

The Performance Appraisal Policy and Tools Used by the Kenya Teachers Service Commission in Bomet Constituency

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between policy and performance appraisal as well as the extent to which performance appraisal tools influence performance appraisal in high schools in Bomet County. The paper is based on a study that looked into the challenges facing performance appraisal of Teachers Service Commission High school teachers in Bomet Constituency. One of the aims of the study was to look into the challenges facing the T.S.C policy on performance appraisal of High School teachers. It also investigated the reliability of P.A tools used for their appraisal. The target population was secondary school teachers in Bomet Constituency. The main focus was teachers in Central and Longisa Divisions. There were 44 Secondary schools in Bomet Constituency 26 in Central Division and 18 schools in Longisa Division. A sample of 20% of all the schools in each division was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using questionnaire method. It was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of tables and pie charts. On the issue of policies for performance appraisal, majority of the respondents (78%) agreed that it does have an effect on performance appraisal of teachers in the division. This implied that TSC should come out with clearer policies to regulate performance appraisal especially on merit of the exam results. On the issue of performance appraisal tools, majority of the respondents (80%) believed that it does affect performance appraisal of teachers in the constituency. This meant that the TSC should come up with clear guidelines regarding the tools they use for performance appraisal since it does have an impact on performance appraisal. The study could help the TSC measure and evaluate the efficiency of its teachers and acts as a point of reference for future researchers of PA globally. It helps the government, specifically the MOEST and TSC; formulate the right policies to be used for efficient management of high schools in Kenya.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal Policy, Tools, Kenya Teachers Service Commission, Bomet Constituency

Introduction

According to Longman (1991), a policy is a course of action for dealing with a particular matter or situation especially as chosen by political party, government, a business company, among other institutions. A policy statement is thus a course or principle of action, especially one that is to one's own advantage. Every organization has established strategy or plan of action. This has to be implemented. The standing plan derived from the strategy therefore helps to derive the policy. The policy spells out the process, which helps in the achievement of the strategy.

These processes are governed by rules, which are universally accepted in an organization as the best to boost its productivity. The Kenya Teachers Service Commission (TSC) (2005) says that the use of confidential reports in assessing a teacher's performance and potential has been replaced by a more modern and open assessment system where the teacher participates in his/her performance. The author of this paper therefore sought to establish whether or not the Performance Appraisal (PA) policy from Teachers Service Commission influenced PA of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency.

According to Odhiambo (2005), in a study that focused on the state of teacher appraisal in Kenyan secondary schools, there is need for an improved (facilitating) model of teacher appraisal. His findings indicate that teacher appraisal policies and practices in Kenyan secondary schools exhibit weaknesses, which need to be urgently addressed if teacher appraisal has to be used to improve the quality of teaching and education in Kenya. Brown (2003) states that guidelines have been developed to enable staff to go through a step by step process of establishing the performance management system. Brief but comprehensive and easy to understand guidelines assist in improving the quality of the system, lessen misunderstanding and promote joint ownership.

According to Gary (2003), PA fails because of problems with the forms or procedures used to actually appraise the performance. Gary adds that the human resource (HR) department is also responsible for monitoring the appraisal system and particularly for ensuring that the format and criteria being used comply with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws and are not outdated. In one survey he reported that half the employers were in the process of revising their appraisal programmes while others were conducting reviews to see how well their programmes were working. The author in the context of this paper sought to establish whether or not the PA policy from TSC influenced PA of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency.

Appraisal Tools

According to Longman (1991), a tool is something necessary or useful for doing one's job. According to Henderson (1984) there are several tools or techniques of carrying out PA. These are: global essays and ratings, graphic rating scale, critical incident, behaviourally based scales and bars, forced distribution, paired comparison, alternation ranking and management by objective (MBO) methods.

Global Essays and Ratings/Narrative Forms

In a typical global rating approach, the rater is asked to provide an overall estimate of performance without making distinctions among performance dimensions. In an essay format the rater is asked to respond narratively to a question such as "What is your overall evaluation of this individual's performance for the past year?" Without specific performance criteria derived from a job analysis procedure, neither the global rating nor the general narrative can be considered job-related. Therefore, both of these techniques have serious limitations.

Trait-Rating Scales/Graphic Rating Scales

According to Gary (2003), graphic rating scales method usually comprises a list of personality traits. A rater will be required to indicate on a numerical scale the degree to which the individual being appraised possesses these traits. This is the simplest and most commonly used method of performance appraisal. It lists personality traits and a range of performance values (on a scale of unsatisfactory to outstanding) for each trait. The supervisor rates each employee by checking or circling each score, which best describes the employees' trait. It is to be done numerically on the scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – where 1 was the strongest and 5 the weakest; or alphabetical A, B, C, D, E where A is the strongest and E is the weakest. However, since they lack specific job-related definitions, trait-rating scales are extremely vulnerable to errors such as halo, strictness, leniency and central tendency that severely affect the validity and reliability of the ratings.

Critical Incident

Critical incident method requires the supervisor to regularly write down desirable or undesirable incidents of each employee's work-related behaviour. The supervisor and the employee then meet at regular intervals to discuss the incidents. This method has the following advantages: It provides the supervisor with hard examples of good or poor performance, which support in explaining how the employee was appraised and ensures the supervisor thinks and monitors the employee's performance throughout the year; not just the most recent ones. It also provides a list of specific incidents or areas, which the employee should have addressed to improve his performance and could be adapted to specific job expectations laid out for the subordinate at the beginning of the year.

Management by Objective (MBO)

MBO is a philosophy which emphasizes on goal setting and planning for individual managers and their work groups. MBO recognizes and encourages participatory approach to goal setting, in which both the manager and staff are involved. The purpose of MBO is to give subordinates a voice in the goal setting and planning process and to clarify for them exactly what they are expected to accomplish within a given time span. In performance management system through MBO, the manager is required to set measurable goals with each employee. The manager is to discuss periodically with the employee his/her (employee's) progress toward the goals and provide feedback in the (regular) review of the progress. MBO consists of six steps: it sets the organizational goals, sets departmental goals, discusses departmental goals, defines expected results, undertakes performance reviews and provides feedback.

Paired Comparison Method

Paired comparison is a modified version of ranking method. It involves comparing two employees at a time on each trait. For each trait, an employee has a plus (+) or a minus (-) depending on whether he/she ranks better than the others on the trait. The number of time an employee is ranked better is counted and added up. Paired comparison method helps to make the ranking method more precise. For every trait for example quantity of work, an employee is paired and compared, with every other subordinate.

Forced Distribution Method

This is similar to grading on a curve. This method places predetermined percentages of rates in categories. For example, it decides to distribute employees as follows: 15% high performers, 20% high-average performers, 30% average performers, 20% low-average performers and 15% low performers. The employee is rated relative to his peers. It involves writing each employee's name on a separate card for each category of trait being appraised such as leadership, judgement or initiative. The employee's card is then placed in one of the appropriate performance categories. One will therefore fall in any of the rate categories and that will be their appropriate performance appraisal rate.

Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales/Behaviourally based Scales and Bars

According to Gary (2003), a Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) combines the benefits of narratives, critical incidents and quantifies (graphic rating type) scales by anchoring a rating scale with specific behavioural examples of good or poor performance. Its proponents argue that it provides better, more equitable appraisals than do the other tool as discussed above. Henderson (1984) says that Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) are descriptions of various degrees of behaviour with regard to a specific performance dimension. The behaviours, specifically defined, provide the anchors for rating scales. Although these scales represent job-relevant dimensions of performance, they still pose problems in determining which actually absent behaviours match with specifically anchored performance scales. Despite this difficulty, BARS are a significant improvement, since they require less inference on the part of a rater than traditional trait-rating approaches.

Alternation Ranking Method

Gary (2003) describes this as the method of ranking employees from best to worst on a trait. Since it is easier to distinguish between the worst and best employees, an alternation ranking method is most popular. First, the rater lists all subordinates to be rated then cross out the names of any not known well enough to rank. Then on a specifically designed form, the rater indicates the employee who is the highest on the characteristic being measured, at the same time shows the lowest employee, then chooses the next highest and the next lowest, alternating between highest and lowest until all employees have been ranked. Sushila (2004) proposes that it is necessary for the school to have a structure for evaluation. This structure is derived from a discussion at a large meeting. It can be modified with time and as the evaluation strategy is in use. PA policy has to be reviewed from time to time. The TSC (2005) gives the sample of the appraisal form which has the ratings under the subheadings: overall assessment of performance within the year, overall job satisfaction during the period of assessment. The choices of the ratings given are: excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. It states that the use of confidential reports in assessing a teacher's performance and potential has been replaced by a more modern and open assessment system where the teacher participates in his/her performance assessment. This made the appraisal tool be more participatory since the teacher could participate in their own appraisal unlike before when their principal confidentially appraised them and submitted the appraisal form to the TSC.

According to Medley (1975), the PA instrument specifies the number and duration of the observations to be made and defines the aspects of the performance to be observed and judged. It also provides a numerical or graphic scale on which the evaluator's judgement or rating of each factor or item is recorded. The validity of teacher ratings is further enhanced if the items to be rated reflect aspects of performance known or believed to be related to teacher effectiveness. Just as the content validity of a test depends on the items it contained, so does the content validity of a rating scale. The rating scale must always measure what it purports to measure.

Gary (2003) says that employers still depend on graphic type rating scales to appraise performance. These performances are susceptible to several problems, namely unclear standards, halo effect, central tendency, leniency or strictness and bias. The graphic rating scale seems objective, but would probably result in unfair appraisals because the traits and degrees of merit were ambiguous. For example, different supervisors would probably define "good" performance, "unfair" performance, and so on differently. The same is true of traits such as quality of work or "creativity". It is on these backgrounds that the researcher sought to determine the extent to which P.A. tools influenced the performance appraisal of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency.

Statement of the Problem

It is important for educational institutions, especially High Schools, to carry out PA of its teachers. However, PA of teachers in High School is affected by some challenges. According to the Ontario Report on Teachers Performance Appraisal Systems (2006), the current teacher PA system requires experienced teachers to be appraised every 3 years, with two appraisals in their evaluation year. The Report notes that teachers receive an overall rating of exemplary good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If unsatisfactory rating, the principal and teacher need to prepare an improvement plan outlining the steps that the teacher should take to improve his or her performance and the support that would be provided in order to carry them out.

According to Odhiambo (2005), there are indications that the teacher policies and practices in Kenyan secondary schools exhibit weaknesses, which need to be urgently addressed if teacher appraisal were to be used to improve the quality of teaching and education in Kenya. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) (2005) *Sessional paper No. 1*, reports that teacher promotion has not been based on performance but on qualifications which contributes to the internal inefficiencies. It is on this background that the author investigated the challenges affecting Performance Appraisal of TSC high school teachers in order to offer solutions. The challenges affecting PA of TSC high school teachers in Kenya could include lack of clear Performance Appraisal policies and poor performance appraisal tools among many others.

Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study was the scope since the study covered only the schools which were in Bomet Constituency. Inadequate funds slowed down the study. The author also had limited time to conduct the study.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Bomet Constituency, located within Bomet County in Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive research design. It involved a field visit to talk to teachers in Bomet Constituency about factors that affected PA of TSC high school teachers in their Constituency. The target population was secondary school teachers in the Constituency. There were 44 schools distributed throughout the Constituency within 2 main divisions: Longisa and Central. There were 18 schools in Longisa Division and 26 in Central Division. For purposes of the study, the author divided the Central Division into Southern Central and Northern Central, their boundary being Chepkulo River which cuts through the Central Division. There were 12 schools in southern central and 14 in northern central and there were a total of 350 TSC teachers in Bomet Constituency. The research however chose a sample of 20% of the schools in each division. This sample was appropriate for generalization of the findings (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1991). The author used stratified random sampling technique to pick a sample from each school in the relevant population of interest. Each school of focus was considered as a sub group or a stratum.

The author picked a sample of 60 from 152 using a ratio of 0.4. Data was collected using questionnaire method. The questionnaire had both open ended and closed questions. A bit of interview was also considered especially as regards the head teachers of the schools. Secondary data was also used to clarify variables and obtain specific information on issues of the problem.

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which included frequency distribution tables, percentages, pie charts and related diagrams. The author made use of computer packages, especially Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel to help analyse and interpret the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Policy and Performance Appraisal

On the question of whether or not there was performance appraisal policy for teachers in the Constituency, Table 1 below summarizes the results. This supports the reason why TSC (2005) reported that there had been a changed way of assessing the teachers. This was with the use of a modern and open assessment system which valued participatory appraisal of a TSC teacher.

Table 1: Availability of PA Policy

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	39
No	32	59
No Response	1	2
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (59%) gave a NO response. This clearly indicated that TSC had not set up PA policy in the Division. This agrees with Odhiambo's (2005) claims that there was need for an improved and facilitating model of teacher appraisal. His study findings on the state of teacher appraisal in Kenyan secondary schools indicate that teacher appraisal policies and practices in Kenyan secondary schools exhibit weaknesses. In Bomet Constituency, the study findings also showed that TSC appraisal policy was not known and was not available to many respondents. This exhibited weakness of PA of teachers due to lack of PA policy in the division. Availability of PA policy could have supported the claims of Brown *et al.* (2003) that developed guidelines enabled staff to go through a step by step process of establishing teacher performance management. Absence of PA policy of TSC in Bomet Constituency showed that PA policy influenced performance appraisal of TSC teachers in the region. On the question of whether or not the policy would affect performance appraisal of teachers, Table 2 below summarizes the findings.

Table 2: A TSC Policy Would Affect PA

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	42	78
No	8	7
No Response	4	15
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (78%) gave a YES response. This clearly indicated that a TSC policy would have an effect on the performance appraisal of teachers. This supports Gary's (2003) claims that PA fails because of problems with the forms or procedures used to appraise the performance. He has also reported in one survey that half of the employers are in the process of revising their appraisal programmes while others are conducting reviews to see how well their programmes were working. The author's findings showed that TSC Performance appraisal policy should work well to improve PA of TSC teachers in Kenya. On the question of the extent to which the policy would affect performance appraisal, Table 3 below summarizes the results.

Table 3: Extent of Policy Effect on PA

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low	8	15
Low	5	9
Moderate	14	26
Great	27	50
Total	25	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (50%) gave a GREAT rating. This clearly indicated that the policy has an effect on the performance appraisal of teachers hence it should be implemented in full to improve the teaching standards in the division. The findings showed that PA policy has some considerable influence on PA of TSC teachers which affects teachers' job performance. The extent of the influence could be as a result of the fact that TSC performance appraisal policy is not widely available and its format and criteria used does not clearly comply with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) (Gary, 2003).

Performance Appraisal Tools

On the question of whether or not there were tools for performance appraisal of teachers in the Division, Table 4 below presents that findings.

Table 4: Availability of PA Tools

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	55
No	23	43
No Response	1	2
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (55%) gave a YES response. From this we can conclude that there were performance appraisal tools in the Division. These tools were available to help the teachers do their job well (Longman, 1991). The available tool which was an improvement of a former one used trait-rating scales. The teacher's personality traits are rated on a scale of unsatisfactory to outstanding for each identified trait. This supports Gary's (2003) views that an employee's score should be given by his/her supervisor. Though TSC (2005) claims that the use of confidential reports in assessing a teacher's performance and potential had been replaced by a more modern and open assessment system where the teacher participates in his/her performance the tool showed some weaknesses. This is because the tools available lacked specific job-related definitions and trait-rating scales were extremely vulnerable to errors such as halo, strictness, leniency and central tendency and these severely affected the validity and reliability of the ratings.

On the question of whether or not performance appraisal tools affected performance appraisal of teachers, Table 5 below shows the results.

Table 5: PA Tools Affect PA of Teachers

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	43	80
No	10	18
No Response	1	2
Total	54	100

Source: Field data, 2006

From the above analysis, majority of the respondents (80%) gave a YES response. This means that the tools used for appraisal of the teachers should accurately measure individual teacher's performance at the particular point in time. The tools should also have the teacher's in-put in their own appraisal. The new PA tool of TSC (2005) with teachers' in-put affects PA of the teachers. The author's view is that management by objective (MBO) tool and its philosophy could positively affect TSC teachers when the supervisor and an employee discuss periodically the progress towards the goals set and feedback is exchanged (Gary, 2003).

On the question of the extent to which appraisal tools affect performance appraisal, half (50%) of the respondents indicated GREAT meaning that the tools which were being used did not measure adequately the performance of the teachers. Others indicated Very Low (15%), Low (9%) and Moderate (26). Since majority of the respondents (50%) gave a GREAT rating, it was concluded that the appraisal tools did have an effect on performance appraisal of high school teachers in Bomet Constituency. The author considers this critical incident method which requires the supervisor to regularly write down desirable or undesirable incidents of each employee's work-related behaviour and afterwards discussions of the incidences appropriate.

The supervisor and the employee then meet at regular intervals to discuss the incidents shows positive effect of PA tools. Its advantages of providing the supervisor with hard examples of good or poor performance support in explaining how the employee was appraised and ensures that the supervisor thinks and monitors the employee's performance throughout the year; not just the most recent ones. It also provides a list of specific incidents or areas, which the employee should have addressed to improve his performance and could be adapted to specific job expectations laid out for the subordinate at the beginning of the year.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident that performance appraisal is critical to the improvement of teaching standards in the Constituency. This has trickling effect on the performance of the various schools in the County, especially in terms of examination results. The findings on policy indicate that there are inadequate policies to govern the performance appraisal of teachers. On the issue of policies for performance appraisal, majority of the respondents agreed that it does have an effect on performance appraisal of teachers in the constituency. This implies that TSC should come out with clearer policies to regulate performance appraisal, especially on merit of the exam results. Hence it can be concluded that there is a relationship between policy and performance appraisal.

It can be concluded that performance appraisal tools were not fully applied during the process of appraising teachers in the constituency. This was indicated by the response given by the teachers with a majority of them suggesting the need for more performance appraisal tools. On the issue of performance appraisal tools, majority of the respondents believed that it does affect performance appraisal of teachers in the constituency. This meant that the TSC should come up with clear guidelines regarding the tools they use for performance appraisal since it does have an impact on performance appraisal.

Most respondents suggested that the teachers should know the available tools and their contents. There were also suggestions that the tools should be clear and precise thus becoming relevant and easy for the teachers to use. From the study findings, the author recommends that there is a need to put up a better policy on performance appraisal of teachers in the constituency. The TSC in collaboration with the schools in the constituency should come together and draft these policies. This will result in improvement of the performance of these schools. On the issue of tools for performance appraisal, the author recommends that the teachers be informed of the kind of tools that are being used and also know of the contents in the tools. These tools should be clear, precise and relevant to the teachers. The TSC should be involved in drafting out these tools and train the appraisers on how to use them.

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