

Assessing the Role of Performance Appraisal in Improving Employee Performance Secondary Schools of Zambia

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Abstract

Performance appraisal is the process of evaluating employee performance by comparing their present performance with the already established standards which the employees are aware of subsequently giving feedback to the employees about their performance level for the purpose of improving their performance as needed by the organization. The purpose of this article is to assess the role of performance appraisal in improving employee performance in secondary schools in Zambia. The objective of this paper is to explore the benefit of conducting employee performance appraisal and to identify the challenges in appraising employee performance in the secondary schools. The statement of the problem is the basis of the continued below standard performance of most Zambian organizations and this had been revealed through the failure of most organizations especially secondary schools to achieve their curriculum objectives. A descriptive research design was used in this study and data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Primary data was collected using interviews and well-structured questionnaires while purpose random sampling was done and the study settled for a sample of 100 employees within ministry of education. Secondary data was collected from the internet and, journals of previous papers. Quantitative analysis was done through a survey in different secondary schools. Performance appraisal improves the work output of workers and generally improves the objective of an organization and that managers were able to gauge teachers who deserved awards and to also improve the quality of education. School managers lacked knowledge on performance appraisal and that knowledge of appraisers had great influence in the outcome of the appraising process.

Keywords: *Performance appraisal, training, skills, performance, management*

Introduction

Performance Appraisal is one important aspect that showed the output of employees in every organization. However, due to the performance of most organizations in Zambia, it could be claimed that there was little or no undertaking of Performance Appraisal in most organizations and that there was poor performance due to lack of performance appraisal. Performance Appraisal is seen as the ongoing process used for identifying, measuring and developing individual's performance in accordance with the organization's strategic goals and objectives of every workplace. This is because every organization has got its own ethos and therefore, all employees of every particular institution must abide to the institution's ethics. Performance appraisal involves both formative and summative aspects that focus on either developing or evaluating the performance of employees in order to achieve effective performance. Performance appraisal system in the Ministry of Education is not well implemented. Performance is supposed to be done annually on all the employees especially in secondary schools because the government of the republic of Zambia is a majority employer in the country and the education sector is the largest number of employees of who are mostly teachers. As a teacher myself I have been to compelled to write about the deficiencies caused by lack of performance appraisal and how the performance appraisal system can help improve the performance of secondary school teachers in Zambia. The schools lack effective performance appraisal systems therefore the teachers do not feel appreciated for their contribution in achieving the objectives of their workplace respectively. It is the wish of every employee to be appraised for different reasons such as opportunity for training, salary upgrade, promotion an even transfer to a different station.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) added that the performance appraisal that identifies and enhances employees' working quality, development and career progression may be considered the ideal quality assurance mechanism especially when used for both accountability and instructional improvement. The Ministry of Education pointed out that this has more to do with having skills that enhance clear understanding of the various roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the performance appraisal and make informed decisions in the day-to-day running of the organizations. The skills and values that managers/supervisors exhibited in conducting the performance appraisal is what either supports or undermines its existence in their organizations.

It is therefore observed that, the important role performance appraisal plays on the employees' performance cannot be emphasized. Performance appraisal is the key for making decision on promotion, demotion and transfer of the employees. In order to properly apply performance appraisal in organizations, new employees should be oriented to their job requirements in order to make them informed on how to do better on their duties and performance. In order to apply performance appraisal accordingly, managers or supervisors need to reflect on past performances, to identify major achievement and areas for further improvement. To ensure fairness, the appraisal interview should be a constructive, two-way exchange between the manager or supervisor and employee, with preparation for the interview done by both parties beforehand. Amidst the given scenario, most, if not all organizations are anchored on Policy documents that guide in the supervision, monitoring and evaluation of standards to ensure quality in the provision of quality employee performance to ensure organizational development.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of performance appraisal in improving employee performance in secondary schools of Zambia. Therefore, I selected secondary schools in Livingstone because they made up the number of my sample size 100, although only 68 responded positively.

The objectives of this research study were to

1. Explore what managers and supervisors in selected secondary schools benefited from conducting employee performance appraisal.
2. Evaluate the skills managers and supervisors possessed in conducting the employee performance appraisal effectively.
3. Identify the challenges managers and supervisors faced in appraising employee performance in the selected secondary schools.

Statement problem

This research study endeavored to address the research problem that followed that despite the existence and high recognition of employment performance appraisal as a pivotal measure and requirement for quality employee performance, professional development and total organization development; its practical applicability in the selected secondary schools had not been established so as to appreciate its importance. The uncertainty was on the basis of the continued below standard performance of most Zambian organizations and this had been revealed through the failure of most organizations especially secondary schools to achieve their curriculum objectives. For example, lack of efficient performance appraisal demotivated the teachers and as such, effects such as late coming, ineffective teaching, absents and job migration were being experienced.

Arising from the above, the researcher in this study intended to carry out a research to assess the role of performance appraisal in improving employee performance in selected public secondary schools. Therefore, effective performance appraisal was connected to improving on the efficiency of the teachers to improve their performance, morale, increase turnover and job growth and job satisfaction at work.

Existing solutions

On the basis of the findings obtained and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were forwarded to improve effective undertaking of employee performance appraisal in secondary schools

1. Performance appraisal is done once a year
2. The School Administrators should make strong efforts to improve the capacity of performance appraisal by conducting regular meetings with their teachers.
3. The Ministry of Education should organize in-service trainings for school managers in order to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
4. The Ministry of Education should produce some literature to support the conducting effective performance appraisal in schools which should be made available to the entire all the interested parties in quality education.
5. The Public Service Management Division should make school teacher performance appraisal policy effective and workable.

Best option

1. The Ministry of Education should organize in-service trainings for school managers in order to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
2. The Ministry of Education should produce some literature to support the conducting effective performance appraisal in schools which should be made available to the entire all the interested parties in quality education.

Limitations

Performance appraisal programs have often yielded unsatisfactory and disappointing results, as the growing body of critical literature attests. However, performance appraisal is often retrospective and is prone to biased ratings. Normally a typical traditional appraisal occurs once or twice a year as extended time gaps of months between establishing goals and reviewing them, and objectives that were set upon in the beginning of the year are usually only dragged out during appraisal time. The most recent actions of employee appraisal and award points are basically on recent favorable or unfavorable events rather than whole years' worth of activities. Therefore, most appraisers fall short of the challenge of bias rating in the selected institutions. Performance appraisal has a tendency to focus on the weaknesses instead of strengths, which creates conflicts between manager and staff as well as a negative work environment. Some of the common problems that occur during performance appraisal process include: bias, stereotyping, halo error, distributional errors, similarity error, the appraisal conflicts, proximity error, decency error, contrast error and attribution error. Furthermore, lack of communication is another challenge in Appraising Employee Performance in institutions. In this regard, employees may not know how they are rated due to lack of feedback from their employers thereby making the standards by which employees think they are being judged are sometimes different from those their superiors actually use. Lack of involvement in the process of performance appraisal is another challenge in appraising employee performance thus particularly damaging organizations that are attempting to maintain a more participative organizational climate.

However, standards and ratings tend to vary widely and, often, unfairly in appraising employee performance. In this sense, some raters are tough, while others are lenient. An appraiser may not lack standards, but the standards used are sometimes wrong. More often, however, outright bias dictates favored treatment for some employees

Achievements

A secondary school staff member is still not satisfied with the ineffective process of performance appraisal. However, with the due to technology advancement system human resource is now being put in place at school have level, district level, provincial and to national where data is now easily accessible. Head counts have been done in different schools, for example at Linda secondary school, the log in and out system of registration at work is being used to monitor the times employees report for work. The payroll systems at district level are being update including the establishments of every secondary school. Performance Appraisal Standard can be very effective for management decisions, organization development, or any other purpose until the people being appraised, know what is expected of them and by what criteria they are being judged on.

Methods

The study undertook a survey in 5 secondary schools in southern Zambia. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected based on informal interviews of key respondents and structured interviews of secondary school teachers, Education standard officers and school managers. Therefore, the school managers are given the task to conduct performance appraisal on secondary school teachers while the managers' report to the education standard officers.

Primary data collection

Primary data was collected using interviews and well-structured questionnaires from 100 respondents who are all working at the Ministry of Education. Purpose random sampling was done and the study settled for a sample of 100. Individual interviews were done from the sample to establish the benefits of performance appraisal in secondary schools.

Secondary data collection

Secondary data was collected from the Ministry of Education. Books and the internet.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis was done through collecting data through a survey from employees of different secondary and other members of staff who work directly with the secondary schools. The researcher prepared bio data of respondent by gender i.e. table 1. The objectives of performance appraisal conducted by school managers, in figure 1.0.

Results

After the interviews it was found that each group of participants had particular results.
Benefit of conducting employee performance appraisal to managers and supervisors

1. There is poor status of performance appraisal in schools.
2. Zambian policy guidelines are clear and explain how performance appraisal is supposed to be done (methods annually).
3. Zambian policy has guidelines as to when performance appraisal is supposed to be conducted and by whom.
4. Performance appraisal was done for promotion, salary reward and to identify gaps in work efficiency.
5. Performance appraisal was also done to identify the gaps the employees have in doing their work.
6. 50% indicated that they did not have performance appraisal policy in their schools.
7. Evaluation of skills school managers and supervisors possess in conducting employee performance appraisal effectively.
8. The ministry of education is yet to come up with a system where performance appraisal may be done quarterly to ensure that the performance of secondary school teachers is improved or strengthened.
9. The majority of teachers did not benefit from performance appraisal because it was not consistently done and the results were unsatisfactory.
10. Performance appraisal requires many skills from appraisers and the most important skill is that of planning and proper techniques to be used in the process

Discussion

The one of the objectives of this study sought to establish the benefits of conducting employee performance appraisal to managers and supervisors and to ascertain that, the researcher first deemed it imperative to assess whether respondents had performance appraisal policy in their schools. According to table 1.1 indicated that they had performance appraisal policy. This was because of the poor status of Performance Appraisal in most schools, it was stated that in the Zambian case, Zambian policy and guidelines is clear when it explains how the Performance Appraisal is supposed to be conducted.

Though the policy is general in its requirement, it requires that managers and supervisors should become more competent in conducting the performance appraisal. Therefore, it can be stated that without clear policy at organizational level, it would be difficult for school managers to have the full benefits of Performance Appraisal because it can be loosely practiced. One important benefit managers and supervisors gain in conducting Performance Appraisal is the concept of Management by Objectives (MBO). It is believed that employee performance is gauged against organizational requirements. Therefore, Management by Objectives is the method that aims at improving performance of an organization by clearly defining objectives that are agreed upon by both management and employees (Taylor, 2014). The benefits of conducting performance appraisal in schools is not just for promotion or to be confirmed in the teaching service as many perceive it but to check if teachers contribute to quality teaching and pupil achievement.

Performance appraisal is about monitoring a teacher's teaching performance, identifying his/her strengths and weaknesses towards lesson preparations and delivery. Every day, people retire and death is right in the palms of our hands, hence, need to replace those that have left work in such a manner. It is through performance appraisal that we promote those that performing according to the teaching service standard to occupy managerial positions.

In agreement with the field data above, chapter two pointed out that the basic need for conducting performance appraisal is to disclose how well an employee is performing and how much he should be compensated by way of salary increase. However, beyond that, Performance Appraisal carried out against the job or organizational requirements.

One of the objectives of the study was to evaluate the skills managers and supervisors possess in conducting employee Performance Appraisal effectively. In view of this, the basic question was asked to teachers regarding whether assessors were trained in appraisal techniques.

No wonder sometimes we are forced to argue especially when they do the rating on our performance and pupil achievement. It is not just about rating teachers' performance but when it comes to giving awards to those that are performing well in terms of service delivery, we wonder how our bosses choose those to be given awards, only those they are in good books with are privileged to receive what they don't deserve. This is unprofessional of our bosses, lack of proper training and unfair.

In order for appraisers to undertake the task of employee Performance Appraisal properly, they should have full and deeper knowledge on the organizational objectives and the job requirements of their employees (Bretz and Judge, 1994). Therefore, in reacting to the literature and the above findings, it can be argued that from the class teacher's view, most school managers did not have the appropriate skills to undertake Performance Appraisal in order to improve employee performance.

Therefore, it was clear that, the knowledge and skill school administrators had in conducting Performance Appraisal had effects on the final results of the whole process. In view of this, it is clear that the knowledge of appraisers has a deeper influence into the final results of the whole process of Performance Appraisal. To support this view, the literature review in the second chapter of this study alluded that Performance Appraisal is the process that constitutes the way and manner in which the performance of an employee is evaluated Otley (2003). To even be more precise, Otley further argued that normally, Performance Appraisal compares quality, quantity, cost and time, and all these aspects have to be outlined clearly in the organization ethos by managers or superiors so as to ascertain the level of performance of their employees. Therefore, in order for managers and supervisors to satisfy their employees, they should follow the stipulated outlines and stick to the knowledge on how to establish quality, quantity, time and cost on how to ensure that employees are meeting such standards.

Most of our assessors are chosen based on experience not really on knowledge in performance appraisal. You know if a junior seem to be more knowledgeable compared to appraiser, they tend to be emotional which affect the final result of the interview. Sometimes we just agree to their ratings for the sake of maintaining a good relationship with them, otherwise their knowledge on an employee affect the final result of the interview. However, the knowledge of the assessors on employees affects the final result of the interview especially when there is competition in knowledge between the assessors and the assessed.

In the literature review, it was pointed out that in the Ministry of Educational; Standard Officers are taught in specific areas on how to appraise teachers and school managers in line with educational requirements. In the same vein, Roberts (2002) observed that training for head teachers in order to acquire necessary training skills and competences to appraise teachers' performance is very important. Contrary to the above, the findings in the previous chapter clearly showed that school administrators are not taught on how to undertake performance appraisal and this was more clearly in the statement above by the head teacher who mentioned that sometimes they tend to be rough so as to control the situation. Therefore, this implies that the skill of school administrators affected the results of performance appraisal.

On the other hand, one educational standard officer mentioned that it was a bit tricky to pinpoint the position of performance appraisal and he observed that the activity was fairly done while the other Educational Standard Officer pointed out that she considered that performance appraisal was poorly done. A year or more would elapse without undertaking performance appraisal and that most school administrators were relaxed towards conducting the activity because sometimes they perceived the process to be of no value.

It was clear that most school managers concentrated on the weaknesses of their teachers rather than being fair in their ratings. Similarly, Porter (2008) indicated that performance appraisal interviews tend to emphasize the superior position by placing him in the role of judge, thus countering his equally important role of teacher and coach.

Sought to assess the role of performance appraisal in improving employee performance in secondary schools was to establish challenges managers and supervisors faced in conducting employee performance appraisal since this study asserted that effective teacher performance appraisal was cardinal for improving employee performance especially the end result is quality teaching and learning. To establish the concern given above, the researcher deemed it cardinal to first inquire whether appraisers faced communication challenges in conducting employee performance appraisal for improving employees' performance and in regard to such a question, clearly indicates that all the teachers mentioned that there was no communication barrier between the teachers and the school administrators.

In the same manner, just as it was stated by the teachers in reference to the table indicated above, the class teachers, educational standard officers and school administrators indicated that language was not a barrier towards performance appraisal as English is the official language used and therefore, every participant was conversant with the language. In this regard, he emphasized that employees may not know how they are rated due to lack of communication during the process. He further amplified that the standards by which employees think they are being judged are sometimes different from those their superiors actually use.

Furthermore, in an endeavor to extract more challenges that performance appraisal encountered in the selected secondary schools, respondents were requested to offer other challenges managers and supervisors faced in appraising employee performance. In the similar vein, Education Standard Officers were equally asked to state their views concerning what they perceived to be the challenges appraisers faced and one of the stated that one of the common challenges that head teachers have regarding performance appraisal is limited time. The case is that just like the rest of the teachers, head teachers also have their own classes that they need to teach and therefore, sometimes it becomes difficult to balance up time between the need to carry out performance and teaching. In the same line, one head teacher pointed out that for sure we face a lot of challenges when undertaking performance appraisal and this is sometimes caused by the resistance we face from other teachers. This is because there are some teachers who think that we do not have the necessary skills in carrying out performance.

In the case of performance appraisal, the Ministry of Education does not provide the necessary resources for effective undertaking of performance appraisal. In the developed countries, performance appraisal is easily undertaken using necessary technology which makes the activity simple and less time consuming. In view of this concern, this research study established that there are certain resources that appraisers need in order to carry out the process of performance appraisal effectively and currently, such resources are not provided.

Conclusion

From the data collected regarding the first objective which endeavored to explore what managers and supervisors in selected secondary schools benefited from conducting employee performance appraisal, the study concluded that managers had many benefits when they undertake performance. Through performance appraisal, managers were able to gauge teachers who deserved awards and to also improve the quality of education. In the same vein, teachers also obtained benefits by appraising them because it motivated them to work hard and to be promoted. Generally, the study concluded that performance appraisal improves the work output of workers and generally improves the objective of an organization. On the other hand; the study also established the fact that some teachers did not see the benefits of performance appraisal and most of these perceived performance appraisals not to have benefits are those that considered appraisers to be biased.

The second objective of this study was to evaluate the skills managers and supervisors possessed in conducting the employee performance appraisal effectively and concerning this objective, the study concluded that majority of school managers did not receive specific training in performance appraisal. In the similar vein, was also evident that the knowledge of appraisers had great influence in the outcome of the appraising process. Meanwhile, it was also clear that due to the perceived biasness of appraisers, some employees were demoralized after being appraised. It was also concluded that good skills of appraising encouraged better work out

The conclusion drawn from the third objective was that mostly, teachers did not freely accept the ratings from the appraisal systems, some appraisers did not receive specific trainings on how to conduct performance appraisal, negative perception by teachers and that some teachers did not cooperate in being appraised. In the same vein, appraiser also complained of having limited time for appraising teachers and also that there are no resources for conducting the task effectively.

In view, this study achieved its objectives as it was able to ascertain the fact that performance appraisal improved the quality of work input and output of teachers as they are able to improve their skills. However, though that was the case, the study has demonstrated that given the poor rate at which performance appraisal is being performed in schools, it is difficult to for the teacher to the gaps in knowledge and skill to improve the quality of effective teaching.

Table 1.0. Bio data of respondents by gender

	Education Standard Officers		School Administrators		Teachers		Heads of Departments	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Female	1	50	4	40	30	44	67	70
Male	1	50	6	60	38	56	14	30
Total	2	100	10	100	68	100	20	100

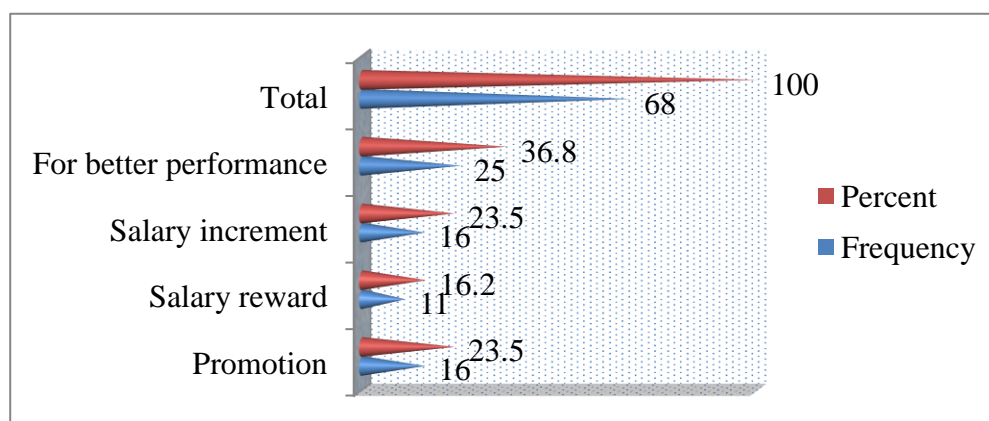


Figure 1.0 The objectives of performance appraisals conducted by school managers

Source. Field data



Figure .1.1 Whether objectives were achieved

Source: Field data

Figure 1.2 below shows that 56 respondents represented by 82.4% indicated that objectives regarding performance appraisal were achieved while 12 of them represented by 17.6 indicated that the objectives were not achieved.

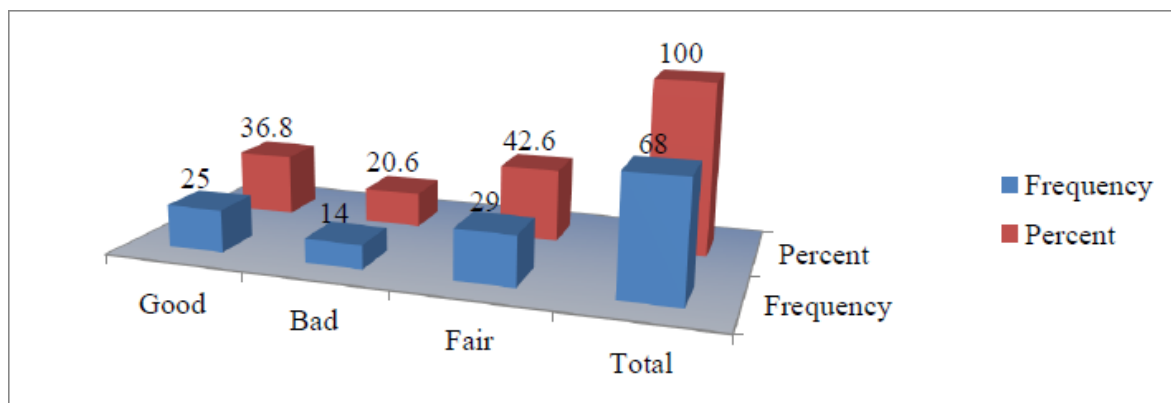


Figure 1.2. Respondents' views towards the current appraisal in your organization

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