

Performance appraisal in public Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: The essence and the formDr. Shahid Jan², Dr. Wali Rahman¹, Dr. Nazim Ali¹, Dr. Muhammad Tariq²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, University of Malakand
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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present a propositional study on performance appraisal and employee development keeping in view the current appraisal system in public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The literature on this HR intervention has been studied to link the current study with the previous concepts. Data has been collected from 329 respondents from all public universities in the province. Logistic regression has been used as a statistical tool for the analysis of the data. Results reveal dissatisfaction on the part of the faculty member with the system of performance appraisal in vogue and suggest its continuation subject to improvement in it. The study provides guidelines for the policy makers through its implications. The current study has looked into the existing gap in the literature on the subject and presented new propositions to fill in that gap.

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Introduction

“Appraisal is the process at the heart of development, but attempts to use it as a major method of control may defeat its developmental objectives” (Harrison, 1997, p. 8). Performance appraisal is a process designed to evaluate, manage and eventually improve employees’ performance. It is now treated as a strategic approach that covers a number of integrated HR activities with the aim to achieve diverse ends. They include employee assessment of their current performance, develop their competence, distribute organizational rewards and improve performance (Fletcher, 2001). Therefore, the critical nature of effective human resource management practices has widely been acknowledged (Gould-Williams, 2003; Guest, Michie, Conway, & Sheehan, 2003; Harley, 2002; Park, Mitsuhashi, Fey, & Björkman, 2003; Tessema & Soeters, 2006; Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003). Understanding the nature of performance appraisal and its role in organizational setup is of prime importance thereof. Organizations that are striving for market share are required to critically manage the results of this activity for this determine the success/failure of an organization (Muczyk & Gable, 1987).

Keeping in view the critical nature of this intervention, almost all public universities in the province undertake this activity. In the parlance of these universities it is known as Performance Evaluation Report. The most outstanding aspect of this intervention is its restrictedness and confidentiality which is the very violation of its very nature. This means the “Form” of the intervention is

there but the “Essence” is absent. And the contention that Pakistan’s civil service sector does not have an efficient performance assessment system and the one that is in practice has been out of favor as far as the modern HRM practices are concerned (CHIP, 2005) holds some merits. The system in vogue in the public universities of **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** happens to be a continuation of the same system—a legacy of the English System—that badly lacks the utilization of the modern human resource expertise.

Performance appraisal and employee development

This HR activity is considered a formal and established way of evaluating the organizational worth of an employee and sometimes it culminates on pinpointing weak and strong areas of the employee and also to look for making up the deficiency as well as opportunities for improvement and skills development. Researchers are unanimous in considering it as a cherished and indispensable tool in organization improvement. On the same page researchers (A. Neely & Bourne, 2000; A. D. Neely, 1998; Soltani, Van Der Meer, & Williams, 2005) also recognize the fact that developing an employee performance appraisal system having the quality of precisely mirroring employee performance and their contribution in various organizational programs, is definitely an arduous and difficult task.

The importance of employee development has widely been recognized (Rahman & Shah, 2012). There has been found a mutual interest in this HR activity. From the individual point of view, an employee would only remain in an organization if

she/he is ensured of good career growth and potential opportunities for development. For organization the cost of replacement for a single employee is 1.5 times supersede an employee's annual salary. Investment in employee development has been considered a smart choice and is a strategic advantage and needs serious attention. When an organization is committed to develop its employee according to their individual needs, this motivates employees and greater teamwork and cooperation is ensured (Rahman & Shah, 2012).

Keeping the importance of performance appraisal this study would suggest that understanding each other objectives (individual vis-à-vis organizational) is required to be the common objective. The existence and continuation of such close understanding would a higher level of trust for one another. While we agree that understanding, and then trust, is essential, we posit that our public universities are far away to accrue benefits because they are not on the same page. Hence, our propositions are:

Proposition 1: Faculty members in the public universities consider performance appraisal is an essential HR activity for their development.

Proposition 2: Faculty members in the public universities consider performance appraisal and employee development are linked.

Performance appraisal and supervisor-subordinate interpersonal relationship

There has been a continuous tradeoff between supervisor and subordinate. The best organizational policy would be to make this relationship effective and efficient. The concept of controlling the behaviour of employees is central to this relationship. Performance appraisal is generally looked upon as one way of controlling the behaviour of an employee. "The success of any performance appraisal can only be guaranteed if the interpersonal context within which performance appraisal occurs is also considered" (Rahman, 2012a, p. 71). From that perspective manager are required to realize the context as well. And a perpetual understanding of one another is needed (Wexley, Alexander, Greenawalt, & Couch, 1980). This understanding affects the supervisor's perceptions of the subordinate's performance and both the subordinate's job satisfaction and evaluation of the supervisor's leadership which in turn engenders organizational citizenship behaviour.

Performance appraisal has many facets. On the negative side it is believed to be a mechanical approach to control an employee's behaviour. On the positive side it is an organizational way of finding the strengths and weaknesses of an employee and possible ways for addressing the potential

weaknesses. This connotes that interpersonal context is essential to pursue specific goals (Tziner, Latham, Price, & Haccoun, 1996). This necessitates that this HR activity is required to be studied within the broader context of ongoing supervisor-subordinate interpersonal relationship. Researchers (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2008) have pointed out two major sources of perceived help from the organization for employee development. They are: a) the supervisor; and b) the organization. They help employees in distinct way. The former works as an agent of the latter. This agency approach needs a mechanism. And performance appraisal is a handy one.

"Supervisor is not only tasked with appraising the performance of the employee but he/she has to maintain working relation with the employee as well. In this relation employee expect something of help from supervisor" (Rahman, 2012b, p. 70). Performance appraisal is a test even for the supervisor's human, technical and intellectual skills. Realizing the importance of this interpersonal relationship Boswell and Boudreau (2002) opine and recommend the removing of the evaluative role from the immediate supervisor that may give way to cooperation and constructive relationship.

We support the idea that good interpersonal relationships are essential for both the employee and the organization. However, this study takes the stand that the relationship is highly subjective and has negative implications for organization if taken for granted. Hence, our propositions are:

Proposition 3: In a culture of conflict avoidance, reforms in performance appraisal is hard to affect.

Proposition 4: Two-way communication is essential for an effective performance appraisal.

Change and resistance to change

Change is not a mere word. It is a phenomenon that causes delay in the change process and obstruct or hinder the implementation of the planned change, thereby increasing its costs (Ansoff, 1990). In organizational context it is a philosophy and a systematic approach that encompasses the adaptation and implementation of procedures and/or technologies to deal with changes in the business environment and to profit from changing opportunities (Rahman, 2012b). It is not a mere wish but very essential for survival in the global world. No matter it is almost inevitable, nevertheless managing change is a challenging task. Therefore, winning the confidence of all the stakeholders affecting change is an integral part of managing change. Resistance from employees and within the system is normal and persistent resistance is dangerous. It is of prime importance that the employees be assured through

attitudinal and behavioural approaches that the change will bring better career prospects for them. Employees offer resistance for a wide variety of reasons. Sometimes it may be straightforward intellectual disagreement but it might be the result of deep-seated psychological prejudices. Common reasons are: change initiatives are considered temporary, supervisor are considered incompetent, weak control, lack of faith in the potentials to learn new skills, too much change too soon expected, lack of trust, etc. Researchers (Burdett, 1999; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Rumelt, 1995) have extensively talked about the change and resistance to change. Rumelt (1995) divides the sources of resistance into five groups. Pardo del Val & Fuentes (2003) further categorize groups into two broad categories. In the first category there are three groups (a. distorted perception, interpretation barriers, and vague strategic priorities; b. low motivation; and c. lack of creative response) which appear in the formulation stage and the two groups (a. political and cultural deadlock; and b. other sources) in the second category appear in the implementation stage.

Change is indispensable for the survival of big and small organizations. This has become a truism. We believe in change and the resistance to change. However, it is generally considered that the potential resistance come from those corners which feel the threat of losing something, this study takes the stand that it is not necessary that change will be easily accepted even by those who will be benefitted from the change. Hence, our proposition is:

Proposition 5: To successfully affect change, organizations are required to motivate even those employees who will be benefitted from such change.

Performance appraisal and system support

Organizations by definition are entities that have some defined and managed structures for achieving certain defined goals. These structures are termed organizational configuration. These configurations affects HR practices (Ketchen et al., 1997; Rahman, 2012a). Researchers (Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, 1978), on the basis of these configurations divide organizations into four types. These are: prospector, defender, reactor and analyzer. This categorization has been made in the light of the relationships among the constituents of the system. Defender organizations have centralized structure and narrow market niches employing single technology; prospector organizations are decentralized structure, having complex coordination and employing multiple technologies. From this perspective public universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can be termed defender with a

deviation of having extensive market domain. It has been researched that organizational configuration affect and determine the objectives of performance appraisal system (Cleveland, Murphy, & Williams, 1989).

Resistance should not always be considered a negative tincture. It may be helpful in the provision of the required information which may be essential and useful in learning how to develop a more successful change process (Goldstein, 1988; Piderit, 2000; Waddell & Sohal, 1998). Therefore, researchers (Pardo del Val & Fuentes, 2003) consider resistance to change an important topic in change management and is required to be studied seriously.

Change and resistance to change appears to be the two indispensable opposites. Though resistance to change is an unwelcome guest in the change process, it is helpful as well. However, we believe that resistance from employees and within the system is normal, persistent resistance is dangerous. Hence, our proposition is:

Proposition 6: Change is resisted but persistent change to resistance is challenging the viability of an organization.

Data and method

Data

A total of 600 questionnaires were sent to 14 public universities and 02 degree awarding institutes in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 329 questionnaires, complete in all respects (55% response rate) were analyzed. Respondents were ensured that their identity would not be disclosed to anyone. Demographic variables that were used in the study were: University ID, age, gender, and designation. To assess the respondents view on the six propositions of the research they were asked six questions. As the data was dichotomous, it was coded 1 and 0. Simple bivariate logistic regression was employed.

Method

We begin our analysis by assessing how well their information regarding the role of performance appraisal in their development match the practical activity they have been experiencing. For that very purpose they were asked six questions keeping in view the six propositions in mind. The first question was: "Do you think performance appraisal is an essential HR activity for the development of employees?" Using logistic regression employee development is the dichotomous criterion variable and performance appraisal as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded performance appraisal with 1 = Essential, 0 = Not Essential, and employee development with 1 = Yes,

and 0 = No. Statistical technique of logistic regression was performed with the objective to compare the number of correct responses to a chance level (i.e. 50%). The results (table 1) indicated that respondents' responses on the first question was above chance level ($z = 0.192, p = 0.000$). On the

whole, the results indicated the response pattern on the 1st question was in line i.e. their knowledge matches with objectives and functions of this HR activity. It means they consider that performance appraisal is essential for employee development.

Table 1. Responses on the first question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed		Predicted		
			Question-1		Percentage Correct
			Not Essential	Essential	
Step 0	Question-1	Not Essential	0	30	.0
		Essential	0	299	100.0
Overall Percentage					90.9
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	2.299	.192	144.134	1	.000	9.967

To assess their view on the second proposition, a second question “Do you think performance appraisal and employee development are linked?” was asked. Using logistic regression “employee development” is the dichotomous criterion variable and “performance appraisal” as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded “performance appraisal” with 1 = Linked, 0 = Not Linked, and “employee development” with 1 = Yes, and 0 = No. Statistical technique of logistic regression was repeated. The results (table 2) indicated that respondents' responses on the second question was above chance level ($z = 0.169, p = 0.000$). On the whole, the results indicated the response pattern on the second question has been found in line i.e. their knowledge again matches with theory. It means they consider the two activities are linked ones.

Table 2. Responses on the second question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed		Predicted		
			Question-2		Percentage Correct
			Not Linked	Linked	
Step 0	Question-2	Not Linked	289	0	100.0
		Linked	40	0	.0
Overall Percentage					87.8
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	-1.978	.169	137.409	1	.000	.138

To assess their view on the third proposition, a third question “Do you think, in a culture that is arguably based on conflict avoidance aspects, a reform such as in appraisal can perform effectively?” was asked. Using logistic regression “change” is the dichotomous criterion variable and “reform in the performance appraisal” as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded “appraisal reform” with 1 = Desired, 0 = Not Desired, and “work effectively” with 1 = Yes, and 0 = No. Statistical technique of logistic regression was repeated. The results (table 3) indicated that respondents' responses on the 3rd question was above chance level ($z = 0.123, p = 0.000$). On the whole, the results indicated the response pattern on the third question has been found in line i.e. they consider that such reforms are desired and that if put into practice they would work effectively.

Table 3. Responses on the third question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed	Predicted			
		Question-3		Percentage Correct	
		Desired	Not Desired		
Step 0	Question-3	Desired	238	0	100.0
		Not Desired	91	0	.0
	Overall Percentage				72.3
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	-.961	.123	60.847	1	.000	.382

To assess their view on the fourth proposition, a fourth question “Do you think the university administrative culture is compatible to such a two-way communication mode of work?” was asked. Using logistic regression “two-way communication” is the dichotomous criterion variable and “cultural compatibility” as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded “two-way communication” with 1 = Yes, 0 = No, and “cultural compatibility” with 1 = Compatible, and 0 = Not Compatible. Statistical technique of logistic regression was repeated. The results (table 4) indicated that respondents’ responses on the fourth question was above chance level ($z = 0.112$, $p = 0.001$). On the whole, the results indicated the response pattern on the fourth question has been found in line i.e. they do not perceive any compatibility issue in the universities. It means they perceive that the administrative culture of these universities are compatible for two-way communication.

Table 4. Responses on the fourth question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed	Predicted			
		Question-4		% Correct	
		Comptble	Not Comptble		
Step 0	Question-4	Comptble	196	0	100.0
		Not Comptble	133	0	.0
	Overall Percentage				59.6
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	-.388	.112	11.914	1	.001	.679

To assess their view on the fifth proposition, a fifth question “Do you think the present system of performance appraisal serve the purpose of employee development?” was asked. Using logistic regression “performance appraisal” is the dichotomous criterion variable and “concordant” as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded “performance appraisal” with 1 = Yes, 0 = No, and “concordant” with 1 = Yes, and 0 = No. Statistical technique of logistic regression was repeated. The results (table 5) indicated that respondents’ responses on the fifth question was above chance level ($z = 0.115$, $p = 0.000$). On the whole, the results indicated the response pattern connotes the perception that the current performance appraisal system does not serve the purpose of employee development.

Table 5. Responses on the fifth question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed		Predicted		
			Question-5		Percentage Correct
		Yes	No		
Step 0	Question-5	Yes	0	119	.0
		No	0	210	100.0
	Overall Percentage				63.8
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	.568	.115	24.504	1	.000	1.765

To assess their views on the sixth proposition, a sixth question “If (answer to Q # 5) “No”, then do you think the system be discontinued or needs improvement?” was asked. Using logistic regression “performance appraisal” is the dichotomous criterion variable and “improvement/discontinuation” as a dichotomous predictor variable. We have coded “performance appraisal” with 1 = Yes, 0 = No, and “improvement/discontinuation” with 1 = Improvement, and 0 = Discontinued. Statistical technique of logistic regression was repeated. The results (table 6) indicated that respondents’ responses on the sixth question was above chance level ($z = 0.256$, $p = 0.000$). On the whole, the results indicated the response pattern on the sixth question conveys the message that respondents perceive that performance appraisal is an essential HR activity however the one in vogue needs attention and improvement.

Table 6. Responses on the sixth question (N=329)

Classification Table ^{a,b}					
	Observed		Predicted		
			Question-6		Percentage Correct
		Discontinued	Improvement		
Step 0	Question-6	Discontinued	0	16	.0
		Improvement	0	313	100.0
	Overall Percentage				95.1
a. Constant is included in the model.					
b. The cut value is .500					

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	2.974	.256	134.598	1	.000	19.562

Discussion

By policy, each faculty member in the public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is evaluated on annual basis through a set of procedures known as Performance Evaluation Report. The process is very short and considered confidential. No input is taken from the faculty member whose evaluation is carried out. Immediate supervisor is fill in a specified form recording his/her views about the concerned faculty member, signs it and sends it to one step higher officer in the hierarchy for his/her countersignature. When the process completes, this document becomes the part of the faculty member’s service dossier (if no highly negative remarks is found).

This confidentiality of a document which is required to be shared and discussed has been under

severe criticism. Faculty member is kept oblivious of his/her strengths weakness which the supervisor observes in the workplace. Faculty express reservations over this one way assessment. This can be observed from the above results. On first question an overwhelming majority (91%) of the respondents believe that performance is an essential activity for their development. Similarly majority (88%) of the respondents believe consider the employee development and performance appraisal are linked activities. These results support previous researches (Mills & Hyle, 1999). Leaving the issue of politics and ethics which is beyond the scope of this study, if taken seriously, the results are encouraging for those who want to make this activity productive and employee development oriented.

Coming to the third and fourth questions, the results are again encouraging. 72% of the respondents believe that reforms will be welcomed. And when employees are willing for change, the only task for the management to motivate them. Similarly, 60% of the respondents believe on two-way mode of communication. Both these results make the task easy for the change agents.

Coming to the fifth question, respondents (64%) reject the current system for performance appraisal from employee development perspective. While responding the sixth questions, they overwhelmingly (95%) recommend improvement. Only 5% of the respondents happen to be disappointed by the current system believe that the system be rooted away. This is again a strong positive gesture for the reformers. Here the role of organizational configurations (Ketchen, et al., 1997) makes the difference. It can be concluded by referring the work of Ijaz & Vitalis (2011) that when employees are willing and decided to change, organizational change is most likely to happen.

Implications

This study has some important implications. First, the study focuses on the HR issue in the developing countries like Pakistan which has been termed under researched (Aycan et al., 2000). The study reveals some basic facts that needs to be addressed seriously. Second, the selection of public universities is significant in the sense that are the main stream universities in the province. Fourth, findings of the current study could be helpful for the reformers. As these universities are the biggest source of higher education in the province, concern about career issues of the faculty members should have pivotal importance in the policies formulation circles. The study provides ample evidences regarding the importance of this HR activity and employee perception about its current status and the desired status. "Therefore, recognizing employees' potential through the quality of this HR intervention might be effective in creating their perceptions of development in outcomes and in the decision-making process" (Rahman, 2012a, p. 204).

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