

Perceptions of Heads and Teachers on the Impact of Performance Management on the Supervision of Educational Personnel in Secondary Schools in Kwekwe District

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Abstract: Performance management system is a process that focuses on individual performance against agreed work plans. It is a means of getting better results from the organisational teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed-framework of planned goals, objectives and standards. In order therefore to assess individual's work performance and contributions to the organisation, the performance management system has to be carried out. Zimbabwe has introduced the performance management system in its public sector institutions (including schools) as a way of improving the performance of the civil servants and public organisations. This study seeks to evaluate the impact of performance management on the supervision of teachers in secondary schools in Zimbabwe using the quantitative paradigm. The study adopted the survey descriptive design. The target population comprised all the secondary school teachers in Kwekwe District using a random sample of 200 teachers and 20 heads of schools made up of 112 males and 108 females. All the information was gathered using a questionnaire. The results of the study revealed that performance management had not changed the supervision practices of heads who still stuck to the traditional models of supervision that existed prior to the introduction of performance management. The study also revealed that identified training needs for personnel were not addressed at all. The study recommends that resources and opportunities be made available to address effectively training and development needs identified during performance management reviews in order to effectively improve personnel competencies and benefit the students learning.

Keywords: Performance management, Supervision, Impact, Secondary school, Perceptions, District, Heads, Education personnel, Appraisals.

INTRODUCTION

In the Zimbabwean context, as cited by the Public Service Commission [1], performance management aims at releasing the individual's potential and thus improving his/her performance. It is viewed as a process that leads to job clarity through well defined personnel's job descriptions. This systematic performance management system, according to Beach [2], enables supervisors (heads of schools) to make objective decisions which are free of bias or prejudice and these decisions include determination of individual employee's outputs, targets, development and training needs, promotion, continued tenure and salary increments by each employee's immediate supervisor in the organisation and this supervisor in turn also reviewed by his/her own super-ordinate. That means that all the personnel in the organisation are appraised by their supervisors [1].

Prior to the introduction of performance management in Zimbabwean schools, teachers' performance was appraised in a number of ways [3].

The various methods of monitoring and evaluating teachers' performance included the use of the ED57 form which was an annual report on a teacher by the school head, the confidential report which was narrative and was a report given to a teacher upon an inspection visit by the education officer and the ED94 form that evaluated teachers for accelerated salary advancement [3]. In addition to these instruments were the routine checks and class visits reports as well as exercise books and record books inspection reports given by the head of the school or the immediate supervisor to his or her individual teachers [4]. Performance management was believed, therefore, to be an improved way of supervising the performance of teaches in order to improve the results of the schools [3]. This study, therefore, wanted to establish whether performance management was better than those systems of supervision it was thought to have replaced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Barhram [5], performance management is about achieving results in a manner that

is consistent with organisational expectations. Integrating competencies within the performance management process supports the provision of feedback to employees not only on “what” they have accomplished (that is, performance goals), but also “how” the work was performed using resources and competencies for providing feedback [6]. On the other hand, Cheng and Dainty [7] state that performance management is a process by which managers and employees work together to plan, monitor and review an employee’s work objectives and overall contribution to the organisation. More than just an annual performance review, performance management is the continuous process of setting objectives, assessing progress and providing on-going coaching and feedback to ensure that employees are meeting their objectives and career goals [8]. As Spencer [8] posits, the fundamental goal of performance management is to promote and improve employee effectiveness and his/her other overall contribution to the organisation.

Sanchez and Levine [9] define performance management as a systematic evaluation process of the employee by his or her supervisor, manager or some other qualified person who is familiar with the employee’s performance on the job. The Public Service Commission [1] views performance management as a holistic process that links goal setting and coaching for performance in a continuous manner with the primary aim of helping managers and supervisors to increase the effectiveness of their staff. Thus, according to Catano *et al.*, [10], performance management is a performance-improvement process based on a joint problem-solving approach rather than an evaluation and control system. Williams [11] states that the primary reason for a appraising performance is to encourage employees to put forth their best effort so that the organisation can meet its mission and goals.

Tack [12] asserts that the performance management system places emphasis on how results are obtained, with special concern for human resources management and teamwork as well as the results themselves. Tack [12] further adds that performance management is processes rather than system oriented with the emphasis on the appraiser-appraisee/manager-subordinate interaction. It is an integrated approach which balances people’s attitudes and skills with the process factors to reflect the organisation’s culture and mission [12].

Duboise and Rothwell [13] posit that, if performance management has to succeed and if an organisation has to grow and achieve its set goals and mission, the appraising systems should identify outputs in measurable terms and the individuals, teams and work units that lead to successful operations. Williams [11] postulates that the performance management system should be able to reward and expand areas of strengths and improvement or at least minimise areas of

weaknesses. Although managers or heads of institutions have the responsibility of assessing the performance of their subordinates, it is considered good practice for managers, heads of schools to do more than simply rate their subordinates, they should also work out jointly with each of their subordinates, a plan for correcting deficiencies or identified training needs, building upon strengths and developing the individual employees [11].

According to Madziyire [3], the main purpose of the performance management system in the education system is to improve efficiency and effectiveness of personnel as it helps heads of schools determine training needs of teachers and motivate them to do better in their present job, giving them knowledge of results, recognition of their merits and opportunity to discuss work with their heads. Performance management also helps heads of schools decide what increases to pay should be given on grounds of merit such as payment of bonuses and salary notches [3]. Furthermore, as Stacey [14] adds, the performance management system helps to determine the future use of an employee such as whether he or she shall remain in the present job or be promoted, transferred, demoted or dismissed.

However, as Crowling and Mailer [15] argue, the process of performance management has its share of weaknesses. For example, it takes time and money to develop and administer the system since both the appraiser and appraisee need to be trained. It requires adequate resources for it to be properly carried out [15]. Robbins [16] states that on assessment, raters tend to be biased or prejudiced and these personal biases distort ratings; some raters are reluctant to rate their appraisees highly because they may be asked to substantiate their judgments and yet some may have a tendency to be liberal in their rating and lack of uniformity in rating patterns create confusion and is an unfair practice.

As Spencer [8] postulates, the results of the system may not be used for the purpose they are intended. Appraisals are often unjust when used for salary increase, promotion or dismissals because the practice may have undesirable effects such as employees being demotivated especially when ratings are not favourable [8]. Chipangura and Musekiwa [4] found that performance management in Zimbabwe was strongly resisted by teachers and most staff associations on the grounds that employees were not consulted in the formulation of the programme, the programme tended to focus on the person rather than the expected behaviour, teachers could not be held accountable for the non-attainment of targets when they did not control the resource input and the linking of the awarding of increments and bonuses to performance management was unacceptable and was viewed as a biased and unfair practice.

Statement of the problem

The general belief is that through use of performance management, in supervision, educational personnel are able to identify their core-business, promote individual accountability and teach effectively so that students achieve quality learning.

Purpose of the study

The study sought to explore the perceptions of secondary school teachers and heads on the impact of the performance management system in order to come up with practical suggestions to improve the operationalisation of the system for the efficiency of Zimbabwean secondary school teachers.

Research questions

1. What are the views of heads and teachers towards performance management?
2. Does the use of performance management motivate educational personnel to perform better for the benefit of students?
3. Is performance management applicable in an educational institution context?
4. How best can the implementation of performance management be improved to improve the performance of teachers and heads for the benefit of schools?

Significance of the study

The importance of the study stemmed from the fact that it attempted to expose the major challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the performance management system with a view to proffer possible suggestions to improve on the implementation of the system and possibly suggest corrective measures to be taken by the Civil Service Commission in addressing the concerns of the heads and teachers in the secondary schools.

Limitations of the study

In view of the small size of the sample and sub-samples used, the findings of the study would have limited generalisability. It has to be pointed out also that

perceptions about a phenomenon are essentially subjective and cannot be measured accurately. In other words, attitudes have no universally accepted scales of measurement and measures that were used in this study cannot be considered to be very accurate.

Delimitations of the study

The researchers delimited the investigation to the evaluation of perceptions of teachers and heads towards the performance management system in secondary schools in Kwekwe District in Western Zimbabwe. Views from 20 heads and 200 teachers were used in the study. Perceptions from other stakeholders like District Inspectors, Education Officers and Civil Service Commission inspectors were not sought after.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative paradigm and made use of a survey research design. Quantitative research was chosen for its ability to enable this study's findings to be generalised to other districts. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting data because of its greater impersonality [17]. All the respondents were given the questionnaires by the researchers in their schools. The researchers also personally collected the questionnaires to maximise on the rate of returns. As Leedy [18] states, non-returns introduce a bias in as much as they are likely to be different from respondents in many respects, thereby, adversely affecting the reliability and validity of the findings. The data gathered produced descriptive statistics around the variables under study. These statistics were computed and inferential implications then deduced and recorded.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study presents the findings on the perceptions of teachers and heads on the impact of performance management in Zimbabwean secondary schools. This section is presented in two parts namely, findings and discussion.

Presentation of Data

Table-1: Category of respondents (N = 220)

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Heads | 20 | 9 |
| Teachers | 200 | 91 |
| Total | 220 | 100 |

The information on Table-1 reveals that the majority of respondents (91%) were teachers, which is a true reflection of what obtains in the schools as each school has one head and many teachers.

Table-2: Distribution of respondents by Sex (N = 220)

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Male | 112 | 51 |
| Female | 108 | 49 |
| Total | 220 | 100 |

Table-2 above shows that there was a slightly higher number of male respondents than the females

ones (51% against 49%). However, the variance is very marginal to warrant any statistical significance.

Table-3: Composition of respondents by professional qualifications (N = 220)

| Professional Qualifications | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Certificate in Education | 0 | 0 | 40 | 20 | 40 | 18 |
| Diploma in Education | 0 | 0 | 145 | 73 | 145 | 66 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 18 | 90 | 15 | 7 | 33 | 15 |
| Master's Degree | 2 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

Table-3 above shows that the majority of teachers were Diploma in Education holders (66%) followed by Certificate in Education holders (18%), Bachelor's Degree with 15% and only 1% of the teachers were in possession of a Master's Degree. On the other hand, heads were all degreed with the bulk of

them in possession of Bachelors Degree (90%) and 10% in possession of Master's Degree. The information in table 4 shows that the majority of heads have been in service for over 20 years (75%). Most teachers are below 20 years of teaching experience (86%).

Table-4: Composition of respondents by experience the education system (N = 220)

| Experience in Years | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 0 – 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 3 – 5 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| 6 – 10 | 0 | 0 | 112 | 56 | 112 | 51 |
| 11 – 15 | 5 | 25 | 58 | 29 | 63 | 29 |
| 20 and above | 15 | 75 | 17 | 8 | 32 | 14 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

Table-5: Responses to the question: “Did you receive any special training on performance management?” (N = 220)

| Category of Responses | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Yes | 20 | 100 | 115 | 58 | 135 | 61 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 85 | 42 | 85 | 39 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

Table-5 shows that all the heads (100%) received training on performance management and 58% of the teachers also received training. A significant

number of teachers (42%) indicated that they did not receive any training.

Table-6: Responses to the statement: “Performance management helps to motivate teachers in order to work very hard.” (N = 220)

| Category of Responses | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Agree | 12 | 60 | 47 | 23 | 59 | 27 |
| Disagree | 8 | 40 | 143 | 72 | 151 | 69 |
| Not Sure | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 4 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

Table-6 above shows that 60% of the heads thought that performance management helped to motivate teachers to work harder and 40% of the heads disagreed with the statement. From the teachers' side,

72% disagreed with the statement and only 23% agreed. Overall, 69% of the respondents do not believe that performance management helps to motivate teachers to perform better.

Table-7: Responses to the statement: “Performance management promotes cheating and falsification of records and is not applicable in the teaching profession and should be withdrawn.” (N = 220)

| Category of Responses | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Agree | 13 | 65 | 181 | 90 | 194 | 88 |
| Disagree | 7 | 35 | 17 | 9 | 24 | 11 |
| Not Sure | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

As Table-7 above shows, the majority of respondents (88%) agreed with the statement that performance management promotes cheating and

falsification of records and it is not applicable in the teaching profession (90%: teachers and 65% heads).

Table-8: Responses to the statement: “Performance management is a one-week event at the end of the year and not a continuous process done during the whole academic year.” (N = 220)

| Category of Responses | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Agree | 15 | 75 | 175 | 88 | 190 | 86 |
| Disagree | 5 | 25 | 15 | 7 | 20 | 9 |
| Not Sure | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

Table-8 above reveals that the majority of respondents (88%) indicated that performance management as conducted in their schools was an event and not a process (heads: 75% and teachers: 88%) respectively. Information on Table-9 above shows that

91% of the respondents thought that performance management did not successfully provide information on staff training and other needs, represented by 70% heads and 93% of the teachers.

Table-9: Responses to the statement: “Performance management successfully and effectively provides information on staff training needs, transfers, promotion and demotion.” (N = 220)

| Category of Responses | Heads | | Teachers | | Total | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Yes | 6 | 30 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 7 |
| No | 14 | 70 | 185 | 93 | 199 | 91 |
| Not Sure | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 200 | 100 | 220 | 100 |

DISCUSSION

Data from the study revealed that the majority of heads and teachers are in possession of relevant professional qualifications and experience necessary for high performance if properly guided. Madziyire [3] argues that individuals who are in possession of relevant professional qualifications require to be carried along when plans are made about their jobs.

The information from the study also shows that many teachers did not receive training on performance management and yet all the heads received the training. It is therefore incumbent upon those who introduced the system in the schools to make sure that those expected to implement the system should have adequate relevant training for them to fully understand all the facets of the programme. Although heads are expected to guide teaches on this system since they themselves (heads) received the training, performance

management is a complex system which also confuses many heads [3]. Training therefore, as Dubois and Rothwell [13] observe, is fundamental before the introduction of a complex system like performance management to equip the teachers with the wherewithals of effectuating it properly.

Findings from the study also revealed that there was a discrepancy between the feelings of teachers and heads on whether performance management motivated teachers to perform better. Most heads thought that it did motivate the teachers to perform better and yet the teachers themselves stated that performance management did not motivate them to improve their performance. This, therefore, implies that teachers think they are not benefiting from the system. In other words, they are in it because it is forced down upon them by the head which negates the very objectives of using the system. As Catano *et al.*, [10]

advise, performance management is a performance-improvement process based on a joint problem-solving approach rather than an evaluation and control system. It implies some kind of collegiality between the teachers and the heads as they set objectives and work towards achieving them.

The data reveal that performance management promotes cheating and falsification of records and it is not applicable in the teaching profession. The fact that heads of schools use results from performance management to decide on what increases of pay or bonus should be awarded to teachers, forces teachers to cook records that will make sure they get the increases irrespective of whether those records exist in reality. As Stacey [14] also states, the performance management system helps to determine the future use of an employee such as whether he or she shall remain in the present job or be promoted or demoted or dismissed.

The information from the study also shows that performance management is a one-week event done only at the end of the year to prepare the forms for onward transmission to district education offices, instead of it to be done continuously from the beginning of the year to the end. As Dainty [7] argues, performance management is more than just an annual performance review, it should be a continuous process of setting objectives, assessing progress and providing on-going coaching and feedback to ensure that employees are meeting their objectives and career goals.

The information from the study reveals that performance management did not successfully and effectively provide information on staff training needs, transfers, promotions and demotions. This implies that the summative information recorded on the appraisal forms does not reflect the accurate situation obtaining on the ground. As Williams [11] postulates, the performance management system should be able to reward and expand areas of strengths and improvement or at least minimise areas of weaknesses. It is considered good practice for managers, heads of schools to do more than simply rate their subordinates; they should also work out jointly with each of their subordinates a plan for correcting deficiencies or identified training needs, building upon strengths and developing the individual employees [11].

CONCLUSIONS

Given the background of the above findings, the researchers make the following conclusions:

- Heads and teachers in Kwekwe District' secondary schools are in possession of the requisite professional qualifications.
- Most teachers did not receive training on performance management.

- Performance management as it is implemented does not seem to motivate teachers to improve their performance.
- Performance management promotes cheating and falsification of records and teachers feel it is not suitable for a service sector like teaching.
- Performance management is a one-week event done only at the end of the year.
- The process of performance management did not provide accurate information on staff training needs, transfers, promotions and demotions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make some recommendations.

- The Civil Service Commission should engage teachers and heads in the schools before it introduces new policies since most teachers are professionals who would contribute immensely towards policies meant to affect their jobs like performance management.
- All teachers ought to receive training on performance management, particularly the new ones who may have missed out on the training programmes rolled out earlier on.
- There should be refresher courses for heads so as to constantly update their knowledge on the system.
- There should be monitoring by the Civil Service Commission on the process of performance management throughout the year so that schools carry out the exercise continuously and not only at the end of year to produce "cooked" reports.
- Adequate resources should be availed in order to fully implement the system.

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