

# Performance Appraisal: A Quality Assurance Tool for Lecturers' Effectiveness in Nigerian Universities

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## Abstract:

**T**his article focused on the strategic adoption of performance appraisal in facilitating quality service delivery by the academic staff of Nigerian Universities. Exploratory approach that guaranteed in depth literature review was adopted. Through this method, the outcome of several research endeavors in performance evaluation was accessed in order to provide the conceptual framework for this paper. Some of the findings recorded in this work include non adoption of valid appraisal method suitable for academic environment and debasing nature of university lecturers effectiveness due to incongruent actions of regulatory agencies with appraisal results. Among the recommendations made was the appropriate use of appraisal reports to elicit service delivery in Nigerian Universities.

**Key words:** Performance, Appraisal, Quality assurance, Lecturers' effectiveness, Nigerian Universities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Like in other development-driven nations, Nigerian government has shown stupendous concern on educational sector advancement with the aim of achieving concomitant broad –based national development. In this sector, public universities have substantially tapped from the huge government investments. The lecturers otherwise known as the academic staff constitute significant part of the subsector's resources needed to be maintained in the right proportion, to propel the institutions toward unleashing the desired national development majorly through training, research, and community development. Universities in Nigeria often adopt lecturers' development measures such as training for higher degrees, professional qualifications, workshops, conferences and seminars, in a bid to foster higher performance.

Nigerian universities also adopt performance evaluation technique (performance appraisal) in determining academic staff who are qualified to be promoted. It is glaring that the regular promotion of lecturer has not guaranteed quality service delivery in the academic environment.

This paper therefore sought to determine the extent to which performance appraisal could be adopted as the strategic tool for facilitating quality service delivery by University lecturers in Nigeria.

## II. THE PROBLEM

The huge government investment in education sector especially public universities was aimed at achieving positive results through effective performance of lecturers.

The return on investment by way of quality service delivery by lecturers is below the expectations of people and the government. Having recognized the prevalence of the problem of this nature, with attendant negative impact on the envisaged general national advancement, it became imperative to take a proactive step by embarking on this research paper in order to proffer feasible solutions for adoption by management of Universities and policy makers in Nigeria.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Exploratory design was adopted to help review the work of some authors and researchers concerning the concept of "performance appraisal" and its relevance in organizations. The method enhanced the accumulation of relevant secondary data to complement the experience and observations in Universities environment that provided the bases for judgments and conclusions in this work.

## IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### A. *The Overview of Nigerian Public University.*

University is one of the tertiary institutions considered to be very complex in terms of its functions, facilities and scope of operation. It is traditionally structured to provide students very high level of training in various fields than can be expected of any other category of tertiary institution [1]. The activities and operations of universities in Nigeria, be it public or private, are under the supervision of the National Universities Commission (NUC), which is an organ under the Federal Ministry of Education.

Public Universities are established and administered by the state or federal government. State government's universities are established through special state edit while federal universities are established through federal acts.

Though public universities in Nigeria exist as autonomous entities, certain aspects of their operational procedures, especially with regards to employment, federal character consideration, staff development and appraisal for promotion and almost similar in nature.

**B. The concept of performance appraisal.**

One of the ways a company can identify and prepare its people for important positions is to establish a second performance appraisal system to identify good performers with promotion potential [2].

Performance appraisal is an administrative exercise typically done once a year to identify and discuss job-relevant strengths and weaknesses of individuals or work teams [3]. It means the assessment of an individual's performance in a systematic way, the performance being measured against such factors as job knowledge, quality and quantity of output, initiative, leadership abilities, supervision, dependability, co-operation, judgement, versatility, health and the like [4]. Performance appraisal is a formal, structured system of measuring and evaluating an employee's job related behaviours and outcomes to discover how and why the employee is presently performing on the job and how the employee can perform more effectively in the future so that the employee, organization, and society all benefit [5].

An appraisal should not be viewed as an end in itself, but rather as an important process within a broader performance management system that links [6]:

- Organizational objectives
- Day to day performance
- Professional development
- Reward and incentives

**C. Objectives of performance appraisal.**

Data extracted from employee performance evaluation are normally documented, retrieved and used for various purposes. Below are the objectives of performance appraisal [7].

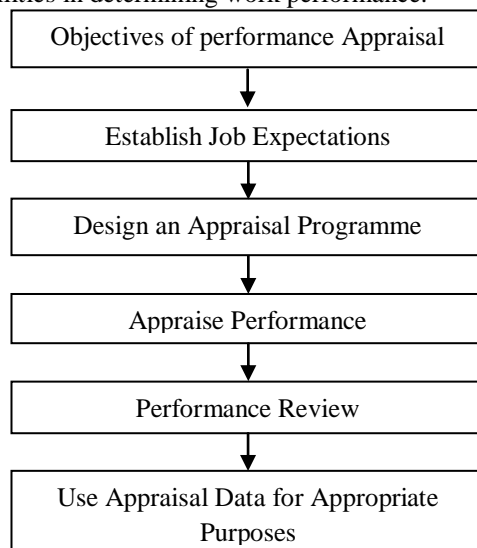
1. To effect promotions based on competence and performance.
2. To confirm the services of probationary employees upon their completing the probationary period satisfactorily.
3. To assess the training and development needs of employees.
4. To decide upon a pay raise where (as in unorganized section) regular pay scales have not been fixed.
5. To let the employees know where they stand in so far as their performance is concerned and to assist them with constructive criticism and guidance for the purpose of their development [4]
6. To improve communication. Performance appraisal provides a format for dialogue between the superior and the subordinate, and improves understanding of personal goals and concerns. This can also have the effect of increasing the trust between the rater and the ratee.
7. Performance appraisal can be used to determine whether human resource programmes such as selection, training, and transfer have been effective or not.
8. It is being used as a base for coaching and counseling the individual by the superior [13]

**D. Performance appraisal process.**

Figure 2.1 below shows the performance appraisal process. The essential steps are logically arranged and explained as follows [8].

1) Objectives of appraisal: Objectives of appraisal include effecting promotions and transfers, assessing training needs, awarding pay increases, and the like. The emphasis in all these is to correct the problems. Appraisal in future, would assume systems orientation. In the systems approach, appraisal aims at improving the performance, instead of merely assessing the performance. Going by this aim, appraisal system seeks to evaluate opportunity factors.

Opportunity factors include the physical environment such as noise; ventilation and lightings, available resources such as human and computer assistance; and social processes such as leadership effectiveness. The opportunity elements are more essential than individual abilities in determining work performance.



Source: [7]

Fig. 2.1 The performance appraisal process

In the systems approach, the emphasis is not on individual assessment and rewards or punishments. But it is on how the work system affects an individual's performance. In other words, for a systems approach to be successful, the employee must believe that by working towards shared goals, everyone will benefit, not merely for individuals rewards purpose.

2) Establish job expectations: This second step in the process encompasses informing the employee what is expected of him or her on the job. Normally, a discussion is held with his or her superior to review the major duties contained in the job description. Individuals should not be expected to begin the job until they understand what is expected of them.

3) Design appraisal programme: Designing appraisal programme poses, several questions which need answers. They are (i) Formal versus informal appraisal? (ii) Whose performance is to be assessed? (iii) who are the raters? (iv) What problems are encountered? (v) How to solve the problems? (vi) what should be evaluated? (vii) When to evaluate? (viii) What methods of appraisal are to be used?

Formal versus informal appraisal: The first step in designing an appraisal programme is to decide whether the appraisal should be formal or informal.

Formal appraisal usually occurs at specified time periods, once or twice a year. Organizations often required formal appraisal for purpose of employee evaluation.

Informal appraisal can occur whenever the supervisor feels the need for communication. For example, if the employee has been consistently meeting on executing standards, an informal appraisal may be in order to simply recognize this fact.

Discussions can take place anywhere in the organization, ranging from the managers office to the canteen. The important thing to be considered in this aspect is that the discussion is held in private. Some organizations prefer a mixture of both formal and informal appraisals. However, the informal appraisal is very helpful for more performance feedback [9].

Whose performance should be rated: The answer to the question regarding whose performance should be rated is not far fetched. The person to be rated is the employees— either as individual, work group, division or organization. Whatever the case, the point to be remembered is that the performance of all employees must be rated (all must become ratees).

Who are raters: Raters can be immediate supervisors, specialists from the HR department, subordinates, peers, committees, clients, self-appraisals, or a combination of several.

What should be rated: Determining the evaluation criteria is one of the steps in designing an appraisal programme. It should be noted that the criteria should be related to the job. The criteria for assessing performance are:

- 1) *Quality*: The degree to which the process of carrying out an activity approaches perfection.
- 2) *Quantity*: The amount produced, expressed in monetary terms, number of units, or number of completed activity cycles.
- 3) *Timelines*: The degree to which an activity is completed or a result produced, at the earliest time desirable from the standpoints of both co-ordinating with the outputs of others and of maximizing the time available for other activities.
- 4) *Cost effectiveness*: The degree to which the use of the organization's resources (e.g. human, monetary, technological and material) is maximized in the sense of getting the high gain or reduction in loss from each unit or instance of use of a resource.
- 5) *Need for supervision*: The degree to which a job performer can carryout a job function without either having to request supervisory assistance or requiring supervisory intervention to prevent an adverse outcome.
- 6) *Interpersonal impact*: The degree to which a performer promotes feeling of self-esteem, goodwill and co-operation among co-workers and subordinates.

4) Methods of appraisal: The last step in the process of designing an appraisal programme is to determine methods of evaluation. There are several methods devised to measure the quantity and quality of employee's job performance. Each of the methods could be effective for some purposes, for some organizations, all the approaches to appraisal can be classified into (i) past-oriented methods, and (ii) future-oriented methods. Past-oriented methods deal with the assessment of the past performance of employees, groups or committees, while the future-oriented appraisal methods deal with how an employee can perform in the future time period.

## **V. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AS A TOOL FOR ACADEMIC STAFF PROMOTION IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR PERSPECTIVE**

Various authors wrote on the purposes and objectives of carrying out performance appraisal. To Nigerian public universities, the purpose of performance appraisal centers around determining who should be promoted. The University of Calabar Conditions of Service outlines the following criteria for lecturers performance appraisal [10].

- Consideration of academic staff for promotion will be based on their contribution to the advancement of knowledge, and their service to the University.
- Emphasis shall be on the quality of the contribution.
- Evidence of contribution to knowledge in the form of scholarly publications in reputable journals or other recognized media for the dissemination of the results of original research. Account may also be taken of published papers presented at conferences of learned societies.
- Staff are only eligible for promotion after confirmation of appointment.
- There shall be a minimum waiting period of 3 years for all categories of academic staff.

The assessment of the performance of a candidate for promotion shall be based on the outcome of the Departmental and Faculty Appointment and Promotion Committee (A&PC) and student evaluation.

## **VI. THE RELEVANCE OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN ENHANCING LECTURES' EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.**

Nigerian public universities adopt performance appraisal for sole purpose of determining employees that should be promoted. Though promotion is a form of incentive which can motivate the staff but that may not positively affect the quality of service delivery in the long-run.

The public universities in Nigeria can enjoy improved quality performance of lecturers by redesigning academic staff appraisal system to incorporate purposes other than for promotion determination. Such appraisal system should measure academic staff past performance and seek to determine future capabilities and or weaknesses. The instrument should be used to suggest measures to be used in reforming the staff performance to meet desired standards and goals.

The appraisal system made to reveal lecturing and research, capabilities of academic staff can aid in identifying those that need appropriate development in order to develop necessary skills, for improved performance, hence generating motivational impact and performance effectiveness. This fact affirms the opinion that performance evaluation process in organization influences the intrinsic motivation of the employees [11].

Area of staff specialization is not given serious consideration by the raters in the public universities; as such it becomes difficult to sift out staff with inappropriate skills and qualification for training, redeployment or transfer. This kind of condition does not only lead to increased inefficiency but it also paves way for poor quality service delivery in the system.

Since promotion of academic staff is primarily based on meeting minimum number of publications, the quality of performance in lecturing, examination and students assessment is ignored in the appraisal system. This invariably leads to reward not based on competence and performance and can demoralize and discourage better performers.

Management in Nigerian public universities does not provide the opportunity for lecturers' participation in goal-setting. Lecturers' appraisal system does not evaluate the staff on this aspect, hence ignoring the benefits of employee commitment toward goal attainment, which could be realized through participative goal-setting process. Committed staff exhibit strong loyalty and have better initiative in performing their work. [12]

Adoption of effective appraisal system in Nigerian university environment can foster understanding and effective communication between the rater and the ratee and keep lecturers informed about his or her work expectations.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Organizations devised various methods to assess their employees performance. Performance appraisal approaches are broadly categorized into past-oriented methods and future-oriented methods.

Employee performance appraisal is periodically carried out to enable organizations achieve specified goals and to use the results for various purposes, for the ultimate interest of both the employees and the firm.

Nigerian public universities carry out lecturers' performance assessment with the sole purpose of identifying who can be promoted or not. The use of performance appraisal for this purpose by the universities enables the individuals get rewarded, without management being able to identify aspects that could discover academic staff development needs, redeployment or other actions capable of enhancing quality service delivery and effectiveness.

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