

Performance Appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Performance appraisal is one of the areas of human resources in educational administration which brings about school effectiveness. When school activities are well appraised and results communicated, corrections will be effected leading to school effectiveness. Thus, this article is intended at exploring Performance Appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon. The implication is that performance appraisal of human resources can impact school effectiveness. data was collected from primary sources through the administration of interview to ten administrators and questionnaires to lecturers using the five point Likert scale format and close ended questionnaires to 375 lecturers. Two data analysis approaches were used for the study that is the qualitative and quantitative method. In all, despite these lapses with performance appraisal observed, all the lecturers 331(100%) agreed that the basic purpose of performance appraisal is to facilitate orderly determination of an employee's worth to the organization of which he is a part and the first step in the process of performance appraisal is the setting up of the standards which will be used as the base to compare the actual performance of the employees. It was then recommended that future research on performance appraisal in the Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon studies should focus on leadership and the management of staff performance in institutions of higher learning. The research would focus on the style of leadership in an institution and how it influences the implementation of performance appraisal. Literature indicates that leadership provides vision and builds staff confidence to enable them to achieved targets. Leaders decide on appraisal policy, purpose and implementation procedures.

KEYWORDS: Performance, Appraisal, Human Resources, Anglo-Saxon, Higher Education Institutions, Cameroon

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education (HE) sector is one area of the public sector where the introduction of performance appraisal instruments faces certain dilemmas. Even though human resources are the most valuable asset of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the accounting and administration of personnel predominates over managing approach. That could be mostly explained by the organizational particularity of HEIs, that is, flatter structure, more collegial than hierarchical management, weaker control and regulation mechanisms. In HEIs, employees usually possess more self-discipline, freedom of action, decision-making, stand to professional standards and code of ethics and their status derives basically from their personal competence, knowledge and excellence (Simmons, Iles, 2001). A number of researches, especially within HE sector (ex. Simmons, 2002) state that application of hierarchic; control-pointed that performance appraisal is "unwarranted, unworkable and unacceptable in knowledge based organizations". Simmons, Iles (2000) note that common principles of flexibility, procedural justice, staff commitment and self-reflection should be applied while developing an equitable and robust performance appraisal system at HEI as well as recognition and consideration of stakeholders' interests

and developmental approach are crucial.

This article raises problem questions: what kind or performance appraisal is prevailing in Cameroon HEIs? What problems does it generate? What would be the most appropriate performance appraisal system for Cameroon HEIs to motivate and empower administrators' and staff to do their best and continuously enhance teaching, learning, research, study quality and accordingly, influence the successful development of HEI?

Background of the study

Armstrong (2006) defines performance appraisal as a "formal evaluation process, when a review of performance over a period takes place, covering achievements, progress and problems as the basis for a revised performance agreement and personal development plan are likely to occur". Currently performance appraisals usually comprise: 1) explicit feedback on various aspects of job performance; 2) identification of employee's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the requirements for current position; 3) the agreement on concrete objectives to be attained by the employee during the next evaluation period; and 4) preparation of personal development plans,

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a statement of each employee's career goals, decisions on merit pays.

Also, according to Seta et al. (2000), initially performance appraisals were quite brief, consisting mainly of a few comments from a supervisor to his subordinate to the extent that he or she was doing a "good job" or, conversely, a "bungle job". However, afterwards performance appraisals have become widely viewed not simply as a means of informing employees on where do they stand, but also as a valuable tool for helping them develop in ways beneficial both themselves and the company.

Besides, Fisher et al. (2005) define the following principal purposes of appraisal: employee development (identification of training needs and preparation of personal development plans), administrative decisions (merit, pay, career, etc.), organizational development (personnel planning, prevention of conflicts, implementation of motivation system, etc.) and documentation (conformity to official regulations, certification of accordance to formal requirements, etc.). Actually, the above mentioned purposes of performance appraisal in practice usually overlap and thereafter two key opposite approaches are referred to. These are, as Haslam et al (1993) define *managerialist* (aimed at control, primarily concerned with assessment of performance outcomes, and linked to promotion and merit pay awards) and *developmental* (intended for the purposes of staff development, explicitly stated and backed up with adequate resources and effective procedures designed to ensure that identified training needs are met). The almost crucial step in developing a performance appraisal system is to determine which aspects of performance to evaluate. According to Fisher et al. (2005) the most frequently used appraisal criteria are traits, behaviors, and performance outcomes.

Türk (2008), stresses that performance appraisal has a pivot role in reforming the educational system and increasing productivity of academic staff, as well as raising the overall quality of HEI. According to Allen (2003) "performance appraisal is one of the most valuable instruments in the manager's toolbox. A careful appraisal process can help improve an employee's performance for an entire year. More broadly, an effective evaluation process is part of the strategic first-rate people management that helps organizations to succeed."

Statement of the Problem

It is the governments concern to ensure that Higher Institutions are accountable, relevance, efficient and effective. The governments demand for accountability implies that there is an expected return on investment. It is expected that Higher Education Institutions should achieve their missions of teaching, research and community service efficiently to justify the high investment. The academic staff performance is crucial for the achievement of goals in higher learning institutions. This implies that academic staff performance has to be monitored to highlight factors that may lead to ineffectiveness. The study therefore sought out to examine performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon

Research Questions

1. To find out the purpose and underlying principles of performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon?
2. To examine the policies, plans and procedures in the implementation of performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon?
3. To find out recommendations that can be made to the existing performance appraisal systems of Human Resources used in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon to make the system a suitable mechanism for institutional efficiency?

Research Questions

1. What are the purposes and underlying principles of performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon?
2. What are the policies, plans and procedures in the implementation of performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon?
3. What recommendations can be made to the existing appraisal system of Human Resources used in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon to make the system a suitable mechanism for institutional efficiency?

Methodology

Since the study sought out to examine performance appraisal of Human Resources in Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon, a survey research design was employ. To estimate the sample size for lectures, the formula stated below by (Amin, 2005) was used.

$$\frac{NZ^2P(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + Z^2P(1 - P)}$$

Where:

- N= Total number respondents that constituted the accessible population of the study.
- Z= Z value corresponding to the confidence level=95%, giving a $Z_{\alpha/2}$ =level of significance = 1.96.
- d= absolute precision=5%.
- P= expected proportion in the population was 40% for optimal sample size.

Thus, 231 out of a total of 375 lecturers were targeted from University of Buea and 144 from the University of Bamenda making a total of 375 lecturers. Lastly, for administrators, it was 5 each from both institutions making a total of 10 administrators'. A questionnaire was used for lecturers and an interview guide for administrators. Two data analysis approaches were used for the study that is the qualitative and quantitative method. Data collected via interview guide were analysed qualitatively. Here, key concepts/themes, groundings and quotations were used. These refer to the key words that emerged from participants' direct statements. On the other hand, groundings represent the number of times that a particular concept or theme emerged from the participant's direct statements with some of the statements used as sampled quotations. The questionnaires were analysed quantitatively. Through this, a pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData

Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) database which has an in-built consistency and validation checks was used to enter. Before the quantitative data were entered using the pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1, the demographic information and the test items were coded with numbers. The questionnaires of individual respondents were also assigned with serial numbers. The reason for the coding of the test items was to ensure easy traceability of the participants' individual responses per test items if need arises. The data were then exported to SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012) for further consistency check, data validation, to identify invalid codes and eventually cleaning of the data in areas where some inconsistency and invalid codes were observed.

After the data had been thoroughly check, the descriptive statistical tools (frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set) and inferential statistics (Spearman's Rho test) were used in analyzing the quantitative data. The normality assumption test was

computed using advanced statistical tests such as Shapiro-Wilk test and the Komogorov test of significance as seen on the table of test of normality below. To know if a data is normally distributed the P-value will be greater than 0.05 which was not the case as seen on the normality test table with all P-values less than 0.05. This therefore justify the reason while the Spearman rho test was used in testing the hypotheses of the study. Checking for normality assumption was very important to avoid faulty generalization like committing the type 1 or type 2 errors during the verification of the research hypotheses. Finally, findings were presented using frequency distribution tables, and charts with all inferential statistics presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels accepting 5% margin of error.

Presentation of Findings

This section was principally concerned with the presentation of findings from 331 lecturers and 10 administrators.

To what extent does performance appraisal affect students' internal efficiency in Anglo-Saxon Universities in Cameroon?

Table1: Lecturers' appreciation of performance appraisal

Test items	Stretched			Collapsed		
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Agree	Disagree
Performance appraisal is often done in my department.	137 (41.4%)	72 (21.8%)	122 (36.9%)	0 (0.0%)	209 (63.1%)	122 (36.9%)
The basic purpose of performance appraisal is to facilitate orderly determination of an employee's worth to the organization of which he is a part.	155 (46.8%)	176 (53.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	331 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Performance appraisal has been discredited because often it has been used as a top-down and mainly bureaucratic system.	229 (69.2%)	102 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	331 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Performance Appraisal in universities needs to appraise the performance of everyone.	141 (42.6%)	190 (57.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	331 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
In my department, teaching and learning is evaluated regularly.	141 (42.6%)	75 (22.7%)	56 (16.9%)	59 (17.8%)	216 (65.3%)	115 (34.7%)
After performance appraisal, the results are communicated and discussed with the employees on a one-to-one basis.	166 (50.2%)	92 (27.8%)	73 (22.1%)	0 (0.0%)	258 (77.9%)	73 (22.1%)
Performance evaluations typically look at the achievements of members of staff but the type of activities that are taken into consideration vary between institutions and countries.	162 (48.9%)	162 (48.9%)	7 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	324 (97.9%)	7 (2.1%)
The first step in the process of performance appraisal is the setting up of the standards which will be used as the base to compare the actual performance of the employees.	233 (70.4%)	98 (29.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	331 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Multiple response set	1145 (43.2%)	865 (32.7%)	477 (18.1%)	161 (6.1%)	2010 (75.9%)	638 (24.1%)

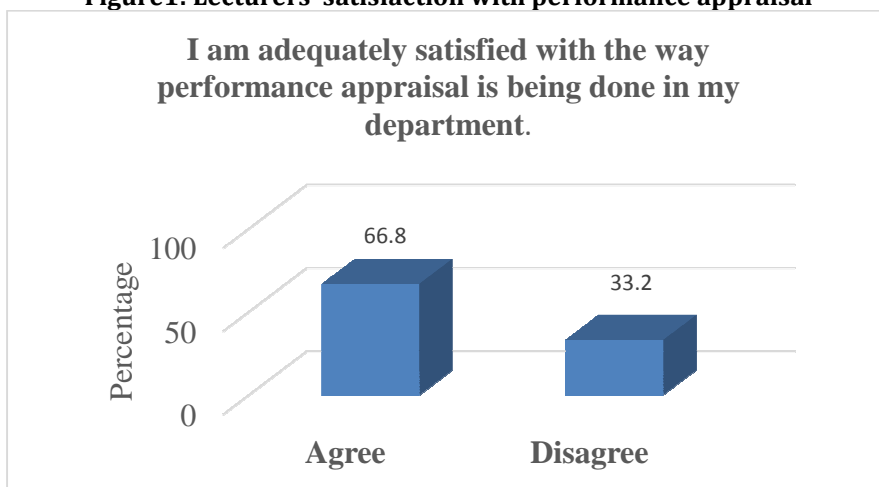
n=331

In aggregate, findings showed that although 75.9% of the lecturers agreed that performance appraisal is done in their institution and they equally positively appreciated it, 24.1% of the lecturers did not. For instance, all the lecturers 331(100%) agreed that performance appraisal has been discredited because often it has been used as a top-down and mainly bureaucratic system. Also, although 209(63.1%) of the lecturers agreed that performance appraisal is done in their department, 122(36.9%) of the lecturers disagreed. Also, although 258(77.9%) of the lecturers agreed that after performance appraisal, the results are communicated and discussed with the employees on a one-to-one basis,

73(22.1%) of the lecturers disagreed with 115(34.7%) of the lecturers equally disagreed that teaching and learning in their department is regularly evaluated.

Despite these lapses with performance appraisal observed, all the lecturers 331(100%) agreed that the basic purpose of performance appraisal is to facilitate orderly determination of an employee’s worth to the organization of which he is a part and the first step in the process of performance appraisal is the setting up of the standards which will be used as the base to compare the actual performance of the employees.

Figure1: Lecturers’ satisfaction with performance appraisal



Findings from figure 1 showed that among the 331 lecturers sampled 110(33.2%) of them were dissatisfied with performance appraisal, meanwhile 221(66.8%) of the lecturers were satisfied.

Administrators’ own perception of performance appraisal

First, all the administrators interviewed said “performance appraisal of staff is conducted” whereby some of them said “twice a year” while others said “in each semester”.

Table2: The various ways the competencies of lecturers are evaluated

Themes	Frequency	Quotations
Students’ performance	7	“Through students’ performance in their course examinations”. “Students performance”.
Effective use of time	1	“How the lecturers use their time”
Collaboration with other staff	1	“How they collaborate with other staff”.

From the table above, findings showed that students’ performance, lecturers’ effective use of time and their collaboration with other staff were the only three ways that the competencies of lecturers are evaluated as depicted in the findings of this study.

Also, considering how performance appraisal is important, findings showed that some of the administrators said, it helps them to check whether they are meeting up to standard, to correct the weaknesses of workers, to equally know the success rate of lecturers and checking for the attainment of goals of the institutions.

Also, based on the demerit with performance appraisal, “favouritism” was the only demerit highlighted by the administrators interviewed for the study.

Lastly, as far as difficult aspects of performance appraisal were concerned, findings showed that measuring the actual performance of staff and setting realistic performance standards were the two difficult aspects captured in the findings of this study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the research questions:

Recommendations on policy and purpose of performance appraisal

The recommendations were discussed as follows based on the responses of participants in the research.

- Staff is aware of the two essential roles of performance management (judgment and development), but favour appraisal that places emphasis on development, since it empowers them with skills and competencies to achieve institutional activities. Therefore, an appraisal policy has to emphasise staff development, not only in the plans but also during its implementation.
- The performance appraisal policy should indicate what is to be evaluated, the criteria and the methods to be used in the assessment of performance.
- Performance appraisal system should be open, continuous, participative and developmental. It should emphasise research and adopt labour practices.

Recommendations on procedure of performance appraisal

The following recommendations are made on the basis of findings with regard to the procedure of performance appraisal.

- Policies, procedure and measures used for collecting evidence on performance should clearly be stipulated.
- Job descriptions should be reviewed and aligned with the institutional mission and goals.
- Subordinates should set standards and indicators of performance with their supervisors. Agreed goals will ease the process of appraisal and the final rating.
- The appraiser and appraisee should hold preliminary meetings before the formal appraisal meeting to agree on documents that should be available during the meeting and set dates for the meeting.
- Provide prompt feedback and written communication on the results of appraisal.
- Performance-related pay should be implemented due to its motivational effects on staff performance. However, other forms of motivation like praise and acknowledgement for good performance are also important.
- Appraisers/supervisors are to be consistent in their ratings to motivate staff, as one of the purposes of appraisal is to motivate staff to perform.
- Grievance procedure should be written and communicated to all staff.

Recommendations for future research in performance appraisal

It was then recommended that future research on performance appraisal in the Anglo-Saxon Higher Institutions in Cameroon studies should focus on leadership and the management of staff performance in institutions of higher learning. The research would focus on the style of leadership in an institution and how it influences the implementation of performance appraisal. Literature indicates that leadership provides vision and builds staff confidence to enable them to achieved targets. Leaders decide on appraisal policy, purpose and implementation procedures.

Conclusion

On the whole, Anglo-Saxon Universities approved of the need for effective and efficient performance appraisal of human resources in their institutions. It can therefore be concluded that performance appraisal has a great role to play as school management is concern to bring about educational effectiveness in Anglo-Saxon Universities in Cameroon. So good performance procedures should be instituted and results communicated to the subordinates or appraisees so that Universities can easily attain their goals.

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