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Employees' Perceptions on the Contribution of Performance Appraisal to Career Growth and Development in Kenya's Ministry of Education in Nairobi City County, Kenya

Hellen Chebet Boruett

Student, Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Management,
School of Education Masaa University, Kenya

Dr. Alexander Ronoh

Senior Lecturer, Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Management,
School of Education Masaa University, Kenya

Dr. Magdalene Dimba

Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr. Florence Kisirkoi

Senior Lecturer, Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Management,
School of Education, Masaa University, Kenya

Abstract:

Performance Appraisal System (PAS) is a vital tool to measure the work set by any organization to its employees. PAS is used to track individual contribution and work performance against organizational goals and to identify individual strengths and opportunities for future improvements. Performance Appraisal System (PAS) assesses whether organizational goals are achieved and serves as basis for the organization's future planning and development. This study determined the effects of employee attitude on the implementation of performance appraisal system among the employees in the Ministry of Education in Nairobi City County, State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education. The study adopted the concurrent mixed methods design where quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed, simultaneously. The researcher used stratified sampling method to select the samples of the study by stratifying the staff into Education officers and Quality Assurance and Standards officers (QASOs). Semi-structured questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from the respondents. The study recommends that 'Appraisal training by MoE'; and 'Perceived organization support by MoE'; are the main critical factors that need to be seriously addressed to improve employees' Attitude on the implementation of Performance Appraisal System. The anticipated key users of the findings include human resources department of the Ministry of Education, the Public service management, other institutions and future researchers.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal System (PAS), Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs), & appraisal training, career growth and development

1. Introduction

Performance appraisal (PA) is a critical element in the performance management system and a key human resource management function. Rao (2005) advocates that performance appraisal is a method of evaluating the behaviour of employees in the work spot, normally including both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of job performance. Performance Appraisal (PA) forms the core of performance management systems. According to Swanepoel *et al.* (2000) Performance Appraisal is a formal and systematic process of identifying, observing, measuring, recording and developing the job-relevant strengths and weaknesses of employees. Fletcher (2001) submits that the PA has a strategic approach and integrates organizational policies and human resource activities. Performance Appraisal should also be viewed as a system of highly interactive processes which involve personnel at all levels in differing degrees in determining job expectations, writing job descriptions, selecting relevant appraisal criteria, developing assessment tools and procedures, and collecting, interpreting, and reporting results (Saari & Judge, 2004).

Some form of appraisal has existed since organizations emerged and has been the basis of selection of staff for promotion, increased reward or dismissal (Bratton & Gold, 2003). Merit rating was used for the first time during the Second World War as a method of justifying an employee's pay (Griffin & Moorhead, 2014). The process was based on material outcomes where higher output was rewarded with higher pay and vice-versa.

Globally, conducting employee performance appraisals has been very challenging for both the managers and employees (Brewster & Suutari, 2005). Looking at the difference between Chinese and Western employee performance appraisals, Shen (2004) found out that the Chinese appraisals are less transparent than the Western appraisals. The Chinese companies also do not provide training in order to improve appraisal skills and the appraisals are usually limited

in feedback and communication (Shen, 2004). The organizational climate must be cooperative rather than competitive (Johns, 2010);(Bowling, Beehr, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2005). Such impediments can complicate the process making it difficult to obtain true and fair feedback of the employee's performance, which can affect the attitudes and approach the raters will have towards the process which has been shown to affect the quality of the appraisals. Lack of proper training and feedback management is not only critical in influencing the attitude of the ratees' but also the raters towards the PAS (Brown et al, 2010). They may view the PAS as effort in futility.

In Kenya, the performance appraisal system in use in the Civil Service was introduced in 2006 as a Government initiative. The aim of which was to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery through review of systems, processes and structures in the government ministries and departments (Guidelines on Deepening Rationalization, 2002). Kenya's Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) targets greater alignment of existing performance management tools (GOK, 2008). It focuses on operational performance management, monitoring and reporting tools and instruments. This requires proper alignment of leadership competencies and a performance appraisal system, which deliver accurate results. Evaluation is not only a matter of using the right form or method, but it's rather dependent on the openness and willingness of the parties to do it rightly ((Segalla & DeNisi, 2014)).

The Ministry of Education of the Kenya Government, observed that employees view performance appraisal as a routine exercise without any impact (GOK, 2012). It would be inappropriate for organizations to emphasize more on training without paying special attention to performance appraisal as Rao (2005) acknowledges that it is the outcome of performance appraisal that would reveal training needs. Understanding the effect of the employee attitude towards PAS is important in establishing an effective system.

In order to develop an effective PAS, the individuals who are involved as raters should undergo training ((Ochot, Maronga, Muathe, Nyabwanga, & Ronoh, 2012)). Although they should be trained on the process of managing, motivating and evaluating employee performance, the PAS should not be seen as a simple "quick fix" solution. This can create a negative attitude and lack of support among the employees towards the PAS while it should be viewed within its wider context of performance management (Peter, Mulvihill, Rebecca, & Freddy, 2017). All employees involved in the performance rating process must be involved throughout the process. According to Bertone *et al* (1998), involving employees will make them understand organizational goals, what is expected of them and what they will expect for achieving their performance goals. This study endeavours to find out the effect of the employees' attitude on appraisal training on the implementation of performance appraisal.

The government of Kenya has made efforts in implementing public service reforms initiatives aimed at improving the performance of public servants in service delivery. The introduction of the new PAS (GOK, 2006) is yet another attempt by the GOK to manage and improve performance of civil service by enabling a higher level of staff participation and involvement of planning, delivery and evaluation of work performance. Performance Appraisal provides a good opportunity to formally recognize employee achievements and contributions to the organization and to ensure that a clear link is established and maintained between performance and reward. However, research has shown that these reforms have not achieved the envisaged results (Opiyo, 2006).

In the Ministry of Education, State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education (MoE), which comprises Nairobi City County, the observation is that PA is viewed by many as a bureaucratic process which has little relevance to improving performance and accountability (GoK 2012). In a task force report that sought to align the activities of the Education sector in Kenya to the Kenya Constitution of 2010, it is further observed that the PA forms in MoE are filled as a matter of routine and not used as a means for enhancing staff development objective (GOK, 2012). Perceptions of employees on the PAS affect the effectiveness of the system. Extreme dissatisfaction towards PAS by employees can lead to the failure of the system. Performance appraisals should help in determining how every employee fit into the organizational development and efficiency in performing all the assigned tasks and responsibilities. This study sought to understand the significance of employee attitude in the implementation of PAS.

Performance appraisal is a process for tracking contribution of individual work performance against organizational goals. Performance appraisal aims at enhancing public service efficiency and productivity in service delivery. It is implemented in the Ministry of Education as one of the requirements of all government ministries and agencies in Kenya

The government of Kenya has in the past made effort in launching and implementing Public Service Reform initiatives aimed at improving the performance of public servants in service delivery. However, these reforms have not achieved the envisaged results. In the Ministry of Education, reports reveal that staff view PA as a bureaucratic process, which has little relevance on improving performance and accountability. Further, the appraisal forms are not viewed as means for enhancing staff development objectives, instead they are filled as a matter of routine. There is evidence of room for improvement in the process and a lack of knowledge on the effect of employee attitude towards the implementation of PAS in the Ministry of Education, a gap this study intends to fill (Researcher's observation, 2019). The related research on PA in Kenya focused on the effects of PA on service delivery, perceptions of employees on PAS and the effectiveness of PAS on performance in the public service and other organizations.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study pursued the following objectives:

- To examine the effect of gender and age on Kenya Ministry of Education staff's perceptions of the contribution of performance appraisal on their career growth and development.

- To determine the effect of levels of education on Kenya Ministry of Education staff's perceptions of the contribution of performance appraisal on their career growth and development.
- To examine the effect of the length of service and vertical mobility of Kenya Ministry of Education staff's perceptions of the contribution of performance appraisal on their career growth and development.

The findings of the study are expected to form a basis for the management of public service to carry out continuous monitoring of the performance appraisal in all government ministries and other institutions. The findings will also be useful to universities, research institutions and practitioners in enhancing teaching, theories and practice of performance appraisal systems. The knowledge excavation by this study is a great benefit to future researchers, as it serves as their point of reference, while the gaps not addressed by this study will provide a ground for future research. The findings will also be availed to the Ministry of Education for future implementation.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a Concurrent Mixed Method Design. This design focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. In this study, the two types of data were collected independently and the final inferences are based on both data analysis results in a research process as advised by Creswell (2014).

Concurrent mixed methods design was adopted in this study because of its advantages over other mixed methods. The design was preferred since its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2011).

The adoption of this design allowed the researcher to collect a variety of data on the effect of employee attitude towards implementation of performance appraisal system in Nairobi city County of Quantitative data answered the question show and why the various variables of the employees affect their perception on the contribution of the performance appraisal system on the growth and development of their careers. In the quantitative approach, the study used the cross-sectional survey to examine the characteristics of employees' demographic characteristics on the contribution of the performance appraisal system on the growth and development of their careers in the Ministry of Education in Nairobi City County.

The qualitative data focused on investigating the effects of the employee attitude on implementation of the performance appraisal system from the County and sub county directors of education and the heads of directorates who are the supervisory staff in Nairobi City County and at the national headquarters. Interview guide was used to gather in-depth information and focused exploration on individual perceptions and feelings of the supervisory staff.

The study was carried in Nairobi City County, which encompasses Kenya's capital city. The study targeted the supervisory and non-supervisory employees of the Ministry of Education's State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education National office located in Jogoo House B, Nairobi City County office located in Nyayo House and Sub County offices located in the various sub counties in the county.

The targeted population for this study consisted of 255 officials of the State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education staff deployed within Nairobi City County. Eleven of the staff were in the supervisory level while the rest, 244, were non-supervisors.

The researcher used both the probability and non-probability sampling methods. From the probability sampling methods, the researcher used a combination of stratified and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling, an aspect of a non-probability sampling, was used to pick all the 11 supervisory staff both at the National, County and Sub County offices. Supervisors were selected, using purposive sampling method due to their knowledge on the study topic and the role they play as supervisors in staff appraisal. According to Ilker *et. al* (2016), the idea behind purposive involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well informed with a phenomenon of interest. Supervisory staff included heads of directorates, county director of education and sub-county directors of education. Non-supervisory staff consisted of technicians, clerks, secretaries, messengers and cleaners.

Since there were two categories of education professionals: general education officers and quality assurance officers, the study initially employed stratified sampling method. The staffs were stratified into two categories of Education officers and Quality Assurance officers. Stratifying was suitable in the selection of the education professional staff so as to give each one of them, as members of the population in the stratum, equal chances of being selected (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013).

Simple random sampling was then used within each stratum to select a total of 186 staff who participated in the study. The employees who were involved in the study were professionals in education deployed in the State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education. According to Human Resource Payroll Database (2019), the Ministry of Education has deployed a total number of 244 nonsupervisory and 11 supervisory staff in Nairobi City County and the Ministry of Education headquarters. Using these sampling methods, respondents from the non-supervisory staff and supervisory staff interviewees were selected to participate in this study. The study used questionnaires to collect data from the sample of non-supervisory staff respondents, whereas, interview guide was used to collect data from the supervisory staff.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

In this study, data was collected from of supervisory and non-supervisory staff of the Nairobi City Education offices and the Ministry of Education headquarters. The return rate of questionnaires was excellent at 86 %, while participation in interviews was 100%.

4.1. Effects of Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents and Interviewees

This section presents the results on the demographic information of the respondents. It describes the various background characteristics of respondents who provided data through administration of interviews and questionnaires. Analysis of the data focused on the following demographic characteristics of the research samples: Gender and age, levels of education, and length of service and vertical mobility.

4.1.1. Gender and Age of the Research Sample

From the Ministry of Education representatives sampled, a total of 183 sample units responded where the majority were male with 56.8% while the rest were female with 43.2%. During the sample selection, there was no priority made between male or female respondent. This agrees with Moy, Chen, and Kao (2015) that sampling may not always guarantee that both genders are equally represented in a study. In this study, both genders were fairly represented hence the findings not be hurt by gender biasness. Table 1 presents the findings on the distribution by gender and age of the respondents.

n=183		Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	104	56.8
	Female	79	43.2
	Total	183	100.0
Age	20 – 30 years	6	3.3
	31 – 40 years	35	19.1
	41 – 50 years	82	44.8
	51 – 60 years	58	31.7
	over 60 years	2	1.1
	Total	183	100.0

Table 1: Distribution by Gender and Age of the Respondents
Source: Field data, 2019

The results as observed in Table 1 indicated that 44.8% of the respondents were aged between 41 and 50 years, while those aged 20 – 30 years constituted only 3.3% of the study population. Comparatively, those aged between 51 and 60 years constituted 31.7%. Age of the respondents ranged from a minimum of 20 years to 60 years and above. As shown in Table 1, the distribution of staff at the MoE is positively skewed. The skewness implies that the majority of staff is approaching retirement age, while a small minority of 22.4% are within the 20-40 years' age bracket. These findings portend a significantly high number of experienced staff under performance appraisal and therefore they fully understand the objectives of the PAS and may also be clear about their expectations. The issues of stagnation for this category of staff would have implications on their retirement benefits. It would also imply that this is a category of staff which can easily get demotivated and who, although experienced on the job, can easily give up or lose commitment if they perceive that the PAS in MoE is not benefiting them.

4.1.2. Levels of Education of the Research Sample

The respondents were also asked to indicate their highest level of academic qualifications. The level of education has an effect on whether or not the employees have effective skills to articulate themselves during the performance review. The findings are presented in Table 2 below.

n=183		Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Total	183	100.0	1.1
	Secondary	10	5.5
	Certificate	3	1.6
	Diploma	27	14.8
	Degree	55	30.1
	Post-Graduate	86	47.0

Table 2: Highest Levels of Education of the Respondents
Source: Field data, 2019

The findings show that in the Ministry of Education, a significant percentage (47%) of the respondents had attained Post-graduate level of education, which represents; Masters or PhD level of education and another 30.1% had attained a degree certificate. This is an indication that the employees at the MoE were highly qualified. and that the participants could comprehend and make reasoned responses to the PAS issues as raised in the study. It means that most employees at the MoE can conceptualize and accurately accomplish their own goals, effectively communicate, articulate their objectives, and negotiate more objectively during the evaluation meetings. Consistent with these findings, Thomas *et al.* (2009) argues that highly educated workers contribute more to organizational effectiveness than less educated workers do. Further, Lepak and Snell (1999), observes that individuals' educational attainments are not only part of a company's

human capital but also a part of a community's core assets. In this analysis, it can be construed that, notwithstanding modest organizational support to staff for scholarship, many have made personal efforts to raise their level of knowledge and skills to perform at workplace. The staffs therefore demonstrate personal conviction and commitment with a view to support the organization by embracing better performance setting of realistic targets since they have the intellectual capacity to interpret the overall goals of the organization.

4.1.3. Length of Service and Vertical Mobility of the Research Sample

This section examines employee demographic characteristics by the length of service and vertical mobility. Employees of MoE were asked to indicate their length of service and how long it takes them to move from one job group to another. Table 3 presents the analysis.

n=183		Frequency (F)	Percent (%)
Length of Service	1-5years	52	28.4
	6-10years	45	24.6
	11-16years	47	25.7
	17years and above	39	21.3
	Total	183	100.0
		Frequency(F)	Percent (%)
Upward Mobility	1-3years	50	27.3
	4-6years	53	29.0
	more than 6 years	56	30.6
	no idea	24	13.1
	Total	183	100.0

Table 3: Length of Service and Upward Mobility
Source: Field data, 2019

The analysis in Table 3 indicates that the majority of employees at the MoE (59.6%) had four or more years of stagnation in the same job-group. At the same time, 46% of the respondents had over 11 years of work experience at MoE. In regard to work experience of employees, Gurbuz and Dikmenli (2007) observes that more experienced employees are more familiar with the PA process and therefore more focused and realistic in their targets during each new appraisal. Their perceptions of the PAS will obviously differ from those with less experienced employees.

The results further show that, for the majority of employees, it takes substantially long before one moves to the next job-group. Stagnation in one job-group for more than six years negates the human resource policy that indicates automatic mobility after every three years in the public service. Essentially, giving employees the opportunity to develop and grow beyond their current positions motivates them to perform better. When there is a standard linear career progression, employees develop high expectations for vertical mobility, and are likely to perform better than when such standards are non-existent. Organizations benefit from focusing on building a mobility programme, as this is more likely to yield greater productivity out of the employees' skills and competencies.

Performance Appraisal results should be used for, among others, developmental issues of employees. As a development tool, performance appraisal is a primary and most accurate way of obtaining information and feedback that often play key role on employees' development and career decisions. It is in the best interest of the management to promote the employees to the positions where they can most effectively use their abilities and such situations, may be justified based on performance appraisal (Fisher *et al.*, 1996). The observed stagnation of some staff at the MoE, in one position is, therefore, a testimony to frustrations as a result of insufficient and/or inaccurate implementation of performance appraisal system, which complicates decisions on promotion of the staff.

4.2. Contribution of Performance Appraisal to Career Growth and Development

This section presents an analysis of the contribution of Performance Appraisal to career growth and development and how this influences the implementation of the appraisal system at the Ministry of Education. According to Sabir, (2017), performance appraisal and review is the formal and systematic assessment of how well employees are performing their jobs in relation to established standards and the communication of that assessment to employees. Performance appraisal of the employees is an extremely useful tool in the decision-making process of the organization in selection, training, promotion, pay increment, and in transfer. Table 4 presents an analysis of employees' perceptions of the contribution of performance appraisal on career growth and development.

		Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Contribution of PA	Yes	67	36.6
	No	116	63.4
	Total	183	100.0

Table 4: Performance Appraisal Contribution to Career Development
Source: Field Data, 2019

The results of the analysis in Table 4 show that majority (63.4%) of the employees at MoE indicated that that PAS had not contributed to their career growth and development. This could explain the casual attitude with which employees at MoE viewed the PAS. The findings are attributed to the findings on the length of service and upward mobility as shown in Table 4, that, despite the employees extended length of service, it took longer for them to move from one job-group to another. The findings show that stagnation of employees at MoE in the same job-group occurs in spite of the fact that performance appraisal is conducted annually.

Efficient implementation of the performance appraisal process can offer MoE the advantage of identifying the employees' skill level in order to address the employees' development needs and career ambitions. Kuvaas (2011) observes that the success of a PAS is extremely important in encouraging employee development and in stimulating their work motivation, the supervisory staff were interviewed on the contribution of performance appraisal on career growth and development of the employees. The findings showed most of the responses of the supervisory staff indicated that the PAS contributed to the career growth and development of the employees at the supervisory level. They observed that this was in regard to the ability to work towards achieving the individual work targets which are set at the beginning of the evaluation period within the agreed timings, helping in working for results in line with organizational vision and goals. The supervisors also noted the use of PAS results for promotion from one job group to another, and the expansion of the role of PAS to include an enforcement tool for setting and achieving work targets on time by employees, which is the immediate objective of the supervisor as the head of section or department. This is regardless of whether PAS will actually return a promotion or career progression for the employee or not. Performance appraisal contributes to career growth and development of organizational employees at the supervisory level, to a large extent.

The differential perceptions of employees and supervisory staff regarding the contribution of performance appraisal to career growth and development can be attributed to variations in the perceived purposes of performance appraisal by staff of different positions in an organization. A research study by Youngcourt *et al.* (2007) examined the perceived purposes of performance appraisal by correlating individual and position-focused purposes on attitudinal outcomes. Furthermore, the study examined purposes of performance appraisals as perceived by the role incumbent, as opposed to the stated organizational purposes. The relationships between these perceived purposes with several attitudinal outcomes, including satisfaction with the performance appraisal, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and role ambiguity, are reported. The results suggested support for a model consisting of three performance appraisal purposes having differential relationships with the outcomes examined, which suggested that the purpose of the performance appraisal may affect rates' perceptions of and attitudes toward their jobs.

5. Conclusion

This study suggests that the PA practices at the MoE should not only enhances the productivity and performance of the employees (Kuvaas, 2006), but well-designed PA system may also gain commitment of the employees and may positively affect their attitudes and behaviour. It is further supported empirically that there is a significant relationship effect between PA practices and organizational commitment and employee attitudes. The implications involve significant impact for MoE in attaining competitive advantage. Organizational commitment and employees' attitudes towards PA system may result in detrimental repercussions on the organizations due to Performance Appraisal and Training and Development. In a nutshell, implementation of effective PA system is imperative for both employee and organization which can lead to better productivity and performance.

The feedback to the employee generally aims at improving performance effectiveness through stimulating behavioural change. So, is the manner in which employees receive feedback on their job performance a major ingredient in deciding the winner of the performance appraisal system. Discovering information about the self-discrepant from one's self-image is often hard and sore. Therefore, because the feedback may strike at the heart of a person's personal belief system, it is essential to determine conditions of feedback so that the appraisee is able to tolerate, hear, and own discrepant information. But if conditions facilitate the acceptance of feedback information then the likelihood of change increases.

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