

**Abstract ID:** ICBMIS-2019-024

## **Why Feedback Matters in Academics' Performance Management?**

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### **Abstract**

Performance Management (PM) is a trending essential ingredient in human resource management (HRM) which is aimed at transforming the public sector. More than ever before, it is nowadays used to support organizations accomplish their goals and mission. The concept is now widely practiced in developed countries and gradually becoming popular in developing countries. There is substantial evidence of empirical studies that focused attention on the effectiveness of performance management systems (PMS). Moreover, notwithstanding the stability of the system, the absence of feedback has been identified as one of the drawbacks associated with the system. Therefore, this paper reviews extant literature and proposes a theoretical framework at the first instance that will support a study to investigate the impact of feedback and how its absence affects performance management of academic staff of public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nigeria.

*Keywords:* Performance Management, Academic Staff, Feedback, Effectiveness

### **1 Introduction**

Performance management (PM) encompasses planning, assessment and feedback (Ainsworth & Smith, 1993; Bredup, 1995). Employees require timely PM feedback (Tinke, 2015). This enables individuals to know how their performance in comparison with established organizational standard (Ojokuku, 2013). It is documented that this human resource (HR) practice has been embraced more increasingly ever than before, and many organizations have engaged it as a HR activity in the management of their employees (Pollit, 2006).

Van Dooren, Bouckaert and Halligan (2010) argue that PM was initially observed in the private sector, however, the emergence of new public management (NPM) brought about the engagement of the practice in the public sector in many developed and developing nations. NPM is the term numerous scholars used in explaining the various reforms that dates as far back as the 1980s which was intended to boost the effectiveness and performance of public sector organizations especially in the Western context (Pollitt, Van Thiel, & Homburg, 2007). PM is a key component towards revolutionizing the public sector (Bouckaert, Ormond & Peters, 2000), as well as a well-established concept in the sector (Pasha & Poister, 2018). Moreover, since the development of modern organizations, it has been exploited to support

attainment of organizational goals and missions (Bourne, Franco-Santos, Micheli & Pavlov, 2018).

One of the PM practices recognized as very important is performance appraisals (PA) of employees (Fletcher, 2001). PA is very important because it is a component of PM that supports monitoring performance management system (PMS) effectiveness (Roberts, 2001). This is supported by Aguinis and Pierce's (2008) assertion that asserted that PA is the starting point of PMS focusing on boosting individual performance consistent with strategic goals aimed at improving organizational performance. Hence, Den Hartog, Boselie and Paauwe (2004) argue that PM comprises the routine management, and the support and development of individuals. It is 'a continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and teams and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization'. (Aguinis, (2009: 2).

Organizations pay more attention on PMS because of its significance especially on employee PA (Flanagan, 2017). Moreover, it is argued that PA is an integral part when linking individual performance improvement and firm performance improvement as well as performance feedback (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). It is argued that key goal in performance assessment is giving feedback on outcomes of employees' work and such feedback ought to be provided as soon as the exercise is conclude (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015). In addition, very committed employees will be supported to part of setting organization goals and values through PMS (Nura & Osman, 2012).

Therefore public organizations comprising the higher educational institutions (HEIs) should pursue the implementation of an effective mechanism that will offer timely PA feedback towards attaining effective PMS. This is because studies show that failure to offer timely feedback is a challenge to PMS (Saad, 2014; Sajuyigbe, 2017). This more important because, for instance, in the Nigerian public sector, Esu and Inyang (2009) associated the reasons for the failures of most public organizations as not connected with their proprietorship status, and hence suggested for the implementation or pursuing PMS as a tool for increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

It is reported that implementation of sound PMS supports organizational performance better by those that embrace the practice compared to those that do not embrace it (Hronec, 1993; Lawson, R., Stratton, W. & Hatch, T.(2003; Nura & Osman, 2012).

Thus, the aim of this paper is to review related empirical literatures and highlight the need to examine the influence of feedback on PMS among academics in Nigeria's HEIs. Furthermore, the paper suggests a conceptual framework depicting the relationships between feedback and PMS. Accordingly, extant literatures related to this paper have been reviewed below.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Performance Management System**

Debates subsist on the importance of the PMS procedure regarding the enhancement of skills and proficiencies of units and their incorporation, as well as the development of process quality (Waal, 2007; Nura & Osman, 2012). PM is a mechanism concerned with handling the individual employee and the working place in such a way the set organizational objectives can be attained by the individual/team (Bouckaert & Peters, 2002; Esu & Inyang, 2009;

Ohemeng, 2011). Hence, Den Hartog, Boselie and Paauwe (2004) argue that PM comprises the routine management, and the support and development of individuals.

Generally, scholars in the field of HRM have defined performance management in several ways (Decramer, Smolders & Vanderstraeten, 2013). For instance, Heery and Noon (2008) understand performance management as incorporating departmental, group and individual objectives in line with organizational policy with the determination of accomplishing organizational set objectives. However, Cristea (2010) stated that performance management describes sequence of individual processes, attitudes and behaviours or a coherent strategy related to the enhancement of performance, and goes further to state the employee's productivity, performance or otherwise, which is dependent on how he/she holds perception about the organization. More recently, DeNisi and Murphy (2017) defined the concept as inclusive range of activities, strategies, and procedures intended to support employees performance improvement.

Drawing from the above definitions, it can be argued that PM is an essential managerial instrument for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational and individual performances in the public sector for the improvement of the delivery of public services (Ohemeng & McCall-Thomas, 2013). Therefore, in an organization, an effective PMS is expected to offer direction in its implementation and attainment, by setting objectives which calls for the application of skills, recognizing what the different types of objectives are to be achieved, what makes a good objective, and mechanisms employed in discussing with employees and what their objectives should constitute, and the manner of attaining these objectives (Armstrong, 2009).

In the educational sector, Molefe (2010) reports that, to make room for healthy PMS, the South African HE institutions passed through major reforms by principally overhauling their HR strategies and practices so that experienced, motivated and proficient lecturers are developed and maintained. These reforms exposed lecturers' jobs to PM and quality assessment (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004).

Prowse and Prowse (2009) argue that PM cannot be achieved effectively without the supervisor or somebody giving feedback. Consequently, supervisor feedback is crucial in every organization as employees will prefer feedback from their supervisors instead of subordinates or colleagues (Ashford and Tsui, 1991). So, feedback ought to be informative as the quality of feedback is important in executing effective PMS especially one targeted towards performance improvement (Govaerts, van de Wiel & van der Vleuten, 2013). The assumption is that, outcome such as job performance would be enhanced consequent of feedback, particularly compared with performance of employees that no feedback was given to (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Besides, the essence is to allow employees determine the extent of an employee achievement against the organization's anticipations as well as support employees to plan targets (Ikramullah, et.al., 2016).

## **2.2 PM (appraisal) Feedback**

Performance feedback is very important in the appraisal process (Mello, 2011). Ilgen, Fisher and Taylor (1979) define feedback as a unique instance of wide-ranging communication process whereby a source sends a message to an intended receiver which contains information regarding the receiver's performance and/or behaviour. Constant review

and feedback is one of the elements in PM cycle (Flanagan, S. (2017). Feedback as an area aimed at improving performance has appeared in numerous literature, especially from JAP ((DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). PA offers employees with feedback that supports performance enhancement (Pichler, S., Beenen & Wood, 2018). For instance, it is argued that as HRM realigns toward a well-structured set of practices that attempt to improve employee performance, giving precise and effective feedback is one of its vital elements (Garg, S. (2018).

The basis of feedback to be engaged for performance enhancement and proficiency development is a consequence of the systematic evaluation of employee performance and discovery of appropriate employees' strengths and weaknesses (Ericsson, 2009). Moreover, PA is expected to give employees with formal feedback that supports them in recognizing prospects for performance improvement (Tziner, Murphy, & Cleveland, 2005). For instance, Oshodi (2011) mentioned assisting in identifying academics' weakness and strengths and facilitating suitable development as some of the advantages derivable from engaging the feedback system in the HEIs. Furthermore, Kampkötter (2017) indicated that offering feedback and communication could prompt employees to appreciate being well recognized by their organization and supervisors making them associate themselves with the organization.

Similarly, scholars opine that observation and documentation of employees' performances regularly, as well as giving feedback on performance are regarded as essentials components of well-implemented PA targeted towards continuous enhancement of performance aligned towards achieving organizational objectives (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008; Aguinis, 2009). Specifically, feedback is considered essential in performance enhancement and proficiency especially in knowledge and competences development (Salas & Rosen, 2010; Ericsson, 2009). There is likelihood that employees will seek feedback on their work if not provided with after appraisals (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). For this reason, the regularity with which employees get feedback is suggested as a major contributing element to appraisal reactions and to PA effectiveness (Ilgen, et al, 1979 Kuvaas, Buch, & Dysvik, 2016; Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008; Pichler, S., Beenen, G., & Wood, S. (2018).

Moreover, relating to PM feedback, it can be argued that employee participation in PMS development is reported as associated with the perceptions held on the PAS fairness (Babagana, Mat & Ibrahim, 2019; Cawley, Keeping & Levy, 1998; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter & Ng, 2001). Besides, employees consider the appraisal ratings as a way to triumph, compensations, acknowledgement, and career development (Lam, Yik & Schaubroeck, 2002). For that reason, organizations appreciate that feedback effectiveness can be the basis of employee development, and thus, make every effort to integrate employee development into their PMS (Ray & Singh, 2018).

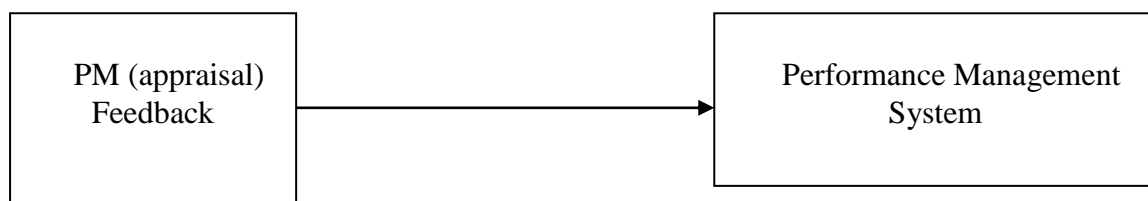
### **3 Empirical studies on the PM feedback and PMS**

A recent study examining existing PMS, and the difficulties encountered in its execution by the Municipal Assembly in Ghana, Ahenkan, Tenakwah and Bawole (2018) reported ineffective PMS in the Assembly as a result of among others feedback, inappropriate measuring and evaluation benchmarks for performance appraisal. The study used purposive sample to collect data from 20 heads of departments and employees. Also, Pichler, Beenen

and Wood (2018) used the performance feedback due process model towards better understanding the predictors of employee reactions to PA. The due process model views knowledge of performance standards and frequent feedback as aspects of adequate notice in performance appraisal, and as key predictors of favorable appraisal reactions. Additionally, in a yet another study, a framework on the determinants of employee satisfaction in the performance and feedback given, after the PA session (Gladisa & Susanty, 2018) was proposed. All these studies suggests the importance of effective feedback in the implementation of PMS, and thus, area of interest to researchers.

#### 4 Proposed Framework

The proposed framework of this study suggests appraisal feedback as independent variable and PMS as dependent variable. A suitable theory is expected to be applied to empirically support the relationships among the study variables to determine the strength of their relationship. Accordingly, the framework is suggested to be used in conducting an empirical study to examine the relations among the variables.



**Figure 4.1: Research Framework**

#### 5 Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to review the extant related literatures as well as highlight the motivation to examine the why feedback matters on academics' PMS. The justification for using appraisal feedback to determine its impact on PMS is because it supports overall PMS especially as regards to improving employee and organizational performances. Besides, academics' staff performance is linked to students' and institutions' performances (Babagana, et al, 2019; Kingdon & Teal, 2007).

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