format of face to face meeting between the job holder and the manager at which the information on the appraisal form is discussed and certain key issues concerning salary, promotion and training are addressed. Managers are uncomfortable when they are put in a position of playing Godly roles.. In a study of six firms, Rowe (1964) found that:
 - i. Appraisers were reluctant to conduct appraisals, devising ways of evading full completion of appraisal form.
 - ii. Appraisers were extremely reluctant to carry out face to face interviews.
 - iii. There was inadequate follow-up to the appraisals interns of their effect on transfers.

Appraisal styles- 3 approaches to appraisal interview.

1. **Tell and sell style**; the manager tells the staff how he/she is doing and endeavors to persuade him/her to accept what has been decided for him/her in times of improvement.
2. **Tell and listen**– this is where the manager tells the subordinate how he/she is doing and then sits back and listens to the workers point of view and the follow-up action required.
3. **Problem – solving style**-the manager effectively puts aside the role of judge in order to join the subordinate in mutual reflection on progress and mutual discuss about required action.

Challenges of the various approaches.

- a) **Tell approach** – could be counterproductive. According to Meyer et al (1965), he found out that praise had little effect one way or the other on appraises. Criticism, however, had a negative effect on subsequent achievement. At least this approach does not give the employee some ideas of his/ her progress.
- b) **Tell and sell approach** – unless the manager is very persuasive, it is unlikely that the Tell employee will accept his version of what is required to be done.
- c) **Tell and listen approach**- this approach has the merit of informing the employees of his/her progress but the goes further by activity involving him/her in the process of deciding what ought to be done, which is more likely to produce a positive response.
- d) **Sharing approach** – this is generally considered to provide the test basis for an appraisal fust to its joint problem solving approach in which managers and their subordinates work together more or less equals. This approach is closer to coaching than anything else.

Discussion and Conclusion

Employees' performance appraisal is an important tool by which organizations improve their chances of attaining their key operational goals. Workers who know what and how much is expected of them are likely to be more productive than those who are unclear about their role. It also provides a way the management and their staff work together on issues that matter. It also contributes to individuals maturing in experience and obtaining greater job satisfaction as a result of joint problem solving approach. However, it remains unconditional to know whether performance appraisal has a role to play in employees' motivation.

Most of the appraisals conducted in schools were informal. They were therefore never planned and were determined by initiative feelings rather than objectivity. The results were a by- product of the day to day relationships between the principal and subordinate. This type of appraisal lacks factual support and no evidence is documented. it is also irrational and disorderly. Staff appraisal reports were irregularly completed. The Teachers Service Commission code of regulations requires the appraisal be done on annual basis.

However, most staff felt that their managers should list the performance goals and objectives more clearly. They also cited cases of managers using PAS as punitive rather than corrective tool. Most managers also do not

actually know exactly what they want from their staff, and could not explain the criteria they use to assess performance.

Many respondents believed that their promotion or salary increments depend on their performance. They need to be proactive in their work. However, it is sad that, the feedback they receive after appraisals do not in most cases describe the level of performance achieved due to inefficiency. It is therefore important for managers to conduct appraisal technique correctly. Most of the managers need to know how to give feedback on performance whether negative or positive. In fact when the managers criticize negatively, this lead to defensive behavior by the staff. It showed that criticisms demotivates workers and lower their performance. Most staff pointed that feed back sessions meant to improve performance should not be pegged to salary and promotion issues. Some staff confessed that continuous promotion and biasness can lead to dissatisfaction and even compel them to seek transfer or leave their jobs. Generally, most staff felt that Performance Appraisal should provide them with a proper understanding of their duties and responsibilities towards the organization.

Most managers use performance as a tool to evaluate employees on a common ground and one which assist in salary and promotions, decisions, training and development programs. .It was most commonly agreed that there are problems in performance appraisal mostly due to bias. Some managers are too soft and others too hard on the halo effect, where managers general feeling about a staff, influences the overall judgment. This is where the managers focus on employee's personality instead of on their work performance. In some schools, it was revealed that Performance Appraisal are a source of tension and dehumanize when judgment is passed on which then lead to apprehensions and stress to the staff.

Methodology

The methodology used was descriptive survey research design, where questionnaires and interview schedules were designed to get data respond to research questions and objectives. The design was suitable as it gave room for describing and reporting underlying conditions.

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