

Motivating the Motivators with Developmental Teacher Appraisal

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ABSTRACT Productivity is the buzzword in all organizations worldwide. Organizations, including schools are busy trying to enhance the productivity of their employees by introducing a number of interventions or incentives. One of the interventions that was introduced in education in Botswana was teacher appraisal, and one of its objectives was to motivate teachers to improve their performance. This paper is based on a combined quantitative/qualitative study that was carried out from a sample of 607 secondary school teachers in seventeen schools in the South Region of Botswana evaluating the effectiveness of the current appraisal process as carried out in secondary schools. It looks at how the process of teacher appraisal can motivate teachers to improve their performance of facilitating effective teaching and students' learning. The study revealed that if carried out properly, the appraisal process can motivate the teachers to do more.

INTRODUCTION

Most people working in organizations including schools like to feel that someone cares about their work and appreciates it and this tends to motivate them to do more. Owens (2004) describes motivation as the forces that cause people to behave as they do. He further points out that behaviorists think of it as extrinsic (the carrot and stick) while others believe it is intrinsic (cognitive and emotional, such as feelings, aspirations, attitudes, thoughts, and perceptions). Hoy and Miskel (2004) contend that the challenge for administrators is to develop highly motivated teachers who are actively engaged in teaching and learning, open to new ideas and approaches, and committed to students and change over the lifetime of their teaching careers. They make reference to Pinder (1948) who defined work motivation as: "... set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (p. 99).

Moorhead and Griffin (2004) define motivation as "... a set of forces that leads people to behave in particular ways" (p. 115). Hanson (2003) defines it as: "... an inner state that energizes, moves, channels, and sustains behavior toward goals" (p. 190). He further contends that motivation should be examined from two focal

points, namely: "... the external perspective of how to energize another person to work harder, faster, better"; or "... the internal perspective of why someone becomes motivated to work harder, faster, better" (p. 190).

Some examples of extrinsic motivation include the following:

- Remuneration – this includes salaries, allowances, and conditions of service for employees.
- Career – promotion opportunities and professional development.
- Support – positive feedback from supervisors and the appraisal process.
- Status – degree of respect in the public eye.

Intrinsic motivation on the other hand includes among others professional responsibility that can be acquired through education and socialization.

The importance of appraisal in any organisation cannot be overemphasised. The literature on staff appraisal covering a wide spectrum of fields such as commerce and industry, private and public sectors, including schools, generally identifies three main purposes: to serve as a basis for modifying behaviour towards more effective working habits; to provide adequate feedback to each employee on his/her performance; and to provide data to managers with which they may judge future assignments and compensation (Kermally 1997; Mullins 1996).

Literature on teacher appraisal shows that it can be very complex as it involves a number of factors than can either impede or support teacher effectiveness (Malongwa 1995). Motswakae

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(1990) contends that governments worldwide are becoming aware of the need to examine carefully and critically the education provided in order to ensure relevance and appropriateness to the needs of the young. It can therefore be inferred that teacher appraisal is of topical importance as its main objective is to improve individual performance and motivation. Poster and Poster (1992) believe that "... if employees are to perform effectively, they must be well motivated, understand what is expected of them and have the ability and skills to fulfil their responsibility" (p. 1).

Poster and Poster (1992) in their description of appraisal in organizations state that "...it is a means of promoting, through the use of certain techniques and procedures, the organization's ability to accomplish its mission of maintaining and improving what it provides while at the same time seeking to maintain or enhance staff satisfaction and development" (p. 1). Sharing this sentiment is the definition offered by Fisher (1995) that it is "... a process of management which entails improving the organization's performance through the enhanced performance of individuals" (p. 11). This is taken further by Moorhead and Griffin (2004) when they assert that managers strive to motivate people in the organization to perform at high levels; that is, to work hard, come to work regularly, and to make positive contributions to the organization's mission.

During the process of appraisal data is gathered by systematic observations, not to only measure current performance, but also to reinforce strengths, identify deficiencies, give feedback and the necessary information for changes in future performance. For appraisal to be effective, it is argued that it should be treated as an ongoing cooperative intervention between supervisor and subordinate; a shared responsibility, not a once-a-year traumatic confrontation. Habangaan (1998) asserts that if it is treated as an event, it becomes judgemental, hence detrimental to individual growth and development.

Mullins (1996) declares that performance appraisal has its roots in three well-substantiated psychological principles, and he asserts that people work/learn/achieve more when they are given:

- adequate feedback as to how they are performing, in other words, knowledge of results;

- clear attainable goals; and
- more chance to be involved in the setting of tasks and goals (p. 640).

Hoy and Miskel (2004) emphasize the crucial role played by feedback when discussing determinants of teacher motivation in schools. They argue that feedback provides individual teachers with the knowledge of results about job performance and satisfaction level; and this knowledge of results allows individuals to appraise outcomes. As a result, "... the individual uses the knowledge of these results to gain a conceptual understanding of why the performance was at a particular level and how it might be improved" (p. 119). Goddard and Emerson (1995); Kyriacou (1995); Trethowan (1991); and Waghid (1996) all recognize the centrality of giving feedback in the appraisal process. Kyriacou (1995) explicitly suggests that teachers value feedback as it provides an opportunity to see oneself as other colleagues see you and this boosts their morale.

The pivotal role of the appraisal discussion as a forum for providing feedback is also recognized and emphasized by various authors and researchers such as Dean (1992); Humphreys and Thompson (1995); Kyriacou (1995); Mackintosh (1991); Waghid (1996); and Webb (1994). Dean (1992) contends that the appraisal discussion offers an opportunity to the appraiser to praise and encourage in a formal setting and to record success, but also to deal with aspects of a person's work which are less than satisfactory. Bennett (1992) further asserts that when the discussion is conducted on the basis of mutual professional respect, where the appraiser can convey his or her genuine desire to understand and share responsibility for the appraisee's working circumstances, where the appraisee feels a positive, supportive and appreciative response, where the dialogue is genuinely two-way, then there is a potential for creating sufficient trust for the appraisee to disclose genuine concerns as well as record successes.

Feedback should be given in a non-threatening atmosphere; and it is generally believed that this can be provided at the discussion stage of the appraisal process. Goddard and Emerson (1995) assert that:

The appraisal discussion is only one part of the appraisal cycle. It will probably last only for one hour, and yet its success or otherwise will have a vital effect on the whole appraisal

process and, beyond that, on the professional relationship between appraiser and teacher (p. 102).

Literature on appraisal points to the fact that in order for the discussion to be successful, there is need for thorough planning by both the appraisee and appraiser. Dean (1992) and Goddard and Emerson (1995) concur that the appraisal discussion demands the application of a wide range of skills from both the teacher and the appraiser. Goddard and Emerson (1995) suggest that the discussion should:

reinforce the mutual confidence and trust between the teacher and appraiser and nothing in the discussion should interfere with these essential aspects of the process;

be positive and should contain praise for good performance and suggestions for improvements for any areas of unsatisfactory performance;

focus on behaviour – what the teacher does and achieves and not on personality;

look forward rather than backwards in order to be more helpful in considering ways in which performance may be improved;

not be seen as an opportunity to condemn, but where inadequate performance is identified and dealt with in the normal process of management; and

be carried out in a way which reflects the normal management style between the teacher and appraiser (p 103).

The preparation for the appraisal discussion should also take cognizance of the setting. Taking this into consideration, Webb (1994) posits that "... physical settings often mirror status and hierarchy" (p. 127), a situation which compromises the collegiality aspect of appraisal. Highlighting on the importance of the setting, Dean (1992) suggests that "... it is important that an appraisal interview is carried out in a comfortable place without interruptions" (p. 188). This according to Trethowan (1991) reinforces to the teacher that the appraiser values the occasion; gives confidence that the climate created for the discussion will not be shattered; and avoids the embarrassment of an intrusion into the appraisal room at a critical time. Other suggested aspects include the type of sitting arrangements; types of chairs and tables; and where in the room the discussion will take place.

Kermally (1997) further contends that employees are one of the key groups of stake-holders

involved in any organization. Therefore, apart from recognizing their interests and expectations, from the perspectives of organizations, it is important to measure their effectiveness in making contribution towards organizational activities and success. After measuring their effectiveness, it is important that they know how they fared. This is where appraisal plays an important role as Taylor (1998) notes that "... appraisal involves letting people know what is required and expected of them, assessing how they are doing, reviewing this with them regularly and agreeing with them what happens next" (p. 10). Appraisal can therefore be viewed as a social relationship characterized by information sharing to avoid conflict and enhance effectiveness. Mullins (1996) contends that an effective appraisal process can motivate employees by:

providing information for human resource planning to assist succession planning, determine suitability for promotion and for particular types of employment and training;

improving communication by giving staff the opportunity to talk about their ideas and expectations and how well they are progressing; and

improving the quality of working life through increasing mutual understanding between managers and their staff (p. 639).

West and Ainscow (1991) point out that there is evidence from studies of motivational patterns that individual commitment and satisfaction can be encouraged by some system for identifying individual goals and for giving feedback to the individual on progress towards these goals. Appraisal has the potential to motivate staff as it gives teachers a clearer view of their job, their aims and what is expected of them, and of the aims of the school.

If appraisal is carried out properly in a conducive non-threatening atmosphere, it helps the teachers to open up and share their experiences with colleagues, thus reducing the traditional isolation and alienation which is generally associated with teaching (Goddard and Emerson 1995; Habangaan 1998).

Schools with a shared vision and clear challenging goals show unity of purpose and demonstrate consistent practice. Where teachers have been fully involved in the formulation of the vision and goals, there is likelihood of a culture of commitment leading to a strong desire to achieve more (Oldroyd and Hall 1991). As Mullins

(1996) has illustrated, one of the purposes of an appraisal system is to motivate employees so that they can learn and achieve more; and this can be realized by involving them in setting clear and attainable tasks and goals.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The use of multi-methods in a study secures in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question as it adds vigour, breadth and depth to the investigation (Cresswell 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Salomon 1991). Most quantitative data gathering techniques condense data in order to see the bigger picture. Qualitative data gathering techniques, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers, because when data is enhanced it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly. In this study the perceptions of teachers regarding the appraisal system in secondary schools in Botswana were captured by applying both a quantitative and qualitative approach.

The quantitative approach involved a questionnaire survey, because it gathers data at a particular time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions (Cohen and Manion 1995). The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed questions and three open-ended questions. For the closed questions the Likert scale was used. The open-ended questions were included in order to capture perspectives with a view of verifying qualitative data from the interviews (see below). A piloting exercise was done in a few selected secondary schools in the Gaborone City.

Sample: The sample for the questionnaire was taken from two school clusters in the South Region of Botswana and consisted of 607 secondary school teachers (of whom 413 returned their questionnaires). For the semi-structured interview purposive sampling was used to select optimally information-rich participants, namely two school principals, two deputy principals, two heads of departments, two senior teachers, two teachers and two assistant teachers.

In the survey the majority of the 413 respondents were female (215 - 52.1%). The fact that there were more women in the sample reflects the real situation, whereby there are more female teachers than male teachers in Botswana secondary schools. The majority (284 - 68.8%) of the respondents were 34 years old and less,

indicating that the teaching force in Botswana secondary schools is relatively young.

Half of the respondents (209 - 50.6%) had a Diploma in Secondary Education (DSE), whilst 131 (31.7%) held a Bachelors Degree. The minority (16 - 3.9%) had merely a teaching certificate. This indicates that the Botswana Government has made significant progress in the training of teachers since the first Commission on Education of 1977 lamented the poor qualifications of teachers in the schools.

As regards teaching experience, 214 respondents (51.8%) fell within the bracket of three to nine years teaching experience while 123 (29.8%) were quite experienced with more than ten years in the field. Seventy-five respondents (18.2%) possessed very little experience, two years or less. This number appears to be small, but it nevertheless calls for effective teacher appraisal since it can play a crucial role in aligning the newly recruited teachers perceptions constructively towards the teaching profession.

Data Analysis: Analysis of the questionnaire data was computerised. As data was collected from all categories of teachers in the schools, variations in the responses to questions were examined. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to present the findings. For the free-response questions the drawing up of a coding frame and verbatim reporting of responses were used (Bell 1993; Oppenheim 1992).

For the analysis of qualitative data, tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed. Data were then coded by reading through the field notes and making comments. From the themes as identified initially, patterns and categories were identified and described.

Trustworthiness: Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation whereby survey data was verified by interview data. Respondents were representative of different post levels. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes made during the interviews were used to verify the data collected during interviews.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the survey questionnaire, one hundred and eighty four (44.7%) of the respondents expressed the feeling that the appraisal process as carried out in Botswana secondary schools

demotivated teachers, while one hundred and fifteen (27.9%) felt it motivated them. What this means is that to some extent the appraisal process has the capacity to motivate teachers to improve their duties of facilitating students' learning. One hundred and nine respondents had no opinion as to whether it motivated or demotivated teachers.

Some respondents in the semi-structured interview support the view that the current system of teacher appraisal as carried out in Botswana secondary schools demoralizes teachers because it is not carried out properly. In the semi-structured interview schedule, teachers were of the opinion that it demoralizes them while others claim that as a result of the appraisal process they were able to get motivated. One teacher interviewed paints a very bleak picture about the appraisal process when he/she declares that ... *it has no effect as I am still a teacher after nine years, yet from the appraisal process I am doing a very good job. Nothing is done after the appraisal despite the recommendations made.* Another interviewee echoes this sentiment by declaring that ... *to me it is not effective, I am so demoralized. I am not as good as I used to be.* These assertions might be manifestations of personal frustrations within their schools based mainly on the nature of the management, and therefore not reflective of the teacher appraisal process. However, it can be argued that the assertions represent those instances when it is not properly done.

One hundred and eighty-four (44.5%) of the respondents agreed that the appraisal process improved their skills and knowledge in teaching while one hundred and fifty-five (37.6%) disagreed. Seventy-one (17.2%) had no opinion. As a result of acquiring new skills and knowledge, the teachers got motivated and thus improved their performance in teaching. Another one hundred and ninety-six (47.4%) of the respondents believe that the appraisal process improved their attitudes towards teaching while a hundred and thirty-four (32.5%) disagreed and seventy-eight (18.9%) had no opinion.

It was also realized that the appraisal process was effective in influencing the behaviour of the teachers in the schools. For instance, one hundred and ninety five (47.2%) of the respondents expressed the opinion that the appraisal process enhanced their working relations with colleagues compared to one hundred and thirty-one (31.7%)

who disagreed, while eighty-five (20.6%) had no opinion. The same trend was shown when 46.2% of the respondents indicated that the appraisal process enhanced the teachers' working relations with their superiors and 29.1% disagreed. Supporting this was an assistant teacher in the open-ended section of the survey questionnaire who declared that the appraisal system was effective "... in that it opens up both the appraiser and appraisee to talk about the strong and weak points and see a way forward, and this is healthy in the teaching profession". Some respondents argued further that when the weaknesses are identified, they are worked on with the help of the immediate supervisors. This point of cordial relations developing between the supervisor and subordinates was emphasized by a school head during the interviewed who declared that: "... at departmental level, the senior teachers have a responsibility of discussing certain aspects of the appraisal which are related to the teaching profession as this approach helps when one is new in the profession".

Mullins (1966) succinctly explains this by pointing out that the appraisal process is beneficial to the teachers in that "... it improves the quality of working life by increasing mutual understanding between managers and their staff" (p. 639). Trethowan (1991) says that:

... appraisal is a relationship; it is a method of managing and of being managed. ... Appraisal means being in and around the teacher's work to catch the teacher doing something right. It means being available for advice and support when things go wrong. It means that someone, in addition to the teacher is directly, personally and continuously responsible for the teacher's performance (p. 181).

Murdock (2000) argues that:

... it is vital for a progressive system of evaluation to build on collaborative relations whereby the supervisor actively makes efforts to understand the teacher's frame of reference on classroom events and engages in continuing dialogue with teachers (p. 56).

Appraisal offers an opportunity for the appraiser and appraisee developing a critical friend relationship, moving into coaching and mentoring. Cosh (1999) offers a model she calls "pair mentoring" where two teachers work together, observing each other's lessons, discussing areas of mutual interest, and planning future

strategies. McGregor (1992) contends that the concepts of collegiality and collaboration are widely emphasized in educational literature, but commonly conflated.

From all the above, it can be argued that teacher appraisal could be one of those processes in the schools which are aimed at motivating teachers in order to enhance their productivity. As a result, the students benefit because the teachers have been empowered through training/staff development activities. The schools as organizations benefit because they will be able to satisfy the requirements and expectations of the stakeholders, as Bell (1992) pointed out that appraisal has "... a part to play in affording parents assurance of the quality of teaching their children receive so that if they are not satisfied they can choose to opt out to other schools" (p. 127). There is a need to reform the teaching profession in an attempt to improve the quality of teaching which in turn will lead to enhanced student learning in schools and teacher appraisal is deemed very crucial is crucial in this venture.

The role of teacher appraisal in motivating teachers was also emphasized by West and Ainscow (1991) when they claim that appraisal "... gives teachers a clearer view of the job, their aims and what is expected of them, and of the aims of the school" (p. 33). For instance, Poster and Poster (1992) and Morris and Everard (1996) concur with this by claiming that the main objective of teacher appraisal is to improve individual performance and motivation in order to enhance the "... learning opportunities for all students". This was further supported by Goddard and Emerson (1995) who view teacher appraisal as a process which is intended to help individuals to develop professionally in order to perform their teaching duties well.

This view is supported by Mullins (1996) by claiming that "... one of the purposes of an appraisal system is to motivate employees so that they learn and achieve more" in their duties such as teaching and facilitating students learning. Murdock (2000) concurs with the above view and explains that because the process involves the teacher through activities such as pre and post conferencing, it empowers and motivates him.

CONCLUSION

From the theoretical and empirical findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, it was succinctly revealed that if properly done, appraisal can be a very effective intervention in motivating teachers in the schools to improve their performance in the teaching and facilitating of students' learning. Secondly, during the appraisal process, teachers gain more knowledge and skills which ultimately motivate them to enhance their performance in their day to day duties in the schools. Thirdly, the appraisal process plays a crucial role in moulding the behaviour and attitudes of teachers so that they effectively perform their daily duties in the schools.

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