

FLEXIBLE APPRAISAL AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at empirically examining the relationship between flexible appraisal system and employee productivity of secondary schools in Port Harcourt. Data was collected from customers of 10 private secondary schools in Port Harcourt and analyzed using spearman's rank correlation coefficient with the aid of SPSS. Findings show that critical incident had stronger positive correlation exam score rate. The study concludes that flexible appraisal system has a significant relationship with employees' productivity of secondary schools in Port Harcourt. The researcher recommended that appraisal systems should be made flexible enough to allow easier adjustments during innovation opportunities or change in organizational goals and objectives.

Keywords: *Flexible Appraisal System, Paired Comparison, Critical Incident, Employee Productivity, Exam score rate.*

INTRODUCTION

Every organization whether profit-oriented or not profit oriented has set goals and objectives. These goals could be short or long term in nature which affect where they are now and where they wish to be in future. Over the years, studies have proven employees as one of the greatest resources organizations have; they have critical contributions towards the success or failure of the organizations. Supportively, Daoanis (2012) observed that the success of organizations beckons on the kind of employees they have as employees are the heart of all organizations. The importance of employees indicates the need for human resource management since employees are humans who need to be managed effectively and efficiently for maximum performance.

Further, Marchington and Wilkinson (2005) noted that a strategic pattern to human resource management (HRM) policies that seeks to match the aims of the organization to the performance of the individual is needed. This organization's key objectives and goals become

effused as part of the process in the performance management and made known to all via performance appraisal procedure. The genesis of performance appraisal is quite has its origin from the early 20th century and Taylor's time and motion examination in workplace. In the 1940s, appraisal system became predominant and was adopted for rating and arranging employees' pay (Lillian & Sitati, 2011).

The need to measure employee's productivity using different appraisal techniques has become an issue of debate among academia and the industries at large. Daoanis (2012) holds that a CIPD survey (2005) found that 65% of the organization surveyed used individual annual performance appraisal and 27 % twice yearly as highlighted. This implies that more than half of organizations utilize appraisal system to evaluate and estimate the level of their employees' output. In the same vein, secondary school institutions in Nigeria, especially in populated cities like Port Harcourt are not doing without appraisal systems. Additionally, Mohamed (2007) stated that institutions need to evaluate their programs' performance to reach equality among employees or staff in order to get them motivated, boost their Morales and discover inbuilt capacities.

Observably, most studies have not deemed it necessary to focus on the link between flexible appraisal system and employee productivity in Port Harcourt. Hence, the current study seeks to bridge this knowledge gap.

Research Problem

The poor management skills of the principals and other members of school management bodies, especially secondary schools is already becoming overwhelming as more secondary schools are being established in Nigeria. Major cities like Port Harcourt are not exempted. Supportively, Oluremi (2017) in a study of management competence of secondary schools in Nigeria observed that many secondary schools principals in Nigeria have no serious or professional training in educational management and are therefore victims of the changing trends in administration of the 21st century.

Uttaramar, Tesaputa, and Sri-Am-Pai (2015) noted that the problem of some performance appraisal was influenced by the limitation from system design, application or implementation of a better appraisal system in the organization. Evidently, these have resulted into low productivity of their staff which cumulates into low performance of their students. Hence, this study seeks to proffer possible solutions to the ongoing challenges among secondary schools in Port Harcourt. Nigeria,

Purpose of Study

The study seeks to determine how flexible appraisal relates with employee productivity of secondary schools in Port Harcourt.

Hypotheses

- Ho₁**. There is no significant relationship between paired comparison and exam score rate of secondary schools in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₂**. There is no significant relationship between critical incident and exam score rate of secondary schools in Port Harcourt.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Frameworks

Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory entails developing an action plan in order to motivate and direct a group of persons or individuals in achieving a set goal (Grant, 2012). The theory was popularized by Edwin A. Locke with the idea that more specific goals lead to better performance as against unspecific goals (Latham, 2006). Every Organization has specific goals which make them different from another. Hence, the theory implies that when organizations specify their goals, its achievement becomes easier than otherwise.

Flexible Appraisal System

Baron et al (2005) defined performance appraisal as a more limited approach which involves managers making top-down assessment and rating the actions of their subordinates at an interval or period, usually yearly. Armstrong (2006) viewed appraisal system as a tool for looking forward to the demands and requirements people need to meet up with in the organization in order to achieve the purpose of the job. Daoanis (2012) noted that appraisal system is used to track individual contributions and performances in relation to organizations' goals and to find individual strengths and opportunities for future improvements. The appraisal system is one element of the performance management process which deals with different evaluations throughout the organizations. The process ranges from technological designs to human factor designs (Armstrong & Baron 2005). In addition, Anthony, Kacmar and Perrew (2002) identified 6 types of elements in an appraisal system as to include: 1) Job analysis 2) Set performance standards 3) Design a performance appraisal system 4) Assess performance 5) Performance review 6) Discuss a future plan of action.

The concept of flexible appraisal system entails an appraisal that is easy to amend in order to meet companies' set goals and objectives. Flexibility entails how smart an appraisal system is in terms of meeting up with business environmental and or organizational changes. Similarly, Golnau (2005) opined that prior to the design of the system, the management or the examiner need to take some factors into consideration. Such factors include: features of work appraised, company's mission, objectives and strategies, organizational size, competence, management authority, and the employee-management relationship. In addition, Midler (1995) noted that in a changing world, flexibility is needed to give opportunity for maneuvering in order to allow adjustments of projects as they gain knowledge. Nilchiani and Hastings (2007) defined flexibility as the capability of a system to take action over a potential internal or external change that could influence the organizational goal attainment.

Further, Jabbarifar (2009) noted that appraisal of teachers could include various elements in teaching and learning. Such as: textbooks, instructional materials, student achievement, and the complete programs of instruction. The study added that classroom appraisals are more qualitative in nature to enhance students' understanding in learning. Dunn et al., (2004) identified two important functions of classroom assessment exercise to include: discovering whether or not the learning was a success and elucidate what the teacher demands from the students. In the same vein, as teaching staff appraises their interactions with students, management also appraises their teaching staff's performance to ascertain whether their productivity is in harmony with their set goals and objectives.

Paired Comparison

Paired comparison is an appraisal system that involves ranking techniques between specified individual employees. Ngeno, Shadrack, Cheruiyot (2013) noted that paired comparison allows managers or examiners to compare individual employee's traits and behaviours with another at specified rate. For example, in the school work environment, a teacher can be examined based on how many students had "A" grade in his/her subject compared to another teacher with his own subject.

Critical Incident

The critical incident appraisal system is a technique for employee appraisal that allows the supervisor to regularly write down desirable or undesirable incidents of each employee's work-related actions. This method enables the management or examiner to note the good and or bad performance which makes it easier to recall how to follow the employee throughout the year. Critical incident provides details of areas the employee needs to improve in order to achieve the organizations' goals and objective (Ngeno, Shadrack & Cheruiyot, 2013).

Employee Productivity

Employee productivity is the measurement or evaluation of organizations' personnel to ascertain if their functions meet the set goals and objectives. Productivity is proportion of production output to what is needed to produce it (capital inputs, labor, land, materials, etc.). Similarly, Bernolak (1997) explained that productivity answers the question of 'how much and how well we produce from resources used? This agrees with the definition of productivity in terms of input-output relationship.

For educational sector, measuring employee productivity revolves around students' performance in terms of level of understanding which is gotten via test results and exam scores. Carter and Nunan (2001) maintained that evaluation is usually done to guide classroom instruction and enrich student learning on a day-to-day basis. They opined that classroom assessment and evaluation involve: suitability of general instructional goals and objectives related with an individual lesson or unit plans, effectiveness of instructional methods, materials and activities used to attain instructional objectives, and satisfactoriness of professional resources required to deliver teaching instruction.

Exam Score Rate

Exam score rate is a measure of the percentage of students' score after examinations. It measures the degree at which students passed or failed the questions asked in the exam. Accordingly, AICPA (2019) noted that an increase in pass rate implies that candidates were better prepared. This also implies that pass rate depends on the level of preparation of the students before the exams. Exam score rate is a good measure of teachers productivity as it directly relate to teachers-students relationship. Supportively, Schalock (1993) opined that measurement of teachers' productivity should be based on what they can accomplish in relation to students

Empirical Review of Flexible Appraisal System and Employee Productivity

Studies have agreed that performance appraisal is a critical tool to measure the frameworks of organizations and their employees including predicting the future development of the organization (Daoanis, 2012). Wise (2005) opined that appraisal system aids an employee

discover his strengths and weaknesses which will help in making wise work-related decisions. Ngeno et al (2013) found that appraisal system has trickling effect on the performance of the various schools in Kenya, profoundly in area of examination results. The study opined that appraisal system are tools used to improve the employees (teachers) teaching standard.

This implies that application of crucial incident and a paired comparison could improve productivity among secondary schools. Misiak (2010) opined that appraisal system is a good way to determine employees' performance but it could be harmful to the organization as well. The study added that appraisal system could lead to a bad result for organizations that does not adopt a better technique that suits them. In order words, appraisal system that has positive effect towards employees' productivity need to be fitting and flexible for the organization to adopt.

Further, Kreiner (1995) argued that flexibility is vital to face the changes and uncertainty in the organizational environment. This implies that flexible appraisal system could have a connection with the changes in employees' productivity. Dove (2001) opined flexibility is that key method to remain competitive as a result of rapid globalization, systemic and organizational complexity. Stavrou (2005) opined that adopting a flexible system can affect the organization performance when innovative situations come including financial and competitiveness of the organization. In order words, where critical incident and paired comparison are flexible enough to suit schools organizational change, it could act positively towards employee productivity. Based on the above assertions, the hypotheses are restated as thus:

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between paired comparison and exam score rate of secondary schools in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂. There is no significant relationship between critical incident and exam score rate of secondary schools in Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design with a sample of 100 management staff of 10 selected secondary schools in Port Harcourt. After data cleaning, 94 copies of the distributed copies of questionnaire were found valid for analysis, and was analyzed using spearman rank correlation coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1 Correlations test of Hypotheses 1&2

		Correlations			
		Paired Comparison	Critical Incident	Exam Score Rate	
Spearman's rho	Paired Comparison	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.706	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		N	94	94	
	Critical Incident	Correlation Coefficient	.	1.000	.811
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.	.000
		N	94	94	94
Exam Score Rate	Correlation Coefficient	.706	.811	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
	N	94	94	94	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data, 2019

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1.1 above reveals a spearman's rank correlation coefficient of 0.706 and 0.811 with significant value of 0.000 (Sig <0.05). This result indicates that paired comparison has a strong positive significant relationship exam score rate while critical incident had a very strong positive relationship with exam score rate. Therefore, we reject the null hypotheses 1 & 2, and accept the alternate hypotheses 1 & 2 which state that paired comparison and critical incident has a significant relationship with exam score rate of secondary schools in Port Harcourt. The results are consistent with other studies like Stavrou (2005) who implied that using a paired comparison and critical incident system that are flexible can affect the organization performance. Appraisal systems like flexible critical incident can be quickly changed or altered to suit the current schools' goals and objectives.

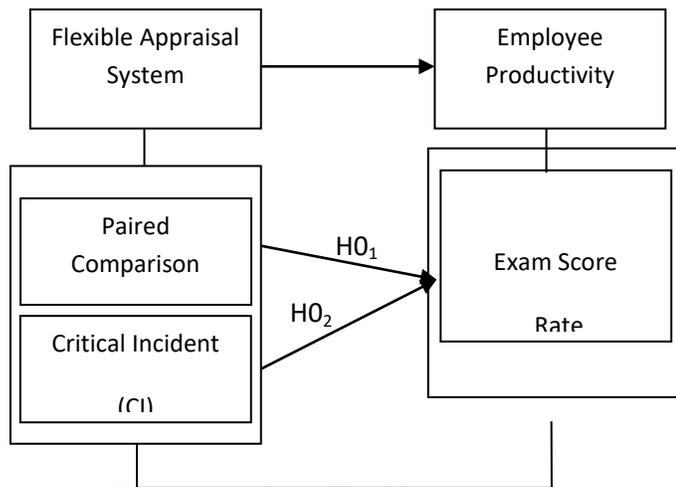


Fig. 1 Operational Framework on Flexible Appraisal System and Employee Productivity

Source: Data, 2019

CONCLUSION

There are lots of appraisal systems that could be used to evaluate teachers' activities to ensure effective and efficient goal attainment. Hence, flexible appraisal system has a significant relationship with employees' productivity of secondary schools in Port Harcourt

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management teams of secondary schools should ensure the appraisal systems adopted are in harmony with organizational goals.
- Goals should be specified and made known to ensure easier attainment.
- Critical incident system should be adopted by schools that wish to gain optimum productivity since it has the highest correlation.
- Appraisal systems should be made flexible enough to allow easier adjustments during innovation opportunities or change in organizational goals and objectives

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