

An Assessment of the Performance Evaluation System Used to Evaluate Teachers in Secondary Schools in Meru Central District-Kenya

Karuntimi Lucy Karuru

Department of Business and Management studies, Meru Technical Training Institute
PhD student, Moi University, Nairobi Campus- Kenya
Email: lucykamut@yahoo.com

Dr. Benjamin Tarus (Phd)

Lecture University of Eldoret

Doi:10.5901/ajis.2014.v3n6p199

Abstract

This paper evaluates the current system of performance evaluation used to evaluate secondary school teachers in Meru Central District. It assesses the effectiveness of the evaluation system in line with the set objectives. A sample of 200 from target of 1250 teachers in the District served as respondents. The paper was guided by Vroom's Expectancy Theory. The respondents were given a Teachers Service Commission performance evaluation form to study and a standard Questionnaire to fill. Other data collection methods adopted were informal discussions and key informant interviews. Data was analyzed descriptively. Arising from the study were findings that the current evaluation system does not live up to the expectations when applied in secondary schools. In terms of implementation, the tool has been implemented in almost 80% of the schools although failures and challenges emerged. In spite of the challenges the study deduced that the tool was appropriate for teacher appraisal and could be relied upon. Arising from the findings, it is recommended that the tool should be put into practice by Ministry of education.

Keywords: performance evaluation, secondary school teachers, Performance Management, Secondary school, Effectiveness, Supervisor

1. Introduction

Performance evaluation, also referred to as employee appraisal or performance appraisal, is a system for the appraisal of employee work performance (Barney, 2006). The job performance of an employee is evaluated in terms of quality, quantity, cost and time. Performance evaluations are essential for the effective management and evaluation of staff. The evaluation helps develop individuals, improve organizational performance, and feed into organizational planning. Formal performance evaluations are generally conducted annually for all staff in the organization. In organizations, each staff member is evaluated by their line manager but according to the code of regulation for teachers (2005), teachers are supposed to be evaluated by the school Principals and Principals are in turn supposed to be evaluated by a TSC agent.

Performance evaluation forms an inseparable part of efficient human resource management system within a given organization. It represents a crucial tool to enhance employee motivation, to influence job satisfaction, and to stimulate top quality work performance. Moreover, it serves as an instrument to link other Human Resource Management (HRM) activities such as compensation, training and development, as well as career management.

It was within this recognition that the Kenyan Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), by then referred to as Ministry of Education (MOE), came up with the Ministry of Education Teacher Appraisal Policy Statement in the early 1980s. The statement states that each teacher's performance, be regularly appraised in accordance to the provisions of employee appraisal system in force. This is because the Ministry of Education Science and Technology recognized that of all its assets, the Human Resource component is not only the most vital asset but also the single of highest expense. The Teacher Appraisal Policy Statement states in part as follows:

- 1) The Ministry of Education has a role to ensure that evaluation is regarded as a positive process, which is supportive of the developmental needs of teachers and principals/administrators alike.
- 2) Appraisal represents a formal, structured and diagnostic procedure within a school's programme aimed at benefiting and enhancing the teaching/learning process.

- 3) It therefore, must be collaborative and collegial, involving the objective collecting, analyzing, sharing and utilizing of information for the purpose of evaluating performance both formatively and summatively.
- 4) Appraisal must be people-centered, taking into consideration the uniqueness of each person's involvement in education for personal and national development and be continuous and systematic.
- 5) Moreover, all participants must demonstrate practices of professionalism, fairness, empathy, honesty, openness and mutual trust. If undertaken with professionalism, the appraisal process will help to encourage improvement in the quality and delivery of education (GoK, 1997: 14).

At the inception of staff evaluation system in the secondary schools, annual salary increment, merit salary increment and promotion among other benefits, for all teachers were pegged to a satisfactory employee evaluation report. Teachers and their head teachers or Principals were therefore keen to participate in the annual evaluation exercise as directed by the Ministry. Head teachers and Principals on the other hand were obliged to evaluate all teachers not only because it was a policy requirement, but also because the teachers themselves had reasons to demand that they be appraised without fail (Tznier, 1993).

Performance Evaluation among teachers ideally involves the focus on developing and honing instruments to more accurately and objectively measure Human Performance (Tznier et al. 2001, Tznier, et al., 1993). This is because effective and efficient performance evaluation systems play a vital role in organizations in terms of benefits to the manager, employee and the organization. Performance evaluation to the Principal and head teacher is expected to help communicate performance expectations to immediate functional staff, provide a source of employee performance information in order to make placement, compensation and development decisions and help build employee career development plans and motivation. For the teachers, it is expected to let them know their strengths and weaknesses in their performance levels, assist in relating employee performance to advancement of financial benefits, clarify expectations for employee performance and determine methods and development programmes to improve their effectiveness at work. On the side of the school, it is expected to facilitate the school's performance by optimizing on its human resources; helping in teachers' identification with departmental and school-objectives; and to identify and measure essential skills as well as potential for development and success of the school

Furthermore, the Kenya Government is currently implementing performance contracts in all its Parastatals including the Ministry of Education. This is a strategy to ensure optimum performance by school boards of Governors (BOG), principals, head teachers, and teachers in these institutions of learning. The strategy is also geared towards improving the performance of hitherto non/under performing schools and sustaining good performance of the education sector at large. Consequently, the government's directive through performance demands that future appointments and reappointments of directors to Parastatals boards, CEOs, principals/head teachers in schools, employment and/or continuation of employment of other cadres of officers in the Parastatals will henceforth be based on the ability of the candidate/incumbent to meet the negotiated and agreed on performance targets.

The concept of performance evaluation is in itself broad. However, the study conceptualizes performance evaluation system to refer to performance appraisals per se. This is because the main performance evaluation system used to evaluate teachers in schools is the use of performance appraisal forms. The primary goals of a performance evaluation system are to provide an equitable measurement of an employee's contribution to the workforce, produce accurate appraisal documentation to protect both the employee and employer, and obtain a high level of quality and quantity in the work produced. To create a performance evaluation system in a firm the following five steps were identified (Cash, 1993: 22):

1. Develop an evaluation form.
2. Identify performance measures.
3. Set guidelines for feedback.
4. Create disciplinary and termination procedures.
5. Set an evaluation schedule.

An effective and efficient performance evaluation system seems to be the only system through which all contracting parties and stakeholders can periodically ascertain the extent to which the terms of the contract have been fulfilled. It was imperative therefore, that the performance evaluation system among secondary school teachers be assessed to ascertain for its effectiveness and efficiency in operation and implementation.

2. Performance Appraisal Methods

Studies by Locher & Teel (1977) found out that the three most common appraisal methods in general use are rating

scales (56%), essay methods (25%) and results- oriented or management by objective (MBO) methods (13%). This study found out that the teacher appraisal system made use of a combination of these methods.

3. Benefits of Appraisal

Appraisal offers a valuable opportunity to focus on work activities and goals, to identify and correct existing problems, and to encourage better future performance. Thus, the performance of the whole organization is enhanced. For many employees, an "official" appraisal interview may be the only time they get to have exclusive, uninterrupted access to their supervisor. One employee of a large organization after his first formal performance appraisal, "In twenty years of work, that's the first time anyone has ever bothered to sit down and tell me how I'm doing" (Sheppard, 1993). The value of this intense and purposeful interaction between a supervisors and subordinate should not be underestimated.

4. Basic Purposes of Performance Appraisal

Effective performance appraisal systems contain two basic systems operating in conjunction: an evaluation system and a feedback system (Waite & Stite-Doe, 2000). The main aim of the evaluation system is to identify the performance gap (if any). This gap is the shortfall that occurs when performance does not meet the standard set by the organization as acceptable.

The main aim of the feedback system is to inform the employee about the quality of his or her performance. However, the information flow is not exclusively one way. The appraisers also receive feedback from the employee about job problems. One of the best ways to appreciate the purposes of performance appraisal is to look at it from the different viewpoints of the main stakeholders: the employee and the organization. From the employee viewpoint, the purpose of performance appraisal is four-fold: Tell me what you want me to do, tell me how well I have done it, Help me improve my performance and reward me for doing well (Cash, 1993). Over time the ministry of education has complained about poor performance in subjects like mathematics, sciences and languages.

The paper was guided by Vroom's Expectancy Theory, which indicates how effort, performance and rewards influence both individual and organization's overall performance. Vroom in 1964 developed a theory of motivation based on the premise that an individual's behaviour is formed not on objective reality but on his or her subjective perception of that reality. In a nutshell, the core of the theory relates to how a person perceives the relationships between three things - efforts, performance and rewards. He concluded that there were three factors, each based on the individual's personal perception of the situation.

These were:

1. **Expectancy** - the extent of the individual's perception, or belief, that a particular act will produce outcome.
2. **Instrumentality** - the extent to which the individual perceives that effective performance will lead to desired rewards.
3. **Valence** - the strength of the belief that attractive rewards are potentially available.
4. This approach to the concept of human motivation has its emphasis on the psychological mechanisms that trigger efforts.

5. Statement of the Problem

Measuring performance of teachers has long been of interest to the Ministry of Education in Kenya. The inability and or desire to perform is what has necessitated organizations- schools inclusive- to seek ways of enhancing performance. The importance of an effective evaluation system is highlighted by (Lawrie, 1990) who refers to performance evaluation as the most crucial aspect of organizational life. However, as much as different organizations have adopted different methods of evaluating staff, empirical research hasn't been carried out to ascertain how effective the system of performance evaluation is in secondary schools in Kenya. The study thus aimed at filling this gap by assessing the performance evaluation system used to evaluate teachers in secondary schools in Meru Central District in Kenya.

6. Justification of the Paper

This study was to be important in various ways. The Government of Kenya was at the time implementing performance contracts in all its sectors including the education sector. This was a strategy to ensure optimum performance by school

boards of governors (BOG), principals, head teachers, and teachers in learning institutions. The strategy was also geared towards improving the performance of hitherto non/under performing schools and sustaining good performance of the education sector at large. As a result, there was an urgent need to understand whether the performance evaluation system for secondary school teachers was effective as it formed the backbone for performance contracting. The study would thus be significant in providing crucial information for policy action by the stakeholders.

7. Results and Discussions

7.1 Performance Evaluation Process

Performance evaluation process is a tool that is used to evaluate teachers' performance in secondary schools. The objective of the study was to assess the performance evaluation system currently used to evaluate teachers in secondary schools.

The objective was measured by the following variables; whether the staff has been evaluated or not, frequency of evaluation, forms of performance evaluation, use of information from performance evaluation, respondent opinion on manager's evaluating performance, whether supervisor consults colleagues in the department concerning respondent's evaluation and whether the supervisor met respondents several times during the year for the purpose of performance evaluation. Moreover the study paid attention to whether supervisors followed up respondent training and development during the next evaluation period and whether the supervisor often reviewed respondent job description before the performance evaluation was conducted. Also of importance was whether respondents and supervisors set monthly (or quarter) objectives for performance improvement, whether performance evaluation process for teachers aimed at improving teachers' performance and whether supervisor was knowledgeable of respondent's job description.

Table 1. Summary of the findings

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Whether Respondents had been Evaluated		
Yes	160	80.0
No	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Frequency of Performance Evaluation in Respondent Schools		
Yearly	50	25.0
After every 2 years	10	5.0
After more than 2 years	100	50.0
Never	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Forms of Performance Evaluation		
Evaluation interview	25	12.5
Appraisal form	15	7.5
Both of the above	120	60.0
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Whether Supervisor Acted As A Mentor		
Yes	66	33.0
No	94	47.0
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Uses of information from performance evaluation		
Compensation	4	2.0
Analysis of training needs	6	3.0
Development and Career Growth	6	3.0
Setting of Further Goals	10	5.0

Not Sure	134	67.0
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Respondent Opinion of supervisors' Evaluation of Performance		
Evaluate only set goals	118	59.0
Evaluate in Factual and Impersonal Way	5	2.5
Be Interested in Relations Among Subordinates	8	4.0
Provide both positive and negative feedback	29	14.5
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Whether Performance Evaluation Process Aimed At Improving Teachers' Performance		
Yes	119	58.0
No	44	22.0
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Whether Supervisor Meets Respondent Several Times		
Yes	34	17.0
No	126	63.0
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Whether Supervisor often Reviews Respondent's Job Description.		
Yes	53	26.5
No	107	53.5
N/A	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2014)

7.2 Summary of the findings

The objective of this paper was to assess the Performance Evaluation System currently used to evaluate teachers in secondary schools. It was established that performance evaluation system was not effectively implemented by secondary schools in Meru Central District. It was found that out of 200 respondents, only 160 of them were aware of the performance evaluation system.

It was further established that 25% of the respondents acknowledged that evaluation was done yearly while 60% of the respondents reported that evaluation interviews were used alongside performance evaluation forms. 67% of the respondents were not sure whether PE system had any benefits. This was because staff promotions and salary increment by the Teachers' Service Commission were corrupt, political and gender biased rather than relying on the performance evaluation process. The TSC also relied heavily on pressure from teachers' trade unions especially when it came to salary increments and promotions. The study further revealed that Head Teachers evaluating performance provided both positive and negative feedbacks, which is recommended for teachers' improvement of performance. Supervisors were found not to consult with colleagues in the departments. This in the end limited the supervisors' knowledge on the evaluation process even though 53% of the respondents said that their supervisors were knowledgeable of the respondents' job description. Furthermore, it was established that supervisors did not set objectives with individual teachers but with departments; a factor that made the whole process to lose focus.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

Arising from the findings above, it can be concluded that performance evaluation no longer carried the importance it was intended for and a substantial number of the secondary school teachers were not evaluated. Moreover, a combination of

evaluation interviews and the appraisal form was established to be the commonly used form of performance evaluation. However when considered independently evaluation interviews was a more used form of performance evaluation than the appraisal forms.

Moreover, from the research findings the current PE system does not live up to the expectations when applied in secondary schools although this is only to some extent. In terms of implementation, the PE system has been implemented among 80% of the respondents. This therefore implies that in application in relation to the study, majority of the respondents were aware of the PE system.

It can also be concluded that failures and challenges also emerge that affect the implementation of PE but these can easily be mitigated upon. The occurrence of the challenges also affects the applicability of the system since only 52% of the respondents reported they had frequent evaluations. However, in spite of these challenges, out of this study, it can be concluded that PE is still the most appropriate way through which teachers can be evaluated and should be relied on and used in planning by TSC and the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

8.2 Recommendations

This paper recommends that the Teachers Service Commission should ensure annual performance evaluation of teachers in all schools and that a manual detailing the appraisal process be developed and used to disseminate information on performance appraisal to all teachers to ensure effectiveness of the process.

References

- Barney, J., (2006). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17:99-120.
- Cash, M. (1993), [in] Collins, R. (1993) (Ed.), *Effective Management*, CCH International, Sydney
- GOK, (1997) "*Staff Appraisal Report ECCD Project*". Nairobi: The World Bank
- Locher, A.H. & Teel, K.S. (1977), Performance appraisal - a survey of current practices, *Personnel Journal*, Vol 56 No 5, p.245-257.
- Lawrie, J. (1990), Prepare for a performance appraisal *Personnel Journal* Vol 69, April, pp.132-136.
- Sheppard, J.A. (1993), Productivity loss in performance groups: A motivation analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113(1), 67-81. *Teachers' Service Commission (2005), Code of regulations for teachers*
- Tznier, A., Kopelman, & R.E. Livneh, N. (1993), Effects of performance appraisal format on perceived goal characteristics, appraisal process satisfaction, and changes in rated job performance: a field experiment. *The Journal of Psychology*, 127(3):281-291.
- Waite, M.L. & Stites-Doe, S. (2000), Removing of performance appraisal and merit pay in the name of quality an empirical study of employees reactions. In *Journal of Quality Management*, 5: 187-206.