

An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal System in Educational Institution: IAMTECH Sierra Leone as a case study

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Abstract:

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays vital role in educational institutions. HRM is an essential ingredient for changing the scope and dynamism in evaluating worker's performance. Performance appraisal permits institution to supervise their employee's performance relating to competencies, punctuality, pedigree and potentials. Ignoring effective performance appraisal system results to low work output. Institutional objectives can be achieved by effectively applying performance appraisal system with diverse positive outcomes and diligently monitoring both academic and administrative staff of the Institute of Advanced Management and Technology (IAMTECH) Sierra Leone. Effective performance management and appraisal system has ultimately improved staff performance and influenced their potentials in thinking, and doing work. Importantly, it brings benefits to employer and employee by creating a plain level ground for both parties.

Furthermore, performance appraisal system delivers a complete assessment of staff performance at IAMTECH. However the researchers established dissatisfaction with some appraisal processes, such as management not backing the appraisal process, authorities are not questioned for not completing their appraisal process on time, and the absence of performance appraisal workshop/seminar/training provided to the staff at IAMTECH and more importantly, the performance appraisal system is done yearly at IAMTECH.

IAMTECH uses rating scale, descriptive system and management by objective methods to evaluate their employees. Noting that management by objective is the most widely used method and hence, our method of effective performance appraisal system has created positive influence on job performance at IAMTECH.

Keywords: *Feedback, Theory, HRM, Performance Appraisal System; Prejudice, Perception*

1. Introduction

Human resource management as an instrument of change plays vital role in attaining standards and effective performance in both private and public institutions. Performance appraisal system is an efficient and organized practice that evaluates worker's job performance and throughput in achieving managerial objectives in an institution. As a tool of positive change, and a technique that delivers procedural techniques to ensure best practice are achieved personally and professionally in line with the objectives of improving their performance. The emphasis should be on generating a philosophy and culture that encourages nonstop developmental progress and the pursuit of

excellence, rather than being solely about managing underperformance. Performance appraisal is characteristically done on annual basis. Functions such as feedback to employees, counseling and developing employees, conveying and discussing compensation, job status, or disciplinary decisions are imminent for the success of performance appraisal system at IAMTECH.

Despite numerous researches in human resource management, only few literatures are made available about empirical research on the effectiveness of performance appraisal system in educational sector. The rise of several educational institutions and organizations both private and public sectors in Sierra Leone demand thorough understanding and

knowledge on the effectiveness of performance appraisal system on work productivity. However, there has not been much assessment on the effectiveness of performance appraisal system relating to its significance in attaining successful work environment. Furthermore, the study provides feedback information concerning the effectiveness of performance appraisal system on work productivity at IAMTECH, and also tries to fill the identified gap in literature (Donkor, 2010). The annual appraisal system presently at IAMTECH exhibits some constraints and solutions have been provided to argument the identified gap in literature (Donkor, 2010).

Moreover, appraisals are poorly done at IAMTECH because of the role of supervisors in implementing the process which is attributed to poor in-service training provided to them on a regular basis. Importantly, there are no binding rules in executing the process leaving individual supervisor to do what he or she likes at the expense of the institution. Interestingly, appraisals are mainly done by the CEO in consultation of top management in acknowledging individual staff contribution to the development of the institution. Sometimes, merits are not provided to the required staff because of the evaluation process. This norm requires changes because annual appraisal constituents only a small portion of managing performance in an organization. Performance appraisal system is not all about annual appraisal doctrine, where merits and rewards are made available to employees but should be an all-inclusive platform to enhance human capital, that facilitates educational institutions to provide short, and long-term culture, norm and capacity through integrated and team skill acquisition, and development of HRM processes in line with the vision and mission of IAMTECH.

The research seeks to assess the effectiveness of performance appraisal system at IAMTECH to increase both academic and administrative staff efficiency and productivity.

2. Research Methodology Overview

Questionnaires were designed and developed to collect and analyze data from the various satellite campuses and the main campus. The amassed data constitutes of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from workers at IAMTECH. The respondents were to demonstrate their opinion on the appraisal system and that they were highly interested in it. The research provides platform that include the views and opinions of almost all the staff at IAMTECH. The staff population is about one hundred and fifty (150) workers in all the sectors of the institution.

Questionnaires and interviews were the key instruments in the research to compliment the relevant textbooks and library. This was done based on the fact that, the staff population comprises of literates and illiterates employees. Questionnaires were administered to the literate staff and interviews conducted for the illiterate staff.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Early Beginnings

Performance appraisal has exponentially grown over the past fifty (50) years. The importance for evaluating employees through performance appraisal has been used for centuries (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). As far back as 3rd century A.D. when Sin Yu, a Chinese philosopher, was critical of a prejudiced rater working for the Wei dynasty on the basis that “the Imperial Rater of Nine Grades seldom rates men according to their merits but always according to his likes and dislikes” (Patten, 1977, p. 352). In the 1500s, St. Ignatius Loyola establishes a practice that assesses members of his religious order (Lopez, 1968). In 1648, the Dublin (Ireland) Evening post purportedly rated lawmakers using a rating scale based on personal character traits (Hackett, 1928 as cited in Murphy & Cleveland, 1991). The first business use of merit rating was perhaps made by Robert Owen at his Cotton Mills in New Lanark, Scotland, in the early 1800s (Heilbroner, 1961). In the cotton mills, wooden cubes of various colors representing various levels of merit and achievement were hung over each employee’s work area. As employee performance varied, the wooden cube was changed to reflect it.

3.2 Development of Performance Appraisal in the United States

The use of performance appraisal system in the United States, probably began in 1813, when army General Lewis Cass gave the War Department an assessment of each of his employees using such expressions as “a good-natured man” or “knaves despised by all” (Bellows & Estep, 1954, p. 118). In the 1854, U.S Congress documented the first Federal pay structure for Federal employees, but it did not require performance appraisals to analyze job requirements as a starting point for establishing pay (Evolution of White Collar Pay, n.d). The Pendleton Act was passed in 1883, which established a

performance-based employment structure and generated the necessity for a system for defining job-related tasks and evaluating job applicants. The notion of performance evaluation and linking pay to performance for Federal employees started to surface at this time. The Bureau of Efficiency established a standardized efficiency rating system in which departments rated employees' performances and changed their compensation based on the rating.

In 1923, Congress passed the Classification Act that established a graphic rating scale for Federal employees in which employee performance was rated by supervisors along a scale for every task completed. One challenge that was found in this system was the need for greater standardization in job categories and pay rates before this system could operate effectively. In 1950, a Performance Rating Act was established requiring agencies to develop appraisal methods with the approval of the Civil Service Commission. Its purpose was to identify the most and least effective workers and to develop relationships between supervisors and employees. This Act allowed agencies to develop their individual performance appraisal procedures that followed legal and Civil Service Commission guidelines.

3.3 Performance Appraisal System (PAS) in Sierra Leone

PAS become popular in Sierra Leone after the civil war. Many organizations (private and public) used various performance appraisal methods to make managerial decisions such as promotion, reward, compensation, bonus, incentives, and firing. IAMTECH as an educational institution also uses PAS to evaluate and make decision either to retain, fire, promote, compensate etc. its staff.

4. Performance Appraisal in Educational Institution

Evaluating employee's performance in an institution is essential for modern educational institutions. It provides a platform where administrators and supervisors supervise the performance of their staff, and also identify people with low caliber and those with high rate of performance, provide periodic in-housing training to underperformer and also provide incentives as a factor of motivation to the general staff. According to Edwin B. Flippo, performance appraisal is a systematic and periodic platform where employees are rated fairly relating to a specific task or job. Maurice B. Coming viewed performance appraisal as an "attempts to recognize and reward for personnel abilities that an individual brings to his job, measured by the extent to which his/her output or quality of his/her work exceeds the minimum that

is fixed as the basic rate of pay". Another critic "Yoder" defined performance appraisal as a formal procedure used by organization that allows the evaluation of personalities, contributions and potentials of group members. Furthermore, Heyel referred to it as "the process of evaluating the performance and qualification of the employee in terms of requirements of the job for which he is employed, for the purpose of administration including placement, selection for promotions, providing financial rewards and other actions which require differential treatment among the members of the group as distinguished from actions affecting all members equally." According to Martin Fisher, performance appraisal is a process for establishing shared understanding about what is to be achieved, and an approach for managing and developing people in a way which increases the probability that it will be achieved in the short or long-term.

Moreover, to Cummings is the main objective of performance appraisal is to improve the efficiency of an enterprise by attempting to mobilize the best possible efforts from individuals employed in it. Such appraisals achieve our objectives including salary reviews, development and training of individuals, planning job rotation and assistance promotions. Wendell French viewed performance appraisal as a review in the formal, systematic assessment of how well employees are performing their jobs in relations to establish standards and the communication of that assessment to employees. Performance appraisal is a method deployed by many institutions to examine the behavior of employees in the work environment, normally including both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of job performances. To find out if an employee is worthy to continue employment or not, whether he should receive a bonus, get a pay rise or a promotion; his performance needs are to be examined from time to time. The objectivity of performance appraisal system is to enhance the effectiveness of organization standards in trying to get the best potential from individual employee in specific timeframe.

Performance appraisal system is a procedural method with standardized knowledge stating rules and regulations on how organization strives to succeed in achieving its blueprint, and apply team efforts to actualize and enhances its value in the global market place. Performance appraisal is an organized placement of employee core objectives, talents, and potentials in-line with the organization's blueprint in order to attain maximum performance norms in an organization. The importance is how to

improve the learning process by conducting in-house service training, and to cultivate the career development to employees in achieving the overall business strategic objectives. It aims at analyzing the performance against set standards, both quantitative and qualitative.

Performance appraisal is a measure of performance of an employee in accomplishing goals and plans of an organization within a specific period of time. It elucidates a pictorial form of assessment where employee caliber and performance relating to a specific task or job is being examined.

5. The Significance of Appraisal System in Educational Institutions

The aims and objectives of performance appraisal system are to be the first step in developing the platform. This explains in detail the methodology and techniques used. It should not be one man show, but an inclusion of all parties concern ranging from the employees, employers and trade unions in collecting their views and commitments (Fletcher, 1994). The core purpose of an appraisal system is customarily to analysis performance and identifies dedicated workers and conduct regular job training and career planning development. It helps to enhance the performance of employee and in returns train others to improve on the overall performance of the organization. Performance appraisal provides maximum degree of stability via frequent feedback platform on performance. It identifies the problems to be solved which impede organizational growth leading to inefficiency. Moreover, as a useful managerial tool that detect individual's gift relating to a specific field and signpost how such gifts should use.

The different purposes of appraisal system frequently conflicts. Appraisal system is used to augment the existing performance, delivering feedbacks, motivation, training, and recognize potentials stating workers expectation with a better plan. Mostly HRM department and senior administrators use the collected data from the various appraisal forms to make managerial decisions. Rendell et al (1984) manifested her discussion on job related constrains but was careful not wanting to risk potential pay rise. The purpose and nature of the appraisal should be made crystal clear to both the appraiser and the employee. Weitzel (2000) sees performance appraisal as a power sharing exercise. Furthermore, appraisal system normally looks at staff strengths and outputs of staff than the faults and failures of their actions, and makes necessary steps to better future.

Supervisor becomes more comfortable in reviewing the performance of employees. Employees feel that they are taken seriously as individuals and that the supervisor is truly concerned about their needs and goals. (Randi, Toler, Sachs, 1992) Performance appraisal gives administrators and workers equal prospects to deliberate how employees are developing and figure out the type of enhancements that can be made or improve on their potentials in an enabling environment to perform more effectively (Grote, 2002). Evaluation of skills and talents envisage the level of work an employee can do in foreseeable future. Reward review - determines the 'rewards' an employee acquire for previous work. The reward review is typically a distinct practice from the appraisal system but the review is often aided by information provided by the performance appraisal (Einstein, 1989).

6. Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal System

Referencing both Bue and Byars (2005) stating "job performance as the net effect of an employee's effort as modified by abilities, role perceptions, and efforts". This implies performance as an output acquire from the interrelationship inclusive to efforts, abilities and role perceptions.

Normally people exhibit different skills in performing job which is their God given gift, thus causing a variation of two people performing the same job at the same rate. Therefore, performance appraisal is necessary to comprehend each employee's abilities, competencies and relative merits and worth for the organization. Abilities typically do not change generally within a short time frame.

Effort is the resultant influence of being motivated which is attributed to the amount of energy exerted on doing work. Role perception states the direction in which workers utilize their efforts on doing work.

7. Causes of Poor Performance in Educational Institutions

Absenteeism and Lateness: Absenteeism is when a worker fail to come to work grounded on certain motives either true or untrue and lateness is measured to be the rate at which an employee comes to work after the actual time schedule for reporting to work.

Poor Aptitude or Knowledge: When employee with low skill is employed by an organization, it is

always a challenge to finish the organization's job as a result of meager knowledge concerning that job.

Alcoholism and Drug Abuse: Medical problems and stress are some of the contributing factors to poor performance in an organization.

Backbiting and Idleness: Normally unproductive workers usually abandon their job to backbite and slander their colleagues or sometimes bring infighting.

Favoritism and Connectocracy: This happens in most organizations in Africa. This is because, if the wrong staff is recruited or hired, thus will affect the day to day affairs of the organization. Unproductive staff has nothing to deliver to an organization.

8. Recommendations

Based on Findings and discussions the following are recommended:

The Need to ensure that Performance Criteria is up to Date: There is a need to ensure that performance criteria have been extracted from an up-to-date job description. This was identified in the case of IAMTECH consistent use of what has been suggested in the literature and need to be encouraged.

Need To Ensure Fairness in the Appraisal Process: The study observed although they were in the minority, some respondents doubted the fairness of the appraisal process in the institution. To totally erase this impression, since it has the potential of affecting confidence in the system, there is a need to ensure that fairness is maintained in the appraisal process so that the necessary trust and cooperation will be forthcoming from staff.

The Need to Ensure Regular Feedback: The study also identified feedback rate to be very low. This affects some of the objectives of instituting an appraisal system. Therefore, there is the need to ensure regular feedback. Failure to do this could affect staff interest in the process, as much as possible feedback should be given to staff on their performance.

The Need to ensure Effective Supervision: Finally, one of the challenges that usually confront the implementation of an appraisal is the fact that some supervisors do not display the right attitude to help the process. Although this was not found at IAMTECH, there is a need for supervisors to

enhance the process by exhibiting the right attitude. This will go a long way to create the right enthusiasm among staff.

9. Future Work

It is expected with the new trend in management that more robust techniques and standards will be applied at IAMTECH. This will help improve the performance of the various categories of staff.

10. Conclusion

Performance appraisal system has contributed to the growth of modern organizations around the world in both profit and standard practices. Provision of in-housing training, incentive to knowledgeable staff, providing scholarships to dedicated staff to broaden their knowledge, and other appraisal methods are vital in achieving the mission and vision of IAMTECH. Shifting to the modern trend by successively applying human resource management in any institution helps to achieve the institution's blueprint and maximize profit. Several researches have proven that utilizing appraisal system in an educational institution fairly motivate staff to perform utmost. This is good for any institution where staff and management exhibit mutual trust and confidence in each other.

Acknowledgement

This research would not have been achievable if not for the divine guidance of the Almighty Allah.

I would foremost acknowledge the continuous and relentless supports from my mentor Prof. Prince Sorie Conteh, A visiting Professor at IAMTECH for mentoring in research. I also like to extend my gratitude to Professor Paul Kamara and Dr. (Mrs) Abie Paula Kamara for the parental support and insights in fulfilling this work. I would like to thank Mrs. Elizabeth Ibrahim Guma-Sawaneh for her matrimonial and moral supports.

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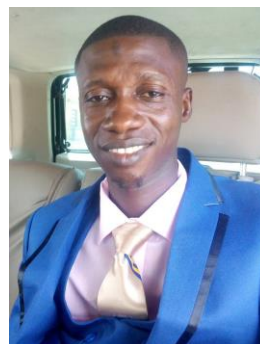


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