

Instructors' Performance Appraisal Practice in the Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate instructors' performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia. In order to address the objectives of the study, a cross sectional descriptive survey method was employed. The data was collected from 41 instructors and 6 department heads. Data collected from respondents was analyzed and interpreted using Percentage. The finding revealed that, the instructors' performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University seemed to be moderate. In On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the weaknesses encountered by the university while performing instructional performance appraisal.

1. INTRODUCTION

All social institutions have their own goals and objectives to achieve. Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia, as social institutions are established to facilitate the teaching- learning process, conducting problem solving researches, and providing community services. Bahir Dar University, as a one of senior higher institution categorized under the first generation universities in the county, plays a vital role in changing the behavior of students and enabling them contribute for the social, economical, political and technological advancement of the country; conducting problem solving researches and providing community services as well.

Basically, the achievement of objectives of the higher institutions merely depends on the performance of academic staffs. Academic staffs are responsible for physical, intellectual, social and moral development of students (Saylor and Alexander, 1966). Hence, it is imperative that instructors' performance appraisal be conducted correctly, efficiently, timely and fairly to determine the level of instructors' performance and to identify the area where further development and improvement of skills are needed.

Due to this fact this paper attempts to study the instructors' performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The task of teachers' performance appraisal is essential and yet a sensitive responsibility. Various reasons could be cited as to why the task is considered to be sensitive and complex. Primarily, performance appraisal deals with measurement of human efforts, the degree to which they could conform to the group norms and how much effort they are putting in their jobs. However, there are instances where people are not clear about objectives of appraising performance and give it less of their time and attention. At other times, the measuring instruments could either be vague or might not contain the necessary quality that need to be measured; else, appraisal could be influenced by the behavior of the appraisee and the appraiser that might distort the real intension behind the appraisal process.

Bahir Dar University, as a higher institution with instructors teaching in various disciplines, is not an exception of these problems. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following basic questions:

1. To what extent the objective of instructors' performance appraisal clearly understood by appraisal and appraisee?
2. How much instructors perceive the criteria used in their performance appraisal relevant and feasible?
3. To what extent is the performance appraisal effectively conducted?
4. What are the problems encountered in instructors' performance appraisal practice?

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective behind this study was to assess the instructors' performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University, main campus as view of instructors and department heads.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURE

4.1. Meaning of Performance Appraisal

Different authors defined performance appraisal in different times in different ways. Some are; Performance appraisal is the process of evaluating how well employees perform their jobs when compared to a set of standards, and then communicating that information to those employees (Mathis and Jackson, 2003). Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of individual with respect to his/her performance on the job and his/her potential for development (Aswatappa, 2005). According to Rue and Lioyd (1990), "performance

appraisal is the process involving communication to teachers how well they have been performing the job, also ideally involves establishing a plan for improvement’.

The above definitions revealed that performance appraisal is a formal and systematic process of evaluating employees’ performance against predetermined criteria; provision of feedback and planning for future improvement on the basis of performance result.

4.2 . Uses of Performance Appraisal

There are many uses of performance appraisal. Davis cited in Zeleke (2010) stated that teaching cannot be measured accurately. However, it is possible to measure signs and indicant of effective teaching. Byars and Rue (1997) indicates that the use of performance appraisal is to encourage performance improvement. In this regard performance appraisals are used as a means of communicating to employees how they are doing and suggesting needed changes in behavior, attitude, skills or knowledge.

According to Graham (1980) the principal uses of appraisal are the following:

- To help a manager decide what increases of pay shall be given on merit grounds.
- To determine the future use of an employee, whether he/she shall remain in his or her present job or transferred, promoted, demoted or dismissed.
- To indicate training needs, that is areas of performance where improvements would occur if appropriate training could be given.
- To motivate the employee to do better in his/her present job, by giving him knowledge of results, recognition of his or her merits and the opportunity to discuss his/her work with his/her manager.

4.3 Objectives of Performance Appraisal

As Aswathppa (2005) stated, data relating to performance assessment of employees are recorded, stored, and used for several purposes. The main purposes of employee assessment are:

- To effect promotions based on competent and performance.
- To confirm the services of probationary employees up on their completing the probationary period satisfactory.
- To assess the training and development needs of employees of employees.
- To decide up on a pay raise where (as in the organized sector).
- To let the employees know where they stand as so far as their performance is concerned and to assist them with constructive criticism and guidance for the purpose of their development.
- To improve communication. Performance appraisal provides a format for dialogue between the superior and the subordinates, and improves understanding of personal goals and concerns. This can also have the effect of increasing the trust between the rater and the rate.

According to Mathis and Jackson (2003), performance appraisal serves four objectives; development use, administrative uses/ decisions, organizational maintenance/objectives, and documentation purposes.

4.4 Principles of Performance Appraisals

A good instructors’ appraisal system should indicate ways in which excellent performance can be recognized and short coming can be remind. To meet such objectives, appraisal should be governed by some common principles on which both the appraisers and appraisees are agreed for mutual benefit (Graham, 1980).

Different scholars have proposed different principles to appraise instructors’ performance.

Accordingly, Stow and Jim in Yilma cited in Zeleke (2010) presents three principles to be followed while appraising instructors; Gathering information from variety of sources, evaluators shall get copy of appraisal policy, and trend appraisers shall carry out the appraisal. Another educator Andrews cited in Zeleke (2010) list out some important principles which include ensuring consistency, fairness, privacy of appraisal results, allowing teachers to express disagreements, recognition for excellence, and the likes. Similarly, Jones, cited in Zeleke (2010) put forward some important and inclusive points which could be considered as worth while principles in the appraisal of teachers’ performance. These are openness, confidentiality, equal opportunity, consistency of values and standards, self appraisal, implementing the outcomes, training and review.

4.5 Process of Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal process includes:

- i. Establishing performance standards
- ii. Communicating standards to employees
- iii. Measuring performance
- iv. Comparing performance with standard
- V. Discussing appraisal with employee
- vi. Initiating corrective action

4.6 Procedures of Performance Appraisal

Appraisal should be an ongoing part of any program being developed. It can contribute most when it is established at the beginning of any undertaking for which pertinent information is needed along the way. According to Hamilton (1975), the procedures which must be included in any appraisal process are:

- Enumeration of goals, objectives and /or standards of the program,
- Designation of information essential to compare the performance with the goals, objectives and/ or standards for the program,
- Design of instruments or other method of collecting the data desired,
- Identification of the discrepancies between what is desired and what exists, and
- Indication of what corrective actions should be taken to lessen or eliminate the discrepancy.

4.7 Criteria for Performance Appraisal

In order to appraise employees, it is necessary to have something against which to compare their performance. Effective performance criteria to measure teachers' competence are expected to be consistent, valid, appropriate, and comprehensive (Dull, in Mulu, cited in Zeleke, 2010).

- ✚ **Consistency-** the extent to which teachers' behavior is concurrent with the objectives of the curriculum, school structure and climate.
- ✚ **Validity-** the extent to which the content taught or appraisal procedures used are accurate.
- ✚ **Appropriateness-** the extent to which the teachers behavior is concurrent with the curriculum, the students ability, cultural identity and learning styles
- ✚ **Comprehensiveness-** the extent to which the teacher includes all of the measure aspects of the curriculum and evaluates all critical aspects of learning.

4.8 Methods of Performance Appraisal

According to Byars and Rue (1997) performance appraisal can be done by the following ways:

1. **Absolute Standards (Rating Methods)** this method requires the appraiser to record his/her subjective assessment of the employee on a scale. The rating factors include job related-and employees' personal characteristics.
2. **Graphic Rating-** method of performance appraisal that requires the rater to indicate on a scale where the employee rates on factors such as quantity of work, dependability, job knowledge, and cooperativeness.
3. **Checklist-** method of performance appraisal in which the rater answers with a yes or no a series of questions about the behavior of the employee being rated.
4. **Behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS)** – it is a method of performance appraisal designed to assess behaviors required to successfully perform a job.
5. **Forced Choice- Rating** this method requires the evaluator to rank a set of statements describing how an employee carries out the duties and responsibilities of the job. This method may include alternative ranking and paired ranking.
7. **Goal setting or Management by Objectives (MBO)** it consists of establishing clear and precisely defined statements of objectives for the work to be done by an employee; establishing an action plan indicating how these objectives are to be achieved; allowing the employee to implement the action plan; measuring objective achievement; taking corrective action when necessary; establishing new objectives for the future.
8. **Multi-Rater Assessment (360 Degree feedback)** - with this method, managers, peers, customers, suppliers, or colleagues are asked to complete questionnaire on the employee being assessed. The person assessed also completes a questionnaire. The human resources department provides the results to the employee, who in turn gets to see how his/her opinion differs from those of the group doing the assessment.
9. **Work Standards** – it involves setting a standard or an expected liable of out put and then comparing each employees level to the standard. This method has an advantage that the performance review is based on highly objective factors. Criticism of this approach is a lack of comparability of standards for different job categories.
10. **Essay Appraisal** – in this method the rater prepares a written statement describing an individual's strengths, weaknesses, and past performances.
11. **Critical- Incident Appraisal-** in this method the rater keeps a written record of incidences that illustrate both positive and negative behaviors of the employee.
12. **Combination of Methods-** As Mathis and Jackson (2003) state no single appraisal method is best for all situations. Therefore, a performance measurement system that uses a combination of the preceding methods may be sensible in certain circumstances.

4.9 Problems of Performance Appraisal

It is very important for any organization to treat all employees on equal bases with out personal likes and dislikes, nepotism, and bias. However various problems have been created in the process of performance appraisal. As

any system, performance appraisal may fail or malfunction. The failure of performance appraisal systems may relate to the design and operation of the system, attitude of teachers towards the appraisal, and skill and competence of appraisers (Noe, 2007; Glueck, 1982). The problems are:-

1. Problems of Design and Operation

One of the major problems in teacher performance appraisal is the type of instrument used to gather the necessary performance information. When we talk of the problem of instrument, various factors, such as validity and reliability could be mentioned. When we talk of validity, an instrument is able to measure what it sets out to measure where as the reliability of appraisals refers to the consistency with which the appraisals are made (Bailey, cited in Zeleke, 2010).

2. Problems with Appraisers

- 1. Central tendency:** - Central tendency is a common error that occurs when employees are incorrectly related near the average or middle of the scale. Some rating scale systems require the evaluator to justify in writing extremely high or extremely low ratings.
- 2. Recent behavior bias:** - it is only natural to remember recent behavior more clearly than actions from the more distant past. However performance appraisal generally covers a specified period of time and an individual's performance should be considered for the entire period.
- 3. Personal bias:** - supervisors doing performance appraisals may have personal bias related to their employees personal characteristics such as race, religion, gender, or age.
- 4. Judgmental role of evaluator:** - supervisors conducting performance evaluations are at times accused of "playing God" with their employees. They make decisions about the ratings and typically try to sell their version to the employees on the defensive. Such relationships are hardly conducive to employ development, moral and productivity.
- 5. Hello Error-** it occur when the evaluator perceives one factor as having Para amount importance and gives a good or bad over all ratings to an employee based on this one factor.

3. Problems with the Appraisees

A substantial amount of employees' negative attitude towards appraisal results is from their doubt about the validity and reliability, and performance feedback presented by their appraisers.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was employed to assess problems of instructors' performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University, Main Campus. Cross sectional descriptive study was used. The study was captured by applying both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The population of the study was 685 instructors from which 597 were male and the remaining were 88 female found in the eight faculties/colleges/institutes/schools of Bahir Dar University main campus.

From the eight faculties, three faculties (37.5 %) were selected as a sample using simple random sampling technique. The sources of data for the study were teachers and department heads of the sampled colleges/faculties. Nine department heads and forty five teachers who were considered to be involved in instructors' performance appraisal and in teaching were chosen using convenient sampling technique because, there were instructors not available in the campus due to summer vacation.

The data was collected using two data collecting instruments: questionnaires and documents analysis. In order to collect adequate and reliable data, two types of questionnaire were developed from the existing literature. The first type with thirteen close-ended and three open-ended items was developed to be filled by conveniently drawn teachers. The second type fourteen closed-ended and three open-ended questions were developed to be filled by conveniently selected department heads. Also documents such as instructors' performance appraisal criteria, Legislation of the University and different guidelines related to instructor' performance appraisals were also assessed to see the key aspects of the problems more clearly and to consolidate the information collected from different subjects.

Data gathered through the questionnaires was tabulated and expressed using different statistical tools. The questions were categorized into tables on the basis of the problems and the analysis immediately followed each table. Percentage was used to describe number and characteristics of the respondents and the data collected from the questionnaires. Whereas, data which was collected from documents was analyzed qualitatively using narrations in their appropriate places.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Success or failure in achieving instruction program is, by and large, determined by the behavior that instructors exhibit in their performance. Therefore, appraisal of instructors' performance is necessary to make decisions on their competence and on the effectiveness of the University. Based on this, respondents were asked to give their opinion whether performance appraisal of instructors would be necessary or not and 31(75.6%) instructors and 6(100%) department heads indicated that performance appraisal is necessary. This would imply that the majority

of the respondents of both groups might have positive attitude towards the importance of performance appraisal. However, 18(58.07%) and 4(66.67) instructors and department heads rated the current system of instructors performance appraisal is low and moderate respectively in helping to improve the teaching learning process. From this information, it would be possible to conclude that there might be some thing wrong within the practice, purpose, and criteria of performance appraisal in the university.

Regarding their awareness of the objective of their university performance appraisal, 36(87.8%) of instructors and 6(100%) of department heads replied as they know the objectives of performance appraisal in the university. It is possible to conclude that the figure indicates the majority of respondents know the objective of performance appraisal. Besides, 34(94.44%) of instructors suggested that the primary purpose of performance appraisal should be to achieve educational objectives whereas, 6(100%) of department heads believed that deciding instructors' promotions is the primary purpose of performance appraisal. Instructors and department heads who suggested that the primary purpose of instructors' performance appraisal should be to identify instructors' strong and weak performance accounted for 58.33% and 66.67% respectively. Deciding on instructors' promotion was suggested as the main purpose of appraisal by 77.78% of instructors and achieving educational objectives was suggested as the main purpose of appraisal by 66.67% of department heads. 66.67% of instructors and 33.33% of department heads suggested that the primary purpose of performance appraisal is to develop instructors' professional competence. Therefore, it could be possible to understand that performance appraisal is used for multi purposes in the university. The performance appraisal system can serve multiple purposes, including formative and summative purposes (Peel and Inkson, 1993).

Related to the relatedness of performance appraisal to instructors' duties, 21(51.21%) of instructors and 6(100%) of department heads believed the appraisal criteria being used have been moderately related to the goal of education. Also 19(46.34%) of instructors and 6(100%) of department heads perceived that the appraisal criteria were moderately correlated to instructors' job description. From the response obtained, it is assumed to be there are some criteria that are not related to the instructors' job. Further, 25(60.97%) of instructors and 3(50%) of department heads replied that the clarity of the statements of the criteria was perceived to be average. From this, it is possible to conclude that, the language of the criteria is expected to be clear and concise.

Regarding the appraiser, 6(100%) and 41(100%) of department heads and instructors responded that performance appraisal was conducted by department heads, peers, and students. Also data obtained from legislation of the University asserted that Instructors' performance appraisal is conducted by department heads 35%, peers 15%, and students 50%. From the response it is possible to understand that combination of appraisers is used in the University to conduct instructors' performance appraisals.

Regarding the willingness of instructors to be appraised, 29(70.74%) of the instructors and 6(100%) of the department heads replied that instructors are not willing to be appraised by the existing criteria of performance appraisal system in the university. This would show that most instructors perceived the existing performance appraisal as insignificant in the process of teaching learning development of competency.

Concerning the time of appraisal, 41(100%) and 6(100%) of instructors and department heads respectively responded that instructors are evaluated twice a year at the end of each semester in the University. As well, all 41(100%) instructors responded that pre appraisal orientation was given at all. As Werther and Davis, Cited in Zeleke (2010) stated to hold employees accountable, a written record of the standards should exist and employees should be advised of those standards before the evaluation occurs. Providing the opportunity for employees to clearly understand the performance standards will enhance their motivation and commitment towards their jobs. However, 6(100%) of respondents replied that they did not take any training about instructors' performance appraisal. Appraisers with no training in the method, technique and practice of appraisal would be expected to make any kind of appraisal error; and instructors would have possibly developed a feeling of mistrust and loss of confidence in the skill and competence of their appraisers.

Concerning post appraisal interview, 41(100%) of instructors and 5(83.33%) of department heads responded that no post appraisal interview between appraiser and appraisees, there would have been no opportunity for instructors to receive feedback about their performance. As a result, they would have developed on them a feeling of suspicion and misunderstanding.

Further, 32(78%) of instructors agreed that appraisal system in the university was conducted fairly.

Further, response regarding the improvement of instructors performance, 29 (70.74%) of instructors and 4(66.67) of department heads replied that instructors were not improved their performance based on the previous result of appraisal. From this, one can possibly infer that the university is not in a position to design ways and means of providing good performance with material and psychological rewards. This might have hindered a development of instruction and provision of quality education.

From the responses obtained from instructors and department heads through open ended questionnaires, revealed that there is a deviation between the objectives and criteria to achieve the intended out comes, there is lack of awareness how to conduct performance appraisal in the side of appraisers and no mechanisms was seen to provide feed back on time for appraisees. In addition pre-appraisal orientation and post appraisal interview is

no managed during the implementation of performance appraisal practice in the University. More over, these problems make appraisees to have negative attitude towards appraisal process.

Finally, the legislation of the University, revealed for the effectiveness instructors in teaching, researches and community services, academic staffs shall be evaluated by students, colleagues, the department head and approved by the college dean. The overall rating of the teaching effectiveness of an academic staff shall be based on the contribution of each of the components of the system of evaluation consisting evaluation by students 50%, evaluation by head of department/dean 35%, and evaluation by colleagues 15%.

7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary

The majority of instructors and department heads know the objectives and accepted the necessity of performance appraisal. However, they perceived the current appraisal system have minimal contribution in helping to improve the teaching- learning process which rather used for administrative purposes; promotion and Salary increments than for professional development of instructors and improvement of their performance.

The clarity of the statements of the criteria was perceived to be average by majority of respondents. The criteria were set based on context of some colleges only and lack feasibility & consistency on changes and variations across departments. Also, the criteria were not directly related to the goal of education and the performance of teachers.

In the performance appraisal held twice in the year at the end of each semester, Instructors' performance appraisal is being conducted by peers, department heads/deans and students. However, the majority of the instructors are not willing to be appraised by the existing criteria of performance appraisal system in the university due to their negative perception towards the contribution of the existing performance appraisal practice. Further, neither pre-appraisal orientation nor post- appraisal interview is conducted. No orientation had been given to instructors about the process of performance and there is no opportunity to instructors to receive feed back at the right time about their performance.

7.2 Conclusions

From the findings obtained from the respondents, one can conclude that the performance appraisal practice in Bahir Dar University seemed to be average. The majority of instructors and department heads know the objectives and accepted the necessity of performance appraisal. Even though, the current appraisal system have minimal contribution in helping to improve the teaching- learning process which rather used for administrative purposes; promotion and Salary increments than for professional development of instructors and improvement of their performance. Due to the fact, instructors are not showing willingness to be evaluated by the current performance evaluation system. Therefore, unless and otherwise the performance evaluation system used in the university revisited and modified in a way it contributes to the teaching learning activities, problem solving researches, and community services it might brought negative impacts on instructors performance that will enable the university not attain its goals effectively and efficiently.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are forwarded;

As research findings showed there are some gaps in performance appraisal process in the university, the university should revisit the existing performance evaluation criteria with the contents represents the instructors' core activities; teaching learning, research, and community service.

Also, appraisers should be given training on the objectives as well as how to evaluate performance. Especially, a lot should be done on students not to attach instructors' performance appraisal with their results/grades, and instructors to show positive willingness toward the evaluation. Further, pre- appraisal and post appraisal interview should be conducted for the effectiveness of the performance appraisal.

Finally, the performance appraisal result should be implemented timely to motivate employees' for superior performance.

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