

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

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Abstract:

Performance management is an approach or cultural style that can be adopted in any organizational setting, and its adoption will only succeed if at least most of the people involved accept its validity. Achieving widespread adoption requires time, effort and, above all, belief by its advocates and would-be implementers, because the change in behaviour and attitude involved is considerable and profound. The paper remains a humble attempt at exploring the evolution, inherent problems of performance management in tandem with suggestions for surmounting the problems.

Key Words: Performance, management, culture, psychology, institution

Background and Rationale:

Performance management does not necessarily include tried and tested methods that can be slotted in to any situation. It cannot be easily equated with a set of standard techniques, like double-entry book-keeping or critical path analysis. Like most of the more effective management practices, it is an approach or cultural style that can be adopted in any organizational setting, and its adoption will only succeed if at least most of the people involved accept its validity. Achieving widespread adoption requires time, effort and, above all, belief by its advocates and would-be implementers, because the change in behaviour and attitude involved is considerable and profound. Researchers like Derek Torrington & Jill Earnshaw(2007) show that underlying the teachers' interest in performance is their greater desire for security and a feeling that prior performance in some way entitles one to future security. The underlying reality in teaching entails security and satisfaction in continuing performance, but it is inevitable that the performance standards will frequently change and will mainly be determined by other people. This creates a considerable degree of confusion and insecurity and therein emerges the importance of performance management. That also justifies why adopting performance management requires time, effort and belief, because the changes in attitude and behaviour are radical.

Evolution:

The term performance management came into use in the 1990s and is derived from a practice that began in the previous decade for performance-related pay. Until the 1980s those whose payment varied according to their level of performance were at two levels. First were those who did work that had clearly measurable output, like sales representatives or production workers, but including people like authors and recording artists, paid a royalty according to the number of books or records sold. There was also an implicit assumption that if there were not a link to output, the workers would not work properly. At the opposite extreme were, people in higher position, like company directors, whose effectiveness could not be measured directly but was linked to the profitability of the business. All other employees were paid a rate for the job, commensurate with experience or qualifications. By the 1980s there were moves to find ways to link the pay of all groups to individual or collective performance, no matter how tenuous the link might be. Performance related pay (PRP) showed that there was an essential conflict inherent in the conflict. Over emphasis on performance collided head on with the values of long service and good behaviour which could not be ruled out due to proven results. Rewards for the latter were also introduced. Derek Torrington & Jill Earnshaw(2007) assert that- "The practice of using the Chairman of the Board to come and make a speech

over a glass of champagne while presenting a gold watch to someone who had completed forty years' service sharpened this conflict between the messages" (p.91). The messages not only had to be compatible, but the importance of performance had to be dominant. However, history reveals that PRP schemes succeeded in bringing about a cultural change by instilling the fact in the mindset of the employers that performance matters and is more important than servile compliance and avoiding risks.

Performance principle was thus introduced into human resource management, linking up with the established methodology of performance appraisal to establish a broader approach to people management which focused on individual performance and possibilities of its enhancement:

It is imperative to ensure that, from the outset of their employment, employees understand not only the nature of their tasks but also how they and their tasks fit into broader organizational cultures. These are reinforced during employment ... through formal reviews of performance on a regular basis.... Such reviews can do much to reinforce and strengthen the links between organizational and individual performance expectations.

(Marchington & Wilkinson 2002:317)

Characteristics:

There are three essential components to performance management: targets, training and appraisal, although they may be presented under slightly different labels, such as objectives, development and review. Teachers, like most people in employment, have a manager or team leader who manages the interaction between the organizational expectations of the school and the individual expectations of the teacher, so that objective-setting is a joint activity, training and development is a responsibility of the management as well as the teacher, and the appraisal is primarily undertaken by the manager in conjunction with the teacher. The level of satisfaction with performance management is typically low (Antonioni 1994), but it shows no sign of going out of fashion, so it is worth understanding the nature and source of the typical problems.

Problems:

The various problems inherent in performance appraisal and the related system are briefly discussed below-

- i. The level of satisfaction with performance management is typically low (Antonioni 1994), but it shows no sign of going out of fashion, so it is worth understanding the nature and source of the typical problems.
- ii. Hard-working people doing the wrong thing is a recipe for disaster. The focus must be on what is achieved: results - not behaviours - are what count. Doing things in the right way is no substitute for doing the right things. The targets or objectives need to be carefully developed, so that they enhance the overall performance rather than over-emphasizing one aspect at the expense of the whole. They also need to be genuine targets that will lead to development and achievement rather than simply reinforcing the status quo. Targets that cannot be reached are better not set.
- iii. Management losing interest is a common problem. Senior managers have to accept that performance management is something in which they have to participate continuously and fully. Too often senior people announce a performance management initiative, saying how important it is and then forget it. Studies have shown that in organizations that utilize performance management, 90 per cent of senior managers have not received performance reviews in the last two years. Clearly the problem here is that PM is not used, modelled and visibly supported at the top of the organization. Sooner or later

people at lower levels catch on and no longer feel compelled to take the time to make PM work. (Sparrow & Hiltrop 1994:565)

- iv. Key feature of managing performance is developing people so that they can perform. This is the feature that is most often not delivered. It may be too expensive, or too complicated, or simply forgotten. The result is always the same. The person with whom targets and specific training or development was agreed not only feels let down but also feels unable to achieve the objectives.

Counter measures:

The classroom is no longer the private domain of the teacher from which adult intruders can be expelled. The concept of the classroom as a sanctum defended from outsiders is largely mythical and stems from the observation of courtesies, such as the head asking permission to come in, or at least knocking before entering, but teachers' methods of teaching were largely beyond outside interference. Performance management makes it not only reasonable but essential for the teacher's performance to be monitored. This ranges from asking to look at a work plan to observing teaching taking place. Observation requires preparation, sensitivity and skill. The observer has to ensure that the lesson is disrupted as little as possible and there has to be full, constructive and timely feedback, offering an opportunity to discuss what went well and what might be done better or differently next time. Again, review meetings are crucial. This involves an assessment of the teacher's overall performance, taking account of achievement against objectives, agreeing objectives for the coming year and discussion of professional development opportunities/activities. By finishing with agreeing objectives for the following year, the review turns the process into a continuing performance management cycle. The review will focus on raising performance and improving effectiveness as it is based on the premise that there is always scope to do better. There are always new things to learn, new opportunities and fresh challenges. The world does not stand still. Continuous improvement is important. Performance management hinges on two key conversations, meetings or interviews, the planning meeting to set the objectives and the review meeting to see if the objectives have been achieved. The whole process hinges on these two meetings because the effectiveness with which they are conducted determines the thoroughness with which the objectives are met. A reasonable level of skill is needed for the first; a great deal is needed for the second. Once the performance management cycle is established the two interviews merge into one, but it is worth considering them separately, especially as the second is an approach that is likely to be used in capability issues.

Appraisal is not a precise measurement but a measurement heavily dependent on subjective judgement. It has a long history of being damned for its ineffectiveness at the same time as being anxiously sought by people wanting to know how they are doing. It is difficult to do, it is frequently done badly with quite serious results, but on the rare occasions when it is done well it can be invaluable for the business and literally life-transforming for the person being appraised. It is probably the most demanding and skilful activity for any manager to undertake: "W. Edwards Deming has contended that performance appraisal is the number one American management problem. He says it takes the average employee (manager or non-manager) six months to recover from it. I think Dr. Deming is about right, though I'd add the setting of objectives and job descriptions to the list of personnel control devices that are downright dangerous - as currently constituted." (Peters, 1989:495). This comment echoes a similar opinion expressed by Douglas McGregor in *The Human Side of Enterprise* – "Managers tend to resist and avoid the task of making formal appraisals, and particularly of conducting appraisal interviews when critical judgements are involved ... it is unlikely that the superior will perform a disliked task in a manner which will motivate and encourage the subordinate to become more effective." (McGregor, 1960:87). With reactions like these, it makes appraisal sound suspect. The reason that performance management flourishes despite the suspicion, is that all seek approval and confirmation that they are doing the right thing, and people also yearn to advise or help other

people overcome problems. At work these basic human proclivities are classified into activities including objective-setting, counselling, coaching or feedback on performance. They all have in common the feature of one person meeting face to face with another for a discussion focused on the performance of only one of them.

Conclusion:

There are many appraisal schemes being designed and implemented in all areas of employment. Once installed, schemes are frequently modified or abandoned, and there is widespread management frustration about their operation. Despite the problems, the potential advantages of appraisal are so great that organizations continue to introduce them and appraisal can produce stunning results. Appraisal is, however, valueless unless the general experience of it is satisfactory. Appraisees have to find some value in the appraisal process itself and see tangible outcomes in follow-up. Appraisers have to find the appraisal process not too arduous and have to see constructive responses from appraisees. When general experience of appraisal is satisfactory, it becomes an integral part of managing the organization and modifies the management process. With the increasing experience of recent years, there is no doubt that schemes are improving and apprehension about their operation is declining. To the outsider the current scheme for schools seems a sound framework, although there is a lot of apprehension about it. Performance management with its integral planning and review meetings has to be conducted with great care and skill if it is to succeed. Some suggestions that can make performance management operate against odds discussed so far are summarized here. A clear understanding of the complementary nature of the contract between teacher and educational institute needs to be developed and a review of the five areas of knowledge, psychological makeup of the teachers, efficiency, ethics and task structure must be done to see whether they can be enhanced. This must be used as a window for thinking about individual teachers and about aspects of the way that the organization is run. A review of the understanding of the school culture and how it needs to develop needs to be done to enable performance management to flourish, followed by an attempt to steer the culture in the required direction (Mullins, 1999). Reflection on the management style and necessary modifications must be done as well (Quinn et al., 1990). A systematic mode of synchronizing individual goals and targets with three characteristics must be developed. These characteristics are - (a) what to do to achieve the target, (b) how to meet the objective rather than pleasing the authority, (c) being precise, difficult and challenging, but attainable, with feedback. It must be ensured that there is an unwavering commitment from both the employee and the management, and that there is an approach that is bought into and owned by those in the middle, that is, the team leaders, in tandem with an approach that is thoroughly explained and 'sold' to all the other teachers, so they can see the potential benefits to themselves as well as to the institution.

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