

CONDUCTING UNIVERSITY STAFF APPRAISAL - ISSUES ABOUT THE IMPACT ON MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The need to conduct staff appraisals in universities is a topic widely debated in recent years by specialists in educational management in the context of education reform in Romania. However, of all human resources activities, performance appraisal is one of the most disputed and least popular activities, especially when is not properly conducted. It may highly affect the work motivation and reduce performance. The case study presented below takes into account exposure to the general operating procedures for periodic performance evaluation of teachers in the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest and its impact on work motivation.

KEYWORDS: *human resources management, performance management, staff appraisal procedure, university staff*

Introduction

Performance appraisal of employees in contemporary organizations is an absolutely necessary activity in the context of knowledge-based economy and especially in high education institutions, where the workforce is educated and trained to become the future specialists. However, of all human resources activities, performance appraisal is certainly one of the most disputed and least popular activities, for all of those involved in this process, because, when the procedures are not quite attentively developed, it may generate a multitude of organisational conflicts. Therefore, employees performance evaluation must be adapted to specific activities and develop a high a degree of objectivity. It is necessary to conduct an assessment in relation to job requirements and features, but also differentiated assessment according to the responsibilities assigned to each workplace.

Among the main objectives of the evaluation of professional performance are certainly identify the performance level of an employee for a period of time, improving communication between employees and management, establishing future training needs and methods, identify new payment methods and inside organisation promotion.

In recent years, performance measurement has become a key feature of competitive organizations, which are constantly in search of competitive advantage and change. This has led to the development of integrated performance management system (PMS - performance management systems) often focused on skills. Even in the public sector, in a movement referred to as “new managerialism” or “new public management” (Pollitt, 2000), performance management has increasingly been seen as the way to ensure administrative accountability, the achievement of standards and the provision of value-added services.

Performance evaluation as a part of performance management and its importance in human resources development in higher education

In order to understand the importance of the human resources performance evaluation in universities, we should consider that this is an essential part of performance management. Seen as a way of achieving individual and organisational outcomes more effectively through understanding and performance management in a coherent framework and context of education, performance management can be defined as a strategic and integrated approach to ensure lasting success inside organisations by improving the performance of employees and developing capabilities of teams and individual participants (Armstrong and Baron, 1998)

The complex process of managing the organisation should integrate performance management and link it with other essential processes, such as university strategy, employees' development and total quality management. The integrated nature means:

- ◆ *Vertical integration* – with the business strategy of the organisation. At the team and individual level they agree targets to support the achievement of organisational goals. They take the form of coordinated objectives descending from the organisational level at the department level, team level and individual employee. The strict alignment of these objectives is essential and especially jointly agree on the objectives to be reached through open dialogue between managers and employees.
- ◆ *Horizontal integration* – involves aligning the performance management strategy with other human resources strategies especially referred to organisational development, appraisal and remuneration, in order to achieve a coherent approach of management and personnel development inside organisations..
- ◆ *Integrating individual necessities with organisational ones.*

There is no single, universally accepted model of performance management that can be also applied in universities, but the management literature brings into light a number of separate contributions which advances the concept of “cycle of performance management”. The authors of this cycle (Mabey, Salaman & Story, 2001) identified five key elements:

- Setting performance objectives;
- Measuring outcomes;
- Feedback of results;
- Rewards linked to outcomes;
- Amendments to objectives and activities.

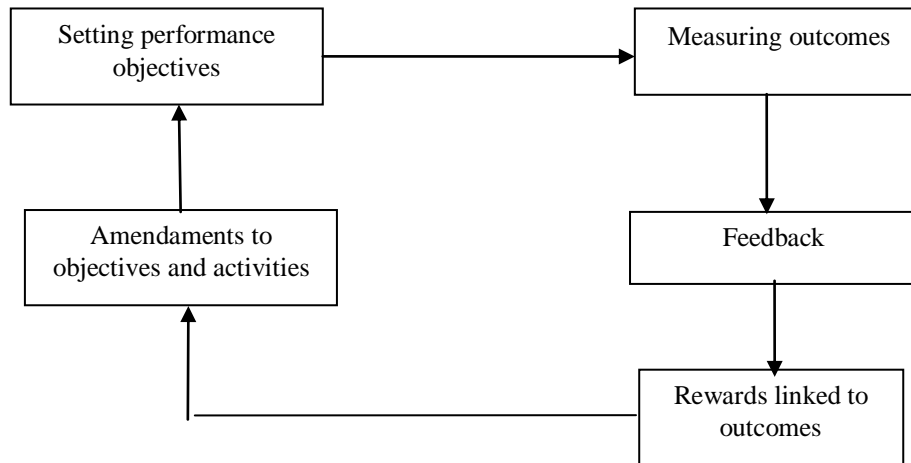


Figure 2.1 The performance management cycle
 (Source: Adapted from Mabey, Salaman & Storey, 2001: 126)

These elements that makes the performance management cycle may be descriptive but also prescriptive. Some writers use performance management as a “framework” in order to analyse the different features of strategic human resources management. Others argue that highlighting the key elements of the performance management process, the cycle presents a way the process should be led by organisations that want to adopt a strategic perspective in managing human resources. The level at which a performance management system operates depends on how the organisation wishes to apply this model. The model doesn’t specify the level at which these elements may be applied: at individual level, at team level, in departments or strategic units or even at the entire level of the organisation. The model leaves the choice of choosing the level. However, the experience of the writers shows that the performance management cycle especially applies at individual level.

University staff appraisal in the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies (A.E.S. Bucharest) is one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions of high economic education and public administration from Romania. In recent years The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies has gained prominence in the continuing process of modernizing the curriculum and infrastructure because the desire to align the European educational process. From this perspective, periodic assessment of teacher performance is part of the complex process of adjustment to European standards on quality in higher education.

The case study presented below takes into account exposure to the general operating procedures for the periodic assessment of the quality of university teachers, requirement of Quality Management System (QMS), according to SR EN ISO 9001:2001. Also, the objective of the paper is to highlight the extent to which the regular evaluation process may influence motivation at work.

This procedure sets out the principles, methods, criteria and stages on which to carry out regular assessments of educational activities, scientific research, national and international visibility of professional prestige and academic integration of all teachers in the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies. Its purpose is the assessment of expertise, teaching ability of synthesizing and transmitting knowledge, potential for scientific research and professional ethics of each teacher. (the operational procedure of the Quality

Management System, periodic assessment of the quality of teachers, Post Code - 15 – A.E.S., Issue 1 / 2006).

The periodical assessment of teachers' performance is a 360 degrees feedback conducted by the university Senate and based on more general criteria of evaluation. If properly implemented, Feedback 360° has multiple advantages, the most important being (Hunt 2005):

- ✓ Increasing trust in the organisation and colleagues;
- ✓ Extra input about the appraisee, leading to deeper understanding about how he is performing and how he is perceived by colleagues and students;
- ✓ A counterbalance to results – based performance indicators, reflecting the fact that performance and satisfaction are not just about such indicators, but also about relationships;
- ✓ Motivating;
- ✓ Correctly identifies the abilities and competences of staff;
- ✓ Helps identify the needs of training and development;
- ✓ Encourages open feedback
- ✓ Helps to work efficiently as a team;
- ✓ Develops creativity.

The first criterion used in teachers' appraisal is **the teaching activity**. The evaluation of the teaching activity is synthesized by the head of department (the Dean of the faculty/ the Rector, for the head of departments) in an evaluation sheet. Inside the evaluation sheet are synthesized information and opinions from different sources:

1. The self assessment of the teaching activity;
2. Peer assessment (the evaluation of the colleagues);
3. The evaluation of the students;
4. The list of textbooks and other teaching activities made by the appraisee;
5. The evaluation of the head of department.

The self assessment contains its own assessment on performance evaluation criteria, with reference to each evaluation criterion. This stage has a strong impact on individual motivation as he has the opportunity to express his own views on the conducted teaching activities. Peer assessment can be done during department meetings or by peer assessment questionnaires. It is primarily aimed matters of professional ethics of each teacher involved in training but also the personal qualities exhibited as a member of the department. The evaluation made by the students is an important component when deciding about teachers' performance and ethics inside the classroom. Questionnaires for evaluating educational activities and professional ethics will be distributed and collected by persons determined by the management faculty in the last week of the module, or at the request of the teacher to be assessed, in order to assure a high degree of objectivity.

The evaluation of the head of department will follow the list of textbooks and other educational activities carried out, the degree of compliance with performance standards by reporting to the appropriate job description held by each member of the team, according to his position and by reporting to optimum operating requirements of the department concerned.

In this stage the assessment must follow:

- ⇒ The communication and how they motivate issues;
- ⇒ Initiative and creativity (proposing new solutions);
- ⇒ Team work;
- ⇒ The readiness in achieving tasks;
- ⇒ The degree of involvement in the execution of professional and administrative duties inside the team;
- ⇒ The attitude towards external and internal pressure;
- ⇒ Personal initiative to promote the department/Faculty/University.

The second criterion of evaluation is **the scientific research activity**. In the last few years this activity became very important for all the academic institutions as it contributes to the increasing of professional prestige of the teachers and university. The scientific research is evaluated by an evaluation commission and takes into account the number of contracts/grants obtained through competition or on the business market, in which the appraisee was a member or a project manager.

The third criterion, **the scientific contribution**, is evaluated by the evaluation commission for the last five years or since the last evaluation and it concerns:

- * Papers/studies published in international specialised reviews (ISI reviews or international indexed magazines) and national reviews indexed by CNCIS;
- * Textbooks (author, co-author, editor) and chapters in specialized textbooks, published by recognized publishers;
- * Papers published in the volumes of international conferences (with ISSN or ISBN).

The fourth criterion, **the professional prestige** is evaluated through the main scientific results.

Cumulating all the criteria mentioned above, the evaluation commissions will gather the results in an Evaluation Report and will give one of the qualificatives: very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory. The evaluation is considered positive if all the criteria are accomplished.

This four criteria evaluation process has multiple implication on work motivation. Therefore, we can conclude that as long as the process has a high degree of objectivity, causing the employee to want to grow and develop in terms of professional skills, to improve his abilities of trainer and mentor, the assessment is a necessary process and has multiple positive effects on the quality in higher education.

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