

Human Resources and Performance Appraisal in Academic Library

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Abstract

Human resources and performance appraisal has increasingly become part of a more strategic approach to integrating HRM activities and business policies and may also be seen as a generic term covering a variety of activities through which organizations seek to assess employees and develop their competence, enhance performance and distribute rewards. This paper examine and appraise the human resources and performance appraisal system; identify the effectiveness of the appraisal process and identify human resources and personnel in academic libraries, features and objectives of performance management and performance appraisal, and put forward ways of improving future performance appraisal and human resources performance in academic libraries.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Human Resources, Performance Management, Appraisal, Organisation, Personnel

Introduction

Human resources (HR) are one of the resources required for production of goods and services and ideas. HR is an important ingredient for the strategic achievement of an organisation's goals and objectives. It specializes in matters connected with the management and development of people in an organisation. HR involve in organisational design and development, knowledge management, human resources planning, recruitment and selection, development and training, employee reward, employee relations, health and safety, welfare, human resources administration, fulfilment of statutory requirements, equal opportunity issues another matter concerned with employment relationship (Osugwu, 2004; Mondy, 2008; Esu and Inyang, 2009).

People are organisation's most valuable resources and if managed appropriately are organisation's lifeblood, but if inappropriately managed, it becomes an expensive commitment that leads to few rewards but many problems. It is generally accepted that people working in an organization are its most important asset and crucial to the success of that organization. Ultimately, human resources should be managed as effectively as the other resources of the organization in order to create stronger impact on most organization outcome. Human resource gives a high degree of consistency, predictability, and fairness to the often difficult and dynamic interpersonal relationships affecting staff and organization management (Guest, 2011, Akinola, 2012).

Armstrong (2005), Combs, Liu, Hall, and Kitchen (2006) emphasized that efficient human resources is planned and executed at both macro and micro level, that is, strategic and operational level of an organisation. Macro human resources management planning and forecasting activities relate to the overall organisational objectives. They are dependent upon the organisation's strategic plans for its future, while micro human resources management activities relate to personnel process that affect individual staffs of the organization.

Human Resources in Academic Library

Academic library is an integral part of a college, university or other institution of post-secondary education, administered to meet the information and research needs of its students. Library occupies prominent position in the management of institutions that established them, Academic library therefore is expected to be a service agencies, and not for profit making firm, purvey information, not more tangible services and product; perform functions both of supply and guidance; provide professional services without, in most cases, having a personal and continuous client relationship; functions as auxiliaries to larger enterprises, such as university, schools and not as independent entities; staffed in the higher making for a highly educated core staff. Academic libraries are administered by professionals who are promoted from the service ranks, seek identity and domain within a host of communication and information source in their parent organisations and respond both to resources and to clientele in a dual and sometimes conflicting orientation, with some staff characterised as resource-minded and other as people-minded (Ogunlana, 2006).

Academic libraries are market-driven, with service performance and customer satisfaction being prima criteria for resources allocation, with measurement against set standard becoming the norm have restructured and re-engineered in order to meet up with globalization in service delivery

Like other organizations, libraries of all types have traditional human resources management activities such as recruitment and selection, compensation, benefits, training and development, health and safety, employee and labour relations, and, in some libraries, student employment or volunteer management. Libraries are labour intensive organisation depending on people to perform their essential functions. The library is with

rare exceptions, a public trust. It is not the duty of libraries to provide continued employment to those who are unproductive; to the contrary it is the duty of human resources manager to hire and retain highly productive and well-motivated employees.

Library and information services roles in human development are tremendous and cannot be over-emphasized. Within research, national, academic, public, and special libraries, the human resources function is structured in a variety of ways that reflect such factors as the size of the library and its view and philosophy of human resources. For some libraries the human resources department of the parent organization or institution provides some or all human resources functions for the library. Some libraries have an internal human resources department and staff devoted to handling all or some of the library's human resources functions in cooperation with the human resources department of the parent institution. Successful planning and management of human resources in academic libraries are critical for the overall organisational effectiveness. The skills, knowledge and experience requirements should relate to the objectives and goals of any academic library. The human resources management of academic libraries emphasizes the need to 'marry' person, the situation and the job. In other libraries individual positions may be dedicated to human resources functions. The most common position titles are human resources or personnel officer, staff development officer, administrative officer, or organizational development officer.

Library Personnel and Human Resources

Human resources recognizes that managing the well-being of the individuals who work in the library services is as important, if not more important, as managing the financial, technical and information resources. From library to library, the level of the position varies from librarian or professional, to administrative officer or department manager, to associate or assistant director, while the reporting relationship also varies. For globalization of library services to be meaningful, there is need for a paradigm shift in human resource development among librarians. Training is crucial in order to achieve high standards, and it plays a transformational role within the libraries, and it enhances continuous improvement.

Like other types of organizations, libraries employ a diverse group of employees with various levels of education and responsibility. As libraries have incorporated more technology in their processes, the staff employed by libraries has necessarily become more varied. Professional librarians almost always constitute the smallest group of library employees. Usually, to be considered a "professional" librarian, an individual has earned a master's degree in Library and Information Science (LIS), but sometimes these professionals also hold a second master's degree in a subject field or a doctorate degree. The professional staff works at the predominantly intellectual and non-routine tasks, those requiring a special background and education on the basis of which library needs are identified, problems are analyzed, goals are set, and original and creative solutions are formulated for them, integrating theory into practice, and planning, organizing, communicating, and administering successful programs of service to users of the library's materials and services. Professional librarians serve in leadership roles, directing the total organization and the various departments: and subunits. They also provide the expertise needed to fulfill the information needs of the library's patrons.

The support staff consists of workers with a wide range of skills, from para-professional to clerical. Next to the professional librarians are the paraprofessionals, they are in cadre of Library Officers, The support staff is usually the largest group of full-time employees in a library, and the activities of these employees cover a wide range of essential duties, including the tasks of entering, coding, and verifying bibliographic data; maintaining book funds; ordering; circulating materials; claiming serials; filing; and copy cataloging. The support staff handles the routine operations in most departments.

The educational background of these workers varies widely. Some may have only a high school diploma, but many have a bachelor's degree, and some have graduate degrees of various kinds. And in the past few decades especially, libraries have needed both librarians and support staff with a strong technology background. Many libraries and information centers now employ specialists to work specifically with technology, for instance, to manage electronic resources or to maintain web pages and social network. These technology specialists have variety of types of degrees and training.

Human resources involves in career planning and personal development of their library staffs in order to sustain and increase individual productivity and prepare them for the future. Staffs can be equipped to cope with the changing world by planning their career and lifestyle, know themselves better and managing their person self and image, training and work experience to fill knowledge and skill gaps, and by obtaining feedback on their performance. Human resources management displays a duty of care for sustainability and increases of individual productivity prepare library staff for the future and support their own and their employees' career and life goals through career planning and personal development. They recognize that an individual's total lifestyle should be managed, as their sense of well-being is directly related to their level of motivation and productivity. They encourage the idea that career and lifestyle planning are both an individual and organisational responsibility.

The human resources also accept their responsibility for ensuring appropriate assignments, coaching and counselling in order to assist individual in the realistic planning and attainment of their goals. They demonstrate their commitment to training and other person development opportunities by making available the necessary funding, time and the provision of opportunities for all staff. Human resources points out to individuals that they also have to accept responsibility for their growth and development. They encourage them to identify their long-term career and lifestyle plans and put strategies in place to achieve these (Akinola, 2012).

Performance Management and Performance Appraisal

In many organizations performance management has been replaced by performance appraisal. Performance appraisal or evaluation or measurement can be used interchangeably. It also includes other procedures such as development and identification of employee's performance. Performance management was also classified as an ongoing process that involves employee training and development, assigning targets, providing feedback, official evaluation of team or individual performance, rewards and recognition associated to performance. Performance management (PM) can be referred to as a supportive collaboration that occurs between the employees and organisation management that boosts staff performance and integration of organisational values, initiatives and goals. Performance management is concerned with improving individual and collective performance; communicating management's expectations to supervisors and staff; improving communication between senior management, supervisors and staff; assisting staff to enhance their career prospects through recognizing and rewarding effective performance; identifying and resolving cases of underperformance; and providing important links to other Human Resource Management functions, such as training. Performance management can therefore be seen as a microcosm of strategic human resources management (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005, Armstrong 2008, and Smither and London, 2009). Performance management refines, interaction, aligns the organisation, self-development, organisation prospective and performance. It dictates better performance, clearly set goals, feedback and employee training on how to achieve their objectives.

Dessler and Gary (2011) defined performance appraisal (PA) as one of the human resource management (HRM) tools used to evaluate the job performance of employees, and a structured formal interaction between a subordinate and supervisor that usually takes the form of a periodic interview (annual or semi-annual), in which the work performance of the subordinate is examined and discussed, with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and treats (SWOT) for improvement and skills development. Performance appraisal assesses an individual's performance against previously agreed work objectives. It serves two functions; it enables management to evaluate an individual's performance in the current job to identify strengths and overcome weaknesses, and it provides information to assist management plan postings, transfers and promotions. In so doing, management is able to compare performance and potential between officers of the same rank.

According to Bateman and Snell (2011), performance appraisal extends individuals' capacities and utilizes their maximum capabilities so that there is; improved personal performance and relationships; increase job satisfaction to determine motivation; and improved quality of life. Human resources serve a number of purposes in organisation. One of them is performance appraisal. Appraisal is both inevitable and universal. In the absence of a carefully structured system of appraisal, people will tend to judge the work performance of others, including subordinates, which is natural, informal and arbitrary. Performance appraisal is the systematic review of an individual employee's performance on the job which is used to evaluate the work effectiveness. Performance appraisal seeks to evaluate and re-evaluate the performance of employees in order to enable them realise their full potential (Armstrong, 2005, 2009).

Smither and London (2009) opined that performance appraisal is not performance management but a necessary aspect of performance management and one of the major several components used in the management of performance. Performance management has a vital role in the development of human capital. Most employees usually see performance appraisal as a paperwork exercise demanded by human resource of the organization for annual evaluation of individual employee. Hence it is periodic and usually involves the evaluation of staff's performance, while performance management is a continuous process that encompasses goal setting and aligning, employee development and training, giving feedback, formal evaluation of employees, and relating performance to rewards and recognition). The main goal of this continuous process is to enhance performance, increase job satisfaction and commitment of employees, increases organisational commitment and increase organisational performance (Boxall and Purcell, 2011).

Library Human Resources Personnel and Performance Appraisal

Library human resources personnel often have to respond to concerns expressed by staff about their individual performance appraisals. For example, staff may feel that they were not evaluated objectively by their supervisor or not evaluated in the same way as other co-workers. Standards used for evaluating staff must enable supervisors to compare performance more equitably. This is particularly important when establishing standards

for jobs that are the same or similar in tasks. In academic library, training and career planning is a joint effort involving the parent organisation and the employee. The parent body provides the structure, career path opportunities and the climate to encourage career planning and personal development. Individuals will look for evidence of organisational direction and career path opportunities when determine where their own future lies.

In many service organizations like library and information centers appraisal results are used, either directly or indirectly, to help determine reward outcomes, that is, the appraisal results are used to identify the better performing employees who should get the majority of available merit or commendations, pay increases, bonuses, and promotions. For academic libraries, performance appraisal systems often are determined at the University level. Many academic libraries adapt University-prescribed performance appraisal methods to meet the unique personnel management needs that academic library required. Depending on the level of the library employee (for example, clerical, paraprofessional, and professional librarian), University policy also may require that staff performance appraisals be used when making salary decisions (Okpe, 2012).

Performance reviews have several important use in academic libraries, they are means of improving staff motivation and expertise; they provide feedback to employee on their level of performance, allowing them to capitalise on their strengths and overcome their weaknesses and they can be used to develop inventory of human resources that forms the basis for career planning and skills inventory from an organisation point of view. Performance review provides a method of career counselling and encouragement for staff member to plan for their future. They allow the supervisor and individual to set mutual goals for the future and outcomes to be achieved during the following year. The human inclination to judge can create serious motivational, ethical and legal problems in the workplace. Without a structured performance appraisal system, there is little chance of ensuring that the judgements made will be lawful, fair, defensible and accurate. Performance appraisal in academic libraries is therefore a means of control through which library administrators monitor the job performance of subordinates by observing variances between set goals (Onuoha, 2014).

Performance appraisal systems began as simple methods of income justification. It was used to decide whether or not the salary or wage of an individual employee was justified. The process was firmly linked to material outcomes. If an employee's performance was found to be less than ideal, a cut in pay would follow. On the other hand, if their performance was better than the supervisor expected, a pay rise is proposed.

Evans, (2004) and Luecke, (2006) observed that performance appraisal are expected to achieve eight objectives. Those eight objectives and his suggestions for achieving them without the benefit of performance evaluations are:

1. Performance appraisal provides feedback to employees.
2. Performance appraisal serves as a basis for salary decisions
3. Performance appraisal identifies opportunities for promotion.
4. Performance appraisal provides direction to employee's work.
5. Performance appraisal provides opportunities for recognition for special projects.
6. Performance appraisal identifies employee training and educational needs.
7. Performance appraisal is necessary to meet legal requirements.
8. Performance appraisal serves as channels for communication.

The objectives of this performance appraisal system is to provide the employee with clear feedback about overall performance in the duties they are employed to which may be linked to the overall business objectives. Performance appraisal helps employees to set plan work and identify skills in order to achieve them. Employee is motivated as there is clarity of what he is required to do in a given period. Increased clarity brings greater focus on job related activities, which in turns facilitates better performance, efficiency and commitment. This increases the productivity of the individual employees and the organization stands benefited out of improved performance of employees. Setting of performance targets /objectives, agreement on measurement criteria and organizations expectations of desired performance level brings to transparency to the appraisal process. It helps organization in taking people related decisions such as career planning, career development, promotions, training and development opportunities, and succession planning. Meritorious employees are rewarded better with increased compensation, promotions, leadership grooming opportunities, job rotations, etc. and help retain top talents in the organization by satisfying their growth and development needs. Employee's involvement in planning of work and identification of skills helps to bring greater self-awareness and increases his commitment to the objectives of performance appraisal activities. Performance appraisal provides an opportunity to communicate performance feedback, review the job description, plan upcoming goals and objectives and develop an individual development plan. Performance appraisal accord an opportunity to develop an employee through the identification of gaps in skills and competencies. Once deficiencies in skills and competencies has identified, suitable training and development programmes can be established for rectifying the gaps/deficiency. This results in personal and professional development of employees (Fletcher, 2008).

Service organizations like academic library should move from performance appraisal to performance management. Lawler and Mohrman (2005) and Mathis and Jackson (2006) opined that primary attention should

be placed on evaluating the system and not the individual. Correspondingly, Persico (2006) advocates process management instead of traditional performance management. Process management is a strategy for managing an organization that focuses on control of the process and not solely on control of the employee, and a process is defined by its inputs, methods, materials, information, and the environment.

Performance is the degree to which a project or institution meets predefined criteria or quality standards, such as, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. Similarly, library performance metrics could indicate to management how well it is performing in meeting its objectives. When choosing performance measurement systems these should be linked to a performance strategy to be truly successful in helping librarians or human resources officer to make better decisions (Mondy, 2008).

According to Partington and Stainton (2003), the real purpose of performance appraisal is to justify organizational decisions. The need to justify organizational decisions is an important source of impetus behind performance appraisal. More recent personnel management literature suggests that performance appraisal systems can be greatly improved by moving toward a performance management system

Performance standards is designed to reflect accurately the tasks associated with successful performance of a job, and if developed in full consultation with workers involved can have great advantages as well. Therefore, one of the important benefits of defining measurable standards from the human resources perspective is that this will ensure that all performance evaluations will be done fairly, accurately, and in an unbiased fashion. It should serve to protect the employee by providing fair and unbiased evaluations and to protect the manager by supplying documentation when dealing with an employee who is performing poorly or complaining about unfair treatment (Akinyele, 2010).

Armstrong (2009) believes that performance standards are standing or continuing objectives and they may not change but be modified if need or new circumstances arise. He identifies five guidelines in which human resources can define performance measures for academic library.

1. measures should relate to results, not efforts
2. result must be within the job holder's control
3. measures must be objective and observable
4. data must be available for measurement.

Performance appraisals also are viewed as an effective personnel management tool. One purpose of staff appraisals is to monitor performance and to identify training needs such as in-service training, on-the-job and off-the-job, just-in-time, workshop and seminars. Personnel management professionals maintain that appraisals that are not based on measurable performance standards cause problems when corrective action is required. Human resources stress that, in order to avoid grievances, managers are responsible for providing employees with written performance expectations that are fair and clearly defined both in terms of quality and quantity. Without these measurements, identifying when an employee has fallen below what constitutes the norm for any given position is impossible (DeNisi, Budhwar and Varma, 2008).

Brown and Heywood (2005) identified workforce characteristics, level of job control, related human resource management practices and structural features of the establishment as four categories of variables that may contribute to explaining the configuration of performance appraisal systems, and Brown and Heywood (2005) further explained that these variable will yield benefits when each worker has substantial scope in determining their tasks and effort levels.

Distinguishing features of Performance Management and Performance Appraisal

Performance management and appraisal is conducted and perceived in terms of its evaluative form rather than its function for facilitating organisational development and growth through training, counselling, coaching and feedback of appraisal process (Obisi, 2011). Performance management (PM) structure comprises of a much wider scope of process, such as continuous feedback while performance appraisal on the other hand is the process of formal performance evaluation and feedback on which performance reconciliation can be made (Akinyele, 2010).

The goal of performance appraisal should be to provide information that will best enable managers to improve employee performance. Thus, ideally, the performance appraisal provides information to help managers manage in such a way that employee performance improves (DeNisi and Pritchard, 2006). The objectives of performance appraisal are as follows

1. To review the performance of the employees over a given period of time.
2. To judge the gap between the actual and the desired performance.
3. To help the management in exercising organizational control.
4. To strengthen the relationship and communication between superior
5. To diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals so as to identify the training and development needs of the future.
6. To provide feedback to the employees regarding their past performance.

7. Provide clarity of the expectations and responsibilities of the functions to be performed by the employees.
8. To judge the effectiveness of the other human resource functions of the organization such as recruitment, selection, training and development.

Performance management is based upon agreements on accountability expectations and development plans. It can be seen as part of the normal interactive processes which exist between managers and teams, a continuous process not relying on a once-a-year formal review. Many academic libraries are moving towards the performance management model with the hope that this approach will meet a variety of needs. The needs include:

1. helping employees to be better informed about the institution's expectations by linking performance standards to the library's mission statement and goals;
2. putting greater emphasis on accountability in the workplace;
3. Ensuring that a library employee's performance will successfully meet an institution's objectives.

Today's academic libraries are being asked to do more with less resource; users want access to more electronic resources, web-based resources and more types of automated support for their research work. Library management expends a great deal of time strategizing in an effort to meet these renew service needs. Instead of focusing only on an individual's goals and performance, performance management enables human resources to link performance appraisals to larger organizational goals. This, in turn, can help drive organizational change and ensure the entire organization is working toward a common objective (Akinyele, 2010).

Armstrong (2005) corroborated that there are a number of significant differences between performance management and the traditional appraisal schemes. Performance management in its most developed form:

1. involves all members of the organisation as partners in the process handed down by bosses to the subordinates
2. treats the performance review as a joint affair which is primarily concerned with looking constructively towards the future;
3. focuses on improving performance, developing competencies and releasing potential;
4. concentrates on self-managed learning giving people the encouragement they need to develop themselves with whatever guidance they need from their managers and the organisation;
5. may not include rating at all if the process is used primarily for development and performance improvement purposes;
6. recognizes the need for thorough training in the required skills in order to agree on objectives, provide feedback, review performance, and coach and counsel employees; and
7. attaches more importance to the processes of forming agreements, managing performance throughout the year and monitoring and reviewing results.

According to Cole (2007) performance appraisal is a process and it involves stages in terms of assessing individual performance against targets set by the organization and any systematic approach to performance appraisal will commence with the completion of an appropriate appraisal form. Fajana (2002) and Aguinis (2007) suggested seven critical steps for creating a 'world-class' performance appraisal system while Armstrong (2009) highlighted twelve golden rules for conducting performance review for effective service organization.

CONCLUSION

Improved human resources and performance measurement is the cornerstone for the many changes and adjustments that libraries will undoubtedly continue to require in this era of rapid change spurred by technological advances. The overall role of human resources function is to enable the organisation to achieve its objectives by taking initiatives and providing guidance and support on all matters relating to its employee. A major key role is the creation of an environment which enables people to make best use of their capacities and to realise their potential to the benefit of both the organisation and themselves human resources function operates as part of the full business management process and cannot be view in isolation.

Therefore, performance management and performance appraisal is necessary to understand librarian's abilities, competencies and relative merit and worth for the organization. Performance appraisal rates the academic librarians in terms of their performance; thus serve as a process of obtaining, analyzing and recording information about the relative worth of an academic librarian are an indispensable part of performance measurement. They serves as tool used to measure the effectiveness of an employee; hence training of personnel in academic libraries is very important, if the library is to possess the quality of personnel needed to face the challenges that are ahead of the library. It is clear that personnel in academic libraries need to be trained and developed, so that they can possess the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude needed to cope with the change those technological, economic, legal political and social environments bring upon the library.

Consequently, the following propositions are put forward as ways of improving on the quality of human resources and performance appraisal in personnel in the academic libraries. Performance planning and development framework in any organisation should aim at identifying and defining the key performance areas

for the employees at the individual level; provision of role clarity and direction to the stakeholders through these key performance areas; provide performance feedback about the potential of staff for higher jobs in the library; and rotation of jobs as a technique for developing librarians potential in new areas and current trends. This is in agreement with Chander (2015) that academic libraries should consider adoption of new system of assessing performance such as multi-rather feedback to avoid inconsistency, and provide training to both the evaluators and the employees on the pay-based appraisal system.

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