



Role of Performance Appraisal in the Development of Human Resource at Takoradi Polytechnic, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to examine the role of performance appraisal in the development of the human resource of Takoradi Polytechnic. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data for this research came from interviews and questionnaires. While the interview generated qualitative data and information, the questionnaire generated quantitative data for this study. The results revealed that though the staff of Takoradi Polytechnic are aware of performance appraisal in the institution, they had problems which needed to be addressed by management of the institution. They indicated that lack of performance feedback negatively affected their level of staff seriousness towards appraisal.

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Introduction

Every organisation, whether private or public, has laid down aims and objectives that they desire to achieve within a specific period. However, these cannot be possible if the organisation focuses only on its financial and physical resources. There is therefore the need to concentrate on the human resource as well. This is necessary because it is only the people who are employed in the organisation that can put together both the financial and physical resources of the organisation in order to achieve its aims and objectives.

With this in mind, each organisation has to take the planning of its human resource well. Pinnington and Edwards (2000) have defined "human resource planning as the systematic and continuing process of analyzing an organisation's human resource needs under changing conditions and developing personnel policies appropriate to the long-term effectiveness of the organisation". This can be done quarterly, bi-annually or annually and through some interrelated activities stated by Cascio (1996) and which include the following:

- Personnel inventory which is done to assess the current human resource base and how they are currently being used.
- Human resource forecast is done to forecast the future personnel requirements. That is the number of workers, skills that will be needed in the future.
- Action plan is done to detail out the pool of people qualified to fill projected vacancies through actions like promotion, development, transfer, selection and recruitment and so on.
- Control and evaluation provide the feedback on the overall effectiveness of the human resource planning.

From the preceding discussion, it is obvious that human resource planning is done for both organisational and individual growth. All these actions can be done using performance appraisal. Performance appraisal has been defined by many writers and renowned authors. It includes the

one defined by Anderson (1992), as "the systematic review of the performance of staff on a written basis at regular intervals and the holding of performance interview at which staff have the opportunity to discuss performance issues, past, present and future on a one-time basis with their immediate line managers".

Performance appraisal is done to determine and communicate to an employee, how he or she is performing on the job and to establish the correct training needs for improvement where necessary. It is also used in order to ascertain the correct remedial actions such as promotions, transfers, training and so on. From the elaborations, it is clear that performance appraisal is really an important technique that needs to be exercised by every organisation to help in the attainment of both its human and organisational aims and objectives.

Problem statement

Performance appraisal include some interrelated activities namely: appraisal for the review of the past performance, performance appraisal interview, performance planning which is the performance gap, developmental plan and finally the future action that is the monitoring, reviewing, developing and motivation of the employees without causing any enmity between supervisors and subordinates.

Usually less attention is given to performance planning or its outcome which includes performance gap, development plan as well as the future action. It appears that problem exists at Takoradi Polytechnic in that the workers are not appraised as expected and when they are appraised no feedback is given. Even though sponsorship is given to workers who want to upgrade themselves the institution does not play any role in ensuring that the worker's career needs are taken care of. Many authors and writers are of the view that workers should be involved in performance appraisal from the setting of the appraisal questions, its answering, discussing and

implementation of the outcomes of the appraisal but in the case of Takoradi Polytechnic it is not like that.

In view of this, the research aims to establish how performance appraisal can be used for the development of human resource of Takoradi Polytechnic without causing any problems between workers of the institution. The primary respondents of this document would be the teaching, non-teaching and management staff of the institution.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this research was to examine the role of performance appraisal in the development of the human resource of Takoradi Polytechnic.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Establish the performance appraisal used in Takoradi Polytechnic.
- Identify the training needs of the employees
- Determine the communication level between subordinates and supervisors and vice versa.
- Identify the career development needs of the employees.
- Make recommendations on the implementation process of the feedback gathered from performance appraisal.

Research questions

The research questions based on the objectives were:

- What performance appraisal was used in Takoradi Polytechnic?
- What were the various training needs of the employees?
- What was the communication level between subordinates and supervisors and vice versa?
- What were the career development needs of the employees?

Research design

The general objective of this research was to examine the role of performance appraisal in the development of the human resource of Takoradi Polytechnic. In view of this, descriptive research design was used in order for the researcher to be able to gather the necessary information that would either ascertain or refute the fact that the performance appraisal used at Takoradi Polytechnic plays any role. The specific research components that were employed in this research were interviews, questionnaire and observation.

Target population

The target population was the teaching, non-teaching and management staff of Takoradi Polytechnic. The staff strength is 933 with 296 as senior members, senior staff 326 and 311 as junior staff.

Sampling technique

Considering Takoradi Polytechnics large staff strength, the time and resources available to the researcher would allow a sample of 100 out of the whole population of the institution. According to Kirk (1995), every population has its own appropriate sample size that needs to be used. For instance a population of 500 has a sample size of 217. In the case of Takoradi Polytechnic with a population of 1000 the actual sample size to have been used for the research should have been 278 but due to financial constraints, time, availability of respondents a sample size of 100 was used. In all simple random sampling is used due to the large sizes. In view of this 70 teaching staff, 28 non-teaching staff and two persons from management were selected to help conduct the research. In total, the sample size for the research would be 100 Polytechnic Staff.

The researcher needed the opinions of the non teaching staff to know if they had ever gone through any performance appraisal activities and if yes whether they were able to get

the feedback or not. It was also to ascertain how performance appraisal has contributed to their individual career training.

With respect to the teaching staff, the researcher wanted to know if they were given the opportunity to communicate with the students or supervisors after the performance appraisal, more especially, the researcher wanted to find out how they teach and if the result has helped them to gain any form of training either internal or external to improve their ways of teaching. Managements view was sought to get a concrete insight into the uses of performance appraisal and how it was conducted.

Method of data collection

Primary and secondary data were used for the study. With the secondary data, the researchers read books from the library, textbooks, website and other materials that had relevant information concerning the topic. Though some of the textbooks were really not updated to reflect the current methods of conducting performance appraisals in organisations they was useful. Interviews and questionnaires were used to solicit for information from the selected sample. The primary data for this research came from interviews and questionnaires. While the interviews generated qualitative data and information, the questionnaire generated quantitative data for this study.

Pre-testing

In order to ascertain the validity and clarity of the questionnaire that was designed, it was considered appropriate to pre-test it on a few of the intended respondents. This exercise took place at Takoradi Polytechnic's School of Business which comprises the Accountancy, Marketing, Secretaryship and Management Studies and Purchasing and Supply Department as well as some lecturers from the 3rd to 5th April 2011. The pretesting provided insight into how the respondents understood the questions and this led to rewording some of the questions in order to remove any sense of ambiguity. It also helped to assess the adequacy of options for the close-ended questions and where additional responses were provided, these responses were added to the options in the revised questionnaire. Interview was introduced to cater for the management staff and then new sets of questionnaire were developed to cater for the other two groups, namely the non-teaching and teaching staff. Again, to ensure that the right sets of questions were asked to bring out the needed information, another pilot test was conducted from the 10th to 13th April 2011.

Performance appraisal used and feedback given

The first specific objective of the study was to assess performance appraisal and to know whether feedback was given or not. To this end, the opinions of the respondents were sought on this issue. Tables 1 to 9 represent the knowledge and perception of the respondents about the type of appraisal used in Takoradi.

Table 1. Type of appraisal used

Field of Work	Type of Appraisal	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Others (specify)	28	100.0
Teaching	Self-Appraisal	7	10.4
	Peer-Rating	7	10.4
	Others (specify)	53	79.2
	Total	67	100.0

From Table 2, the respondents who chose others (67.8 and 82.1 percent) which represent non-teaching and teaching staff gave explanations that targets were set as and when the need arose for the submission of particular documents. This

assertion by the respondents was confirmed by members in management who indicated during interview that even though the institution has its targets, it has been very difficult for those targets to be broken down to department and possibly individual level.

Notwithstanding this, 14.3 percent of teaching respondent and 7.5 percent of non-teaching respondents said targets were set for them during the beginning of the year while 17.9 percent of the non-teaching staff indicated that their targets were set for them during the ending of the year which is a bit difficult to ascertain and finally 10.4 percent of the teaching staff said targets were set during the middle of the year.

Table 2. Period for target setting.

Field of Work	Period for target setting	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Beginning of the year	4	14.3
	Ending of the year	5	17.9
	Others (specify)	19	67.8
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Beginning of the year	5	7.5
	Middle of the year	7	10.4
	Others (specify)	55	82.1
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

From the responses in Table 3, 67.8 and 58.2 percent for non-teaching and teaching staff chose others from the alternative answers with reasons that appraisal was conducted as and when new employees have finished serving their probation and also when employees who have upgraded themselves submit their various certificate for promotion. Nevertheless 17.9 and 28.4 percent chose the middle of the year, while 14.3 percent of the non-teaching staff indicated the beginning of the year while 13.4 percent of the teaching respondents indicating that assessment was conducted during the end of the year.

Table 3. Period for appraisal.

Field of Work	Period for appraisal	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Beginning of the year	4	14.3
	Middle of the year	5	17.9
	Others (specify)	19	67.8
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Middle of the year	19	28.4
	Ending of the year	9	13.4
	Others (specify)	39	58.2
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Opinions were sought as to whether the report from the appraisal was able to meet the deadlines set by management. From Table 4, 112.0 percent of both the non-teaching and teaching respondents were neutral as to whether the report met management deadlines while 17.9 percent disagrees that appraisal does not meet management deadlines. Again 28.3 of both respondent disagreed, while 31.3 percent strongly disagrees that the reports are not able to meet the deadlines set by management. Meanwhile 28.4 percent of the respondents said they agree that the report from the assessment was able to meet the deadlines set by management.

From the negative responses from the respondents it can be said that the institution does not rely on appraisals in order to take decisions in relation to salary increment, promotion, transfer etc and this is at variance with the position of McGregor (1960) that performance programme lead to systematic judgement to back up salary increases, promotions, transfers and sometimes demotions and terminations.

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 4. Appraisal reports meeting deadlines of management.

Field of work	Appraisal reports meeting deadlines of management	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Disagree	5	17.9
	Neutral	23	82.1
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Agree	19	28.4
	Strongly Disagree	21	31.3
	Disagree	7	10.4
	Neutral	20	29.9
	Total	67	100.0

From the responses in Table 5, 82.2 percent of the non-teaching staff and 79.2 percent of teaching staff indicated that appraisals were conducted for the purpose of confirmation and promotion and therefore did not have any specific time frame but they were quick to add that the students lecturer assessment was sometimes done getting to the end of the first or second semester. These were however confirmed when 10.4 percent each and 17.9 percent for teaching and non-teaching staff chose 'semi-annually' and 'quarterly' respectively. These were confirmed when a management member interviewed stated that though the institution has times for their council meetings, anytime there is the need for confirmation and promotion, the appointments and promotions board would meet and fix a day(s) for interviews after which the outcome is sent to council for approval.

Table 5. Number of times for conducting appraisal.

Field of Work	Number of times for conducting of appraisal	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Semi-Annually	5	17.9
	Others (specify)	23	82.2
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Quarterly	7	10.4
	Semi-Annually	7	10.4
	Others (specify)	53	79.2
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Responses in Table 6 indicated that 64.0 percent from both respondents "strongly disagrees" that feedback is not given after appraisal. Again, 60.5 of both respondents were of the view that feedback were not given after appraisal while 29.9 percent of the teaching staff preferred to be neutral as to whether feedback was given or not. Despite these negative responses from majority of the respondents, 45.6 percent of both respondents were of the view that feedback was given. In considering the negative response with the outlining process for appraising performance by Raymond and Mires (2007), it is clear that the institution does not follow all the outlines for the design and implementation of performance appraisal and thereby preventing its workers the chance to know their performance.

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

In Table 7, a little above 100 percent responses from both respondents showed that appraisal was used for promotion. Whilst 28.4 percent said the appraisal was used for transfers, 46.4 percent of the non-teaching staff emphasised that it was for confirmation purpose and to ascertain if the students were satisfied or dissatisfied with the teaching methods and the facilities they use in learning. Comparing the model of total reward by Armstrong (2006) with the responses in Table 7, it is clear that performance appraisal conducted at Takoradi Polytechnic does not make full use of the model and their concentration is only on promotion and confirmation.

Table 6. Appraisal feedback to appraisees.

Field of Work	Appraisal Feedback to Appraisees	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Agree	4	14.3
	Strongly Disagree	15	53.6
	Disagree	9	32.1
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Agree	21	31.3
	Strongly Disagree	7	10.4
	Disagree	19	28.4
	Neutral	20	29.9
	Total	67	100.0

Table 7. Uses of appraisal.

Field of Work	Uses of Appraisal	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Promotion	15	53.6
	Others (specify)	13	46.4
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Transfer	19	28.4
	Promotion	48	71.6
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Training needs of respondents

The subsequent presentation shows the responses in relation to the second specific objective which sought to know the training needs of employees and if the training needs of the employees were catered for after appraisal had been conducted.

Over 81 percent of responses from both respondents Table 11 shows that there is the need for the institution to organise refresher courses to enable respondents keep abreast with latest methods of doing their work. Notwithstanding this, 87.1 percent of them needed new software that would help them in compiling and entering the students' results. Finally, 31.3 percent responses from teaching staff indicated they needed training that would equip them with skills in using modern technologies like projectors, public address systems and power point presentations that would help improve upon their work. This high level of inadequacy of training for employees goes to confirm the statement by Torrington et al. (2008) that though performance appraisal is popular, it is treated as an administrative exercise and little is done to improve the performance of employees for the future.

Table 8. Training needs of employees.

Field of Work	Training needs of employees	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Refresher courses	17	60.7
	New software for compiling results	11	39.3
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Refresher courses	14	20.9
	New software for imputing results	32	47.8
	Courses on use of modern technology	21	31.3
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Responses in Table 9 from both teaching and non-teaching staff which is represented by 62.7 percent, 21.4 percent and 17.9 percent respectively indicate that the respondents "strongly disagree" and "disagree" respectively that their training needs were not catered for after appraisal. As many as 69.7 percent of both respondents to be "neutral" as to whether their training needs has been catered for or not.

Notwithstanding this, a total of 31.8 percent of both respondents were of the view that their training needs were satisfied after assessment has been done.

Table 9. Respondents satisfaction with training needs provided after appraisal.

Field of Work	Satisfaction with training needs after appraisal	Frequency	Percent
Non-teaching	Strongly Disagree	6	21.4
	Disagree	5	17.9
	Neutral	17	60.7
	Total	28	100.0
Teaching	Strongly Agree	7	10.4
	Agree	12	17.9
	Disagree	42	62.7
	Neutral	6	9.0
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Furthermore, opinions were sought to ascertain whether any form of training had been put in place to increase the strength and reduce the weakness of the respondents after appraisal. To this end, 67.3 percent of both respondents said they do not have any idea as to whether there is any such training in place even though sometimes management is able to provide some of the items needed to facilitate and improve their work, no training was given as to how to use those equipment. Another 32.6 percent of the respondents were said that there was no training in place to increase or reduce their strength and weakness respectively. It was clear from the responses that performance appraisal in Takoradi Polytechnic did not conform even to the outlines suggested by Raymond and Mires (2007) indicating that training employees was essential for the smooth and effective running of the performance appraisal as well as the improvement of employees abilities.

Perception of workers on communication

The third specific objective of the study was to assess the communication level within the institution that is from supervisors to subordinates and vice versa. From both responses, 81.1 percent said both the formal and informal forms of communication was used in the institution, whilst 66.2 percent said its only formal form of communication which is used, 52.7 percent of both respondents said it was the informal way of communication which was used. A further probe revealed that sometimes personal interactions or word-of-mouth was used to circulate information.

On communication or the way information is disseminated on in the institution, 60.0 percent of both respondents were not satisfied with it. They went on further to say that lack of effective in the institution made the work difficult and also make them work under stress since they had to struggle to meet deadlines. This high level of dissatisfaction with communication is not good as Fletcher (2004) has indicated that communication is an essential element in making performance appraisal effective. Notwithstanding this 40.0 percent thought the communication level within the institution was alright.

Career development needs of respondents

The last specific objective was to find out the career development needs and ascertain if such needs were satisfied after they were appraised. In their responses, 63.2 percent stated that there was no training in place to cater for their career development needs. However, the other 36.8 percent

said their career development needs were satisfied after being appraised. The large number of respondents stated that their career development needs were addressed indicated that performance appraisal in the institution was weak since according to Torrington (2008) performance appraisal is supposed to be a developmental experience for employees. It was also a teaching moment for the assessors.

Among the suggestions was also that the institutions management should give equal opportunities in the award of sponsorship to employees when they seek to upgrade themselves. Again 70.5 percent of the respondents said management should make conscious effort to train the staff on the various modern technologies to enable them improve and give off their best to the work.

Conclusions

Based on the research questions, the findings revealed that though the staff are aware of performance appraisal in the institution, they had problems, which needed to be addressed by management of the institution. They indicated that lack of performance feedback negatively affected their level of staff seriousness towards the appraisal. They were of the view that written report on each employee's performance, particularly excellent and poor performers should receive praises and/or warnings accordingly. The absence of this did not make the staff consider the appraisal with the seriousness it deserved since there was no impact on the appraisal's outcome.

Performance appraisal report was put to little use particularly in the areas of salary administration, promotion, payment of bonus, training, transfers and rewards for hardworking staff. Also performance appraisal reports did not meet the deadline of management due to the fact that the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) had busy schedules and could not allow students to finish appraising their lecturers (teaching staff) before the semester ends or even for the whole year. This, to some extent affects the implementation of the performance appraisal report.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented:

- Management should ensure that effective training sessions are organized to explain the need for the appraisal, how it operates and the processes involved. Periodic refresher courses should be organized to help both supervisors and subordinates to maintain the necessary skills in performance appraisal.
- Management of the organisation should come out with job description for each individual worker. This can be done by first establishing the organisational objectives, which is then translated into departmental objectives, and then to individual targets. This process should involve clarifying the job description and responsibilities. It should be possible for non-teaching staff with similar job schedules to have similar target/objectives to achieve.
- As to who should appraise whose performance, the system of immediate supervisors and self-appraisals should be

maintained by management. The assessment should be crowned with an agreed rating (i.e. the out-come of the agreement between the supervisors and subordinate).

- Considering the fact that feedback was not given after assessment in the institution as revealed in the findings, workers did not know exactly the outcome of the performance appraisal exercise as to whether they met the requirement or not. It is therefore prudent for feedback to be given as early as possible to enable the workers know their shortfalls and quick remedies to them. This should be done in writing particularly to excellent performers (praising, rewarding and congratulating them), and non-performers (warning them or issuing the necessary sanctions).

- Performance appraisal report should play active role in such areas as salary administration, training, transfers, manpower planning, dismissal and reward for hardworking staff and not only when one needs promotion. With this as the end result, both teaching and non-teaching staff would take the exercise seriously. This will also help to create a motivated and committed work force since key personnel issues will depend on the scheme. Thus performance appraisal reports should have a link with the various proposed uses.

- For the scheme to be effective, it requires the support of top management to show their commitment in terms of financial and material resources. Without the commitment of management, the scheme will suffer a lot of deficiencies.

- Samples of targets covering all departments should be prepared and distributed to all appraisers and appraisees to serve as a guide for effective target setting. There is the need for effective keeping and maintenance of accurate records of employees' performance. This will help establish patterns in employees' behaviours and achievements that may be difficult to spot and keep in mind till assessment time.

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