



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEEDBACK AND INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHER APPRAISEES BY THE TEACHERS SERVICE COMMISSION IN BOMET CONSTITUENCY, KENYA

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History:

Received: 11 August 2013

Final Accepted: 21 August 2013

Published Online: September 2013

Key words:

Relationship, Feedback, Involvement, Teacher Appraisees, Teachers Service Commission, Bomet Constituency and Kenya.

Abstract

Performance appraisal has a lot of benefits such as helping in the identification of an individual's current level of job performance, promotion and salary increase, motivation, correcting and reinforcing strengths, career planning process, succession planning of employees among others. This paper looks into the challenges facing performance appraisal of Teachers Service Commission High school teachers in Bomet Constituency. The specific aim of the paper is to assess the relationship between feedback and involvement of appraisees and performance appraisal. The study targeted secondary school teachers in Bomet Constituency. The main focus was teachers in Central and Longisa Divisions. There were 44 Secondary schools in Bomet Constituency 26 in Central Division and 18 schools in Longisa Division. A sample of 20% of all the schools in each division was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using questionnaire method. It was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of tables and pie charts. On feedback and involvement of appraisees, majority of the respondents (83%) believed that it does have an influence on PA. This implied that TSC should regularly update the teachers on the progress of their appraisal and give them feedback in time to avoid any conflict of interests and it will increase their morale in teaching. Suggestions from most respondents on feedback were that there should be a regular feedback to those who were appraised in the division. On feedback and involvement of appraisees, the author recommends that they should be done promptly to avoid delays. The appraisers should make use of information technology and be sending feedback through email and short message service (SMS). All the mobile service providers in the country should adequately cover the region. The Ministry of Education should ensure all schools in the constituency have access to a computer and Internet.

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Introduction

According to Gary (2003), Performance Appraisal (PA) means evaluating an employee's current or past performance relative to the person's performance standard. Appraisals involves: setting work standards, assessing the employee's actual performance relative to these standards and providing feedback to the employee with the aim of motivating that person to eliminate deficiencies or to continue to perform above par. PA is a method of evaluating employee behaviour at work place. It includes both quantitative

and qualitative analysis, that is, an organization's evaluation of individual's level of performance and a review of how well an employee is carrying out the tasks associated with his job. It is therefore a systematic and objective way of judging the relative worth or ability of an employee in performing tasks.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) (2005), teacher promotion has not been based on performance, but on qualifications, which contributes to internal inefficiencies. One

purpose of PA is to determine the person's level of job performance in order to be promoted. The PA form should clearly spell out the measurable job performance in classes which help in the discussions of whether a teacher should be promoted or not and not on the basis of their qualifications, which contribute to internal inefficiencies. P.A. improves an employee's job performance. It also improves relationship between an employee and supervisor due to mentorship given to the employee. Employee's career development can be achieved when promotion is based on the results of PA.

School Management and Series (2004) says that a well-defined performance framework is an imperative for effective work outcomes. A well-defined performance framework springs from a proper PA policy from the TSC. *School Management Series* (ibid.) also states that effective management involves a clear vision, collaboratively arrived at by the staff, an open school culture in which professional collaboration is at a premium, conditions of work which encourage active reflection, professional scrutiny of teaching and the possibility of learning on the job. It also entails an acceptance of professional accountability and strong purposeful leadership, which encourages commitment to student learning and continuing school improvement.

Brown, (2003) states that modern appraisal system increasingly seeks to incorporate objective-setting measurements of results and potential for performance improvement. Appraisals were therefore designed around targets set for each employee. However, a balance must be struck so as not to lose the personality traits altogether. Ways of striking a balance include: behaviour based generic tasks, performance indicators, annual appraisal standards, developing value statements for the school, assessment of whether or not the code of conduct has been adhered to, developing and including a set of desired core competencies in the appraisal.

Gary (2003) says that employers depend on graphic type rating scales to appraise performance. These performances are susceptible to several problems, including unclear standards, halo effect, central tendency, leniency or strictness and bias. The graphic rating scale seems objective, but could probably result in unfair appraisals because the traits and degrees of merit are ambiguous. For example, different supervisors would probably define "good" performance, "unfair" performance and so on differently. The same is true on traits such as quality of work or "creativity".

PA helps to identify those who are performing their assigned tasks well and those who are not and the reasons for such performance. It is thus the process of reviewing an individual's performance and progress in a job and assessing his potential for future improvement. It is a systematic method of obtaining, analyzing and recording information about a person that is needed for the efficient management of business. It is also needed by the manager to help improve employee's performance, career planning, evaluation of job performance and career development.

Other reasons (purposes) for appraisal include: Identification of employee's current level of job performance, strength, weaknesses and a basis for rewarding employees in relation to their contribution to organization's goals. It motivates employees and helps them identify training and development needs. It also provides information for succession planning, enables coaching, counselling and control of the behaviour of both an employee and the supervisor. P.A further improves internal communication, sets performance goals and assesses employee's potential for promotion.

Categories of Appraisals

There were two categories of appraisal: Informal and Formal

Informal Appraisal

This involves the continuing assessment of employee's performance. Employees, the supervisor and manager during normal course of work do the assessment. This appraisal is of an *ad hoc* nature. It is a product of day-to-day employee supervisor relationship.

Formal Appraisal

This is a more rational and orderly assessment of an individual's performance. Formal appraisal can be conducted in various ways:

Systematic Performance Appraisal

A systematic performance appraisal follows several steps:

Step 1 – Completion of PA forms (preparatory stage);

Step 2 – Appraisal interview conducted, and

Step 3 – Action agreement – job improvement plan, promotion or transfer and salary review.

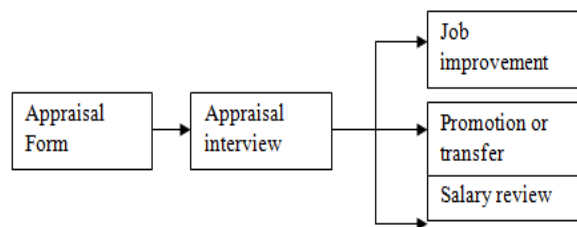


Figure 1: Appraisal process

Source: Author, 2006

Critical aspects of Performance Appraisal

A typical performance appraisal should capture the following aspects regardless of the appraisal method, format of appraisal tool, or procedure in administration. These are: job definition, performance evaluation and feedback.

Job Definition

The job to be done must clearly be defined and agreed between the supervisor and the staff. The duties to be performed have to be understood in the context of the performance standards. The expected performance should be measurable, not just a statement of what is to be done.

Performance Evaluation

This aspect calls for appraising the employee's actual performance against the standards that had earlier been set. It involves the use of some kind of a rating form.

Feedback

It involves periodic discussions between the supervisor and the subordinate to monitor the latter's progress in achieving the standards and making plans for any required development.

Feedback and Involvement of Appraisees

According to Gary (2003), feedback involves periodic discussions between the supervisor and the subordinates to monitor latter's progress in achieving the standards and making plans for any required development. It is achieved through performance reviews. Its purpose is to analyze what a person has done and is doing in his job in order to help him to do better by developing his strengths or by overcoming his weaknesses. Feedback may involve counselling which is a very vital part in PA if the appraisal has to achieve its prime purpose of helping people to improve and develop. Unless carefully and sensitively handled, subordinates could become more dissatisfied after counselling than they were before.

In a well conducted feedback and involvement of appraisees, one has to ensure that the employee discusses the problems encountered in the job. The employee has to be encouraged to bring out his own solutions to them. Feedback and involvement of appraisees provides intrinsic motivation that could be derived from work itself and serves as a process of tackling work problems. Feedback helps employees develop their problem solving skills therefore enabling them use their potential at the job. This brings job satisfaction which improves an employee's job performance.

Upward Feedback

Gary (2003) says that more firms today let subordinates anonymously rate their supervisor's performance, a process some call upward feedback or Survey Feedback Action (SFA). The process helps top managers diagnose management styles, identify potential "people" problems, and take corrective action with individual managers as required. Subordinates ratings were especially valuable when used for developmental rather than evaluative purposes.

360-Degree Feedback

Many firms expanded the idea of upward feedback into "360 degree feedback." Ratings were collected all around an employee, from supervisors, subordinates, peers and internal or external customers. Most 360-degree feedback systems contain several common features; appropriate parties like peers, supervisors, subordinates, and customers, for instance completed surveys on an individual. The surveys take many forms but often include supervisory skill items such as "returns phone calls promptly," "Listens well" or "[my manager] keeps me informed". Computerized systems then compile all this feedback into individualized reports that HR presents to the raters. The raters are often the only ones who get these completed reports. They then meet with their own supervisors and sometimes with their subordinates and share the information they feel is pertinent for the purpose of developing a self-improvement plan. With multiple employees to appraise and multiple rates for each employee, 360-degree assessment is such a paperwork nightmare.

Sushila (2004) suggests that evaluation must be considered both as a learning and improvement process. It should not be associated with fear, e.g. 'what will happen to my job if I prove inadequate?' Every institution has its weaknesses and strengths. It is healthy to discuss these openly in order to create learning opportunities. Failure or weakness has to be associated with an opportunity to improve and learn

not with inadequacy. TSC (2005) states the modern system is a more open assessment system where the teacher participates in his or her assessment. The appraisal form gives the teacher an opportunity to first assess his or her performance before discussing the same with the supervisor. In all cases, the head-teachers as agents of TSC have to discuss the contents of the report with the appraisee. The staff appraisal system also seeks to establish training needs for teachers, besides openly discussing ways through which performance can be improved.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and technology (MOEST) (2005), monitoring is a continuous or periodic process of collection and analysis of data, in order to measure the performance of an activity and interventions as well as their direct and indirect effects on resources and people. As such monitoring and evaluation has critical relevance to the implementation of any development programme in study thus proposed in Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP). It is on this background that the author sought to determine the relationship between feedback and involvement of appraisees in PA of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency. MOEST (2001) says that monitoring learning attainment and evaluation is a continuous assessment. Evaluation of learning outcomes is a pre-requisite to quality. Teachers, school inspectors have to do this with the summative evaluation being done at the end of the detriment of monitoring learning outcomes on a regular basis. It is on this basis that the author sought to find out the relationship between feedback and involvement of appraisees and PA of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency.

Statement of the Problem

It is important for educational institutions, especially High Schools, to carry out PA of its teachers. However, PA of teachers in High School is affected by some challenges. According to the Ontario Report on Teachers Performance Appraisal Systems (2006), the current teacher PA system requires experienced teachers to be appraised every 3 years, with two appraisals in their evaluation year. The Report notes that teachers receive an overall rating of exemplary good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If unsatisfactory rating, the principal and teacher need to prepare an improvement plan outlining the steps that the teacher should take to improve his or her performance and the support that would be provided in order to carry them out. Odhiambo (2005) has found out that there are indications that the teacher policies and practices in Kenyan secondary schools exhibit weaknesses, which need to be urgently addressed if teacher

appraisal is to be used to improve the quality of teaching and education in Kenya.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) (2005) *Sessional paper No. 1*, teacher promotion has not been based on performance but on qualifications which contributes to the internal inefficiencies. It is on this background that the author investigated the challenges affecting Performance Appraisal of TSC high school teachers in order to offer solutions. The challenges affecting PA of TSC high school teachers in Kenya could include lack of clear Performance Appraisal policies, lack of feedback, lack of involvement of the appraisees, untrained appraisers, unclear standards and objectives and poor performance appraisal tools among many others.

Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study was a limitation because the study was done in a constituency not a District. As such the findings may not be generalised to the entire district since the challenges facing TSC appraisal may vary according to the schools contexts in the district. The same applies to the whole country. Nevertheless, the study provides a framework within which similar studies could be replicated across Kenya.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in Bomet Constituency, located within Bomet County in Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive research design. It involved a field visit to talk to teachers in Bomet Constituency about factors that affected PA of TSC high school teachers in their Constituency. The target population was secondary school teachers in the Constituency. There were 44 schools distributed throughout the Constituency within 2 main divisions: Longisa and Central. There were 18 schools in Longisa Division and 26 in Central Division. For purposes of the study, the author divided the Central Division into Southern Central and Northern Central, their boundary being Chepkulo River which cuts through the Central Division. There were 12 schools in southern central and 14 in northern central and there were a total of 350 TSC teachers in Bomet Constituency. The research however chose a sample of 20% of the schools in each division. The author used stratified random sampling technique to pick a sample from each school in the relevant population of interest. Each school of focus was considered as a sub group or a stratum. The author picked a sample of 60 from 152 using a ratio of 0.4.

Data was collected using questionnaire method. The questionnaire had both open ended and closed questions. A bit of interview was also considered especially as regards the head teachers of the schools. Secondary data was also used to clarify variables and obtain specific information on issues of the problem. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which included frequency distribution tables, percentages, pie charts and related diagrams. The author made use of computer packages, especially Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel to help analyse and interpret the research findings.

Result and Discussion

On the question of whether or not there was feedback and involvement of teachers in performance appraisal exercises, Table 1 below summarizes the results.

Table 1: Presence of Feedback and Involvement

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	31
No	37	69
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (69%) gave a NO response. From this finding we can conclude that the teachers were not involved in their performance appraisal and feedback exercise. For effective performance appraisal, employees should be involved in setting their performance standards with their supervisors (Gary, 2003). Lack of feedback of performance appraisal to the appraisees means that they are not able to know how well they are doing and areas they need to improve on for better performance in the future. The findings showed that TSC managers do not value the benefits of feedback to the employees and this may hinder improved performance. Since feedback is not given to most teachers they may not develop their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. The vital part of employee counselling, which emanates from performance appraisal, is therefore lacking and teachers ability to manage job challenges is inhibited (Gary, 2003).

On the question of whether or not feedback and involvement of appraisees' did have an effect on the performance appraisal of teachers, Table 2 below presents the findings.

Table 2: Feedback and Involvement Affects PA

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	83
No	9	17
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (83%) gave a YES response. From this finding we can conclude that the appraisees had to be given feedback. If employees are given feedback, they will be satisfied with the counselling given to them because there will be evidence of their performance which they can own (Gary, 2003). Feedback encourages teachers to bring out solutions to their job problems because they are involved. The teachers are also able to develop their problem solving skills and utilize their potential at the job. Feedback and involvement of teachers in their appraisals brings job satisfaction which improves their job performance. Since majority of the respondents acknowledged that they were not given feedback and were not involved in their appraisals, the likelihood of improved education standards in the Division is very low. It also means that the supervisors are not appraised by their juniors and this shows that they may not diagnose their management styles and may not correct their actions which hinder organizational development.

On the question of respondents' ratings on whether or not feedback and involvement of appraisees affected performance appraisal of teachers, Table 3 below shows the findings.

Table 3: Ratings on Effect of Feedback and Involvement on PA

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low	4	7
Low	3	6
Moderate	18	33
Great	29	54
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (54%) gave a GREAT rating. From this finding we can conclude that the appraisees had to be given feedback and be involved in performance appraisal exercise in order to make it successful. Sushila (2004) suggests that evaluation must be considered both as a learning and improvement process. This

lacking means that learning of teachers and their supervisors in the schools in Bomet Constituency is hampered. The findings showed that it is healthy to discuss employees' performance openly in order to create learning opportunities as Shushila claims. Failure or weakness noted in performance appraisal has to be associated with an opportunity to improve and learn not with inadequacy. As TSC (2005) states, a modern system which is more open in assessment where the teacher participates in his or her assessment, has been introduced; education managers in Bomet Constituency need to implement its use, for it allows for feedback and involvement of teachers in their appraisal. The appraisal form gives the teacher an opportunity to first assess his or her performance before discussing the same with the supervisor. This kind of appraisal approach which provides feedback improves employees' motivation (Gary, 2003).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that feedback and involvement of appraisees has not been done in the best way. This was indicated by the complaints from the respondents that they were not receiving them in time. Majority of the respondents believed that it does have an influence on it. This implies that TSC should regularly update the teachers on the progress of their appraisal and give them feedback in time to avoid any conflict of interests and it will increase their morale in teaching. The author recommends that feedback and involvement of employees should be done promptly to avoid delays. The appraisers should make use of information technology and be sending feedback through email and short message service (SMS). All the mobile service providers in the country should adequately cover the region. The Ministry of Education should ensure all schools in the constituency have access to a computer and Internet.

Based on the research findings the author recommends that performance appraisal exercises be carried out throughout the entire constituency so that there would be no imbalance in terms of performance of all the schools there. In the case of Bomet Constituency, there are some regions that are under hardship due to unfavorable weather. The TSC should concentrate on such areas to make them competitive to other areas in the constituency.

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