

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IN SCHOOLS

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Introduction

The search for efficient tools for evaluating the performance of teachers and other related personnel in work organisations has always engaged the attention of management. This is because sustained productivity and survival of organisation may ultimately depend not solely on the ability and the will of workers to perform but also on the quality of tools used to evaluate their performance and effectiveness.

From time immemorial effective workers have always been seen as great assets to their organisation. Hence efforts are usually made by management to properly identify and maintain such workers in the organisation's interest. An effective employee is one who is willing and able to achieve the objectives of his organisation. A teacher who attains the objectives set for him by his employers (e.g. Ministry of Education) is therefore, effective and vice versa.

A brief review of literature brings out some characteristic features of effective teachers. According to O'Kelley (1974) an effective teacher has a current knowledge of his subject matter; he shows interest in teaching students and exhibits enthusiasm for the subject he teaches. An effective teacher exercises good morals, zeal for work, public service and readiness to accept responsibilities within and outside school hours. Fafunwa (1969) and Aghenta (1971) indicated that a teacher is effective where he is dedicated to duty and committed to the attainment of school objectives and where he teaches well. He is also effective where he is interested in the students' welfare and commands respect from his class and from other people. In the analysis of positive teacher qualities which make for effectiveness, Nwankwo and Ohikhena (1979), identified four main factors — competence in teaching, response to school social activities, relationship with students and devotion to duties.

The target of management in most secondary schools is to have and retain effective teachers. But in actual fact effective teachers are relatively few in our schools. In some cases, however, the problem may not lie only with scarcity of effective teachers but that of using valid and objective instruments to determine teachers that are effective. Although, as indicated earlier in this paper, some scholars tend to agree on factors which make for teacher effectiveness yet the techniques practically adopted for the evaluation of the factors differ from country to country, from one state to another and even from one appraiser to another (Yalokwu, 1989). One of the widely known techniques which is used for evaluating the effectiveness of teachers' performance in Nigerian secondary schools over an academic session is Annual Performance Evaluation (APE). APE specifically refers to performance evaluation that is conducted on a yearly basis. As for the concept of performance evaluation, it has been given various definitions by scholars and researchers. Robert (1971) defined it as "a systematic review of an individual's performance in his job to evaluate the effectiveness of his work". Barick and Baxter (1986) conceptualise it as, "a judgmental process which aims at appraising the performance of another individual". Cascio and Awad (1980) define it as, "the systematic description of the job relevant strengths and weakness of employees". The following generalisations can be made based on the above definitions. First, performance evaluation is a judgmental process aimed at appraising the performance of an individual in a given task. Second, it systematically describes the job-relevant strengths and weakness of an employee. Since our emphasis in this paper is on Teacher Annual Performance Evaluation (TAPE) it is reasonable to define TAPE. The concept of TAPE is used here to imply the appraisal of teacher performance on the job to which he is

assigned within and outside the classroom teaching situation during the course of an academic session. It involves the evaluation of job of and personal characteristics which influence the teacher's performance in terms of the appraisal factors which have been formulated for the school concerned as well as the teachers potential for development.

A properly articulated TAPE can help the school principal and other education authorities to judge the effectiveness or otherwise of their teachers. With proper periodic review to suit current trends in school pedagogy and the local environmental imperatives, TAPE could constitute a veritable standard against which teacher effectiveness can be ascertained from time to time.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- a) examine the concepts of "TAPE" and "teacher effectiveness" and review the TAPE practices in Nigerian Secondary Schools;
- b) identify the problems facing the use of TAPE as a tool for evaluating teacher effectiveness in schools, and
- c) suggest steps that should be taken to improve the TAPE in the direction that will foster teacher effectiveness in secondary schools.

1. TAPE In Nigerian Secondary Schools

A review of the TAPE practices in Nigerian schools would be incomplete without a proper account of the historical development of public-sector employee performance evaluation. Before and immediately after Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960, public sector employees were evaluated with the Confidential Reporting System (CRS) of performance evaluation. The CRS is a type of evaluation in which the appraisal report written by a superior (e.g. a school principal) is neither shown to nor discussed with the subordinate on whom the report is made. Agbonifoh (1985) has identified the rationale for keeping performance evaluation confidential. Since the report could contain some unfavourable comments or judgments on the individual's personality, present performance and potential for promotion, making it open could result in aggressiveness and low morale on the part of the one evaluated. A second factor is that the report is part of the contents of the employee's personal file. As such files are sometimes regarded as confidential, open reporting it was argued, would violate this traditional confidentiality.

A crucial feature of CRS as indicated earlier is that the contents are never formally disclosed to the appraisee. On this hinge it's major weakness and strengths. On a positive perspective, CRS inspires objectivity especially when the rater is firm, fair and skillful in the act of performance rating. It reduces conflict inherent in the open criticism of employees by superiors. It protects superiors from open criticism from subordinates. Finally, it saves time. The weaknesses of CRS lie in the fact that it permits employee victimisation and it does not allow appraisal feedback and counselling which offer suggestions for improvement on past performance.

In spite of the hall-marks of CRS, it was clear from the flurry of complaints from appraisees in the early 1970's that the CRS did more harm than good to a broad spectrum of workers (FGN, 1974). A good performance evaluation, the public servants argued, is expected to be objective and capable of providing feedback to employees to enable them identify their weaknesses and make improvements. Since the consumers of CRS contended that it has failed to achieve the purpose for which it was designed, it became imperative that a better system of performance evaluation be adopted. Hence the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) after a careful consideration of the complaints from public sector employees decided to change from CRS to Open Reporting System (ORS) of personnel performance evaluation.

The Public Service Review Commission otherwise called Udoji Commission, (FGN, 1974) aptly described the undesirable state of CRS in the following statement:

When the basic method is questioned and the reports are kept from the subject, suspicion inevitably arises that unknown factors are also considered such as ethnic background, age or sex or that the reports are unfair and subject to favouritism, corruption or sheer lack of competence in their completion.

The Open Reporting System evaluation requires that the appraisee must be shown the report; often the form includes a declaration signed by the ratee to the effect that he had the opportunity to see the report. The ORS makes provision for discussion of the completed evaluation form with the appraisee. This takes place at the post-evaluation interview the purposes of which are (a) to offer an opportunity to the appraisee to know where he stands; (b) to develop a plan for improvement in performance and self development (Since 1977). the acceptance of the Udoji Commission's recommendation on CRS by the FMG in 1974, all Federal and State Government public sector organisations, including secondary schools have adopted the open system of reporting.

In line with the FMG's directive the Bendel State Teaching Service had to adopt the open reporting system of appraisal for all its employees in secondary schools. By 1975 it had designed an appraisal instrument entitled, "Annual Performance Evaluation Report on staff of the Unified Teaching Service". This evaluation form has since been used to appraise all secondary school teachers in Bendel State. Although some minor reviews have been made on the design of the TAPE format, over the years, the frequency of evaluation, the title of the TAPE form and the major elements on which teachers are appraised remain more or less unchanged. The items on which teachers are evaluated are for convenience grouped under the following five major headings.

- a) Instructional delivery and student Evaluation.
- b) Classroom management and organisation
- c) Teacher efficiency and discipline
- d) Extra-curricular activities
- e) Personal characteristics and Human Relations.

All these evaluation factors are rated by principal (or Vice Principals and Heads of Departments). No formal provision is made for student raters or self (teacher) appraisers. Performance evaluation forms are usually completed by superiors once in a year — usually towards the end of the academic session.

Despite the changes in the TAPE system since the last one and a half decades, evidence from teachers' complaints about the current appraisal strategies tend to suggest that the full objectives of teacher performance appraisal are yet to be achieved.

2) Problems Facing TAPE in School

As indicated earlier in this paper, the ORS of evaluation was adopted in schools because educational authorities believe that, if properly implemented, it could yield better results than the CRS. In a comparative analysis of CRS and ORS, Agbonifoh (1985) posited that the latter system of evaluation was fairer to the employee than the former. Ikuenobe, (1980) in his review of evaluation of staff in educational institutions found that the new model of evaluation tended to provide a more reliable quantitative and qualitative data on employee performance effectiveness than the one previously used. This he said was due to the fact that, it has ample provision for a two-way communication between the appraiser and the appraisee which is usually effected during post-evaluation discussion and counselling.

Notwithstanding the possible hall marks of ORS, a number of scholars have found that some human and other problems inherent in the Nigerian society pose a great threat to the proper use of ORS as an instrument for evaluating employee effectiveness. For instance, Eya (1985) observed that ORS is unlikely to succeed in Nigeria because of the relatively low level of integrity of most of the reporting officers. He believed that an undisciplined reporting officer who received bribes from his subordinates or had immoral dealings with his female employee can hardly make accurate and objective report on them. Ejiofor (1980) also noted that the "worst enemy to the attainment of the objectives of the new appraisal policy is the corrupt public officer". He concluded that except the Nigerian public servant ceases to be corrupt, the ORS of performance evaluation will not be a feasible instrument of performance appraisal.

But how effective has TAPE been in Nigerian Secondary School? We shall report in brevity here, the findings of an investigation conducted by the writer on TAPE in some

Nigerian secondary schools in recent months (Yalokwu, 1989). The population for the study consisted of 518 public secondary schools in Bendel State of Nigeria. Of these, 76 schools were randomly selected. A target sample of 1,300 teachers were drawn as research subjects; out of these, 860 teachers successfully completed the research questionnaire. Through the use of a structured questionnaire and an oral interview technique, some pertinent data relating to the impact of performance evaluation on teacher effectiveness were gathered. It is not the intention of this researcher to present a detailed analysis of the findings in this write-up. The intention is to highlight some of the findings as they relate to the topic under discussion. The following problems were found to stand in the way of the successful use of TAPE as a tool for appraising teacher effectiveness.

- i) Rater Error — Sociometric errors such as leniency, central tendency and halo effect constitute a major problem hindering the smooth operationalisation of the new TAPE system. Findings from the study suggest that rater errors result mainly from some systematic bias on the part of the rater. Lenient principals are extremely easy with their ratings of teachers. They feel that if they rate any of their teachers unfavourably, it will reflect poorly on their (raters) worthiness. Central tendency errors tend to manifest when political considerations make raters to assign all their subordinates ratings that are neither very bad or very good. Ratings are clustered about the centre of the scale making every appraisee to fall within the average domain. Halo error is committed when a rater assigns ratings on the basis of global (good or bad) impression of the rates. These findings tend to support Landy and Farr (1975) who indicated that despite heavy reliance on appraisal ratings, they are often contaminated by systematic errors as leniency, Central tendency and halo effect.
- ii) Inadequate utilisation of TAPE results for personnel decisions. This is a crucial problem bothering on implementation of appraisal results for the purpose of executing annual promotion, salary adjustment, demotion, termination and the like. The general complaints from the teachers was that over the years majority of them had been given high ratings but only in tiny proportion of them enjoyed appropriate promotion, advancement or training leave. The teachers also complained that some of their colleagues who got relatively low ratings were promoted before them — a practice that brought the suspicion that some criteria other than high performance have been used.
- iii) Inadequate TAPE feedback: Majority of the teachers deposed that their principals were not giving them feedback on their evaluation outcomes. The importance of post-evaluation interviews coupled with proper counselling of the appraisee cannot be overstressed. Post-evaluation interviews and counselling should not be denied the teachers for as Landy and Trumbo (1980) asserted, "infrequent and ineffective use of evaluation interviews make outcomes of most appraisal systems less than desirable".
- iv) Ratings are trait-oriented: some of the ratings by principals are trait-oriented and not strictly based on amount and quality of work done. Emphasis is often given to personal traits of teachers (e.g. their physical built, honesty, diligence and loyalty) at the expense of actual performance.
- v) Lack of proper understanding of the overall purposes of TAPE — A considerable proportion of practising teachers and principals do not know the overall objectives of periodic evaluation of teachers. There is a common belief that TAPE is only a tool for effecting promotion. Consequently, most principals do not take regular supervision of teachers work seriously until the time for completion of TAPE form draws near.
- vi) Low frequency of Teacher Performance Evaluation: It was observed that principals hardly evaluate teacher's performance and keep records on a frequent basis e.g. day by day or week by week. Instead, they take the appraisal of teachers as a once-in-a-year event. This is sad and very discouraging to many teachers. It is perhaps due to the poor result which this infrequent evaluation yields that teachers interviewed regarded the once-in-a-year evaluation as an "annual ritual full of surprises".
- vii) Inability of the principals to draw a comprehensive set of plans to initiate and

monitor objective evaluation system: The current TAPE used in Bendel State schools are centrally designed and monitored by the Teaching Service Board. Principals are not given the authority to generate relevant appraisal data from their immediate local environment. In fact, school heads only strive to implement the laid down evaluation policies as indicated on the evaluation form and not to use their initiative to add any local environmental issues that might enrich the evaluation instrument. Since principals lack a comprehensive set of plans needed to initiate and monitor a viable evaluation system, they find it difficult to tie the teachers behaviour to some local environmental forces e.g. local taboos.

- viii) TAPE is dominated by principals. The ratings of teachers performance is done by principals (or those delegated to them e.g. Vice Principals) Teachers are not allowed to participate in rating of other teachers neither are they allowed to participate in TAPE policy making. It is perhaps due to the narrow scope of teacher appraisers that some teachers look down on the outcomes of TAPE. For the larger the scope of the participants the more objective the evaluation tend to be.

3. Suggestions For Improvement

The status of TAPE in secondary schools has been examined within the overall framework of ORS of evaluation adopted in public sector establishments in Nigeria. The problems facing TAPE practices in schools have also been identified. Since the TAPE has not justified it's position as a tool that can be used to foster teacher effectiveness, it is only proper to suggest some steps that could be taken to overcome the highlighted problems. Below are the suggestions for improvement.

First, to minimise rater errors (as halo effect, central tendency and leniency in rating), increase the awareness of the overall purpose of performance evaluation and improve post-appraisal feedback to teachers, special workshops and seminars should be organised for principals and teachers at least once in a year. Such an educational forum will enlighten both the principals and the teachers about current trends in teacher evaluation and the need for both parties to contribute meaningfully to making TAPE an instrument for promoting school organisational success and teacher productivity and development.

Second, to overcome the inaccurate and unpopular evaluation outcome which often follows a once-in-a-year performance rating, principals should supervise their staff regularly and keep accurate records of critical incidents concerning teachers' daily performance.

Third, to make evaluation results more comprehensive, objective and fair to all concerned, it is suggested that the scope of teacher performance appraisers be broadened to include students and fellow teachers. According to O'Kelley (1974) the criteria used by teachers and students to evaluate teacher effectiveness are similar and the criteria that students use at the beginning differ significantly from the ones used at the end of the semester. Since the integrity of some principals as raters is now open to question, appropriate weighting should be given to evaluation reports from principals, teachers and student representatives and a committee set up by the Teaching Service Board to consider final overall score on each teacher. Student participation in the evaluation of teachers should, however, be limited to appraisal of classroom teaching, for students have a capacity to identify teachers who teach well, (Nwankwo, 1977).

Fourth, to ensure that teachers take their appraisals very seriously, those given the opportunity to rate teachers' performance should be honest about the reports they make; in fact the reports should be such as can be easily defended during post-evaluation interview.

Fifth, the results of evaluation should be used by supervising authorities in the Ministry of Education to ensure that only teachers who qualify for promotion, or in-service training or salary adjustment or advancement by virtue of the high scores they made in the evaluation report are given the opportunity to enjoy it. On the other hand, those who performed badly and therefore had low scores should by the same token be negatively reinforced e.g. through with-drawal of annual increment or reassignment to a less demanding and less consequential job.

Sixth, the superior on which the authority to evaluate teachers' performance currently rests, should not see TAPE as an opportunity to judge the subordinate teacher. Rather an evaluation session should be seen by principals as an opportunity to use their privileged position to coach and counsel their teachers, where need be. All these should be done in a spirit of love in order to foster the teacher's growth and development.

Seventh, to prevent a situation where the school administrator does not tie the teacher's behaviour to actual results achieved every principal should tie what teachers achieved (results) with how it is achieved (behaviour). Hence teacher traits (e.g. good physical built, vigilance, honesty, should not be invoked by principals as high-score factors, except they are tied to high performance on the part of the teacher concerned.

Finally, to give teachers and principals a feeling of belonging, the Ministry of Education and the Teaching Service Board should incorporate teachers and principals into the forum for teacher performance evaluation policy formulation and periodic reviews. It is through this strategy that relevant evaluation data from the immediate local environment of the appraisees can be generated and utilised for control purposes.

4. Conclusion

Teacher performance evaluation systems at all levels of education are expected to constitute teacher-quality control instruments that are capable of fostering teacher growth and development as well as his effectiveness within the organisation. However, findings in this paper indicated that the TAPE used in some secondary schools have not been able to achieve the laudable objectives due to several human and technical problems. The result is that TAPE had more often than not deflated teacher morale thereby causing overall job performance and productivity to suffer. What is called for, at this juncture, is concerted effort by school administrators, Ministry of Education Officials, educational planners, teachers, students and other interested parties to formulate and operate a more comprehensive and objective performance evaluation system for teachers. Such an evaluation should be able to meet the goals of individual teachers as well as school management. If properly articulated, it should be administered as an on-going process of managing performance and not a once-in-a-year event. It is only when the TAPE system used in secondary schools is re-modelled in this light, that it can successfully boost teacher morale as well as improve his productivity and overall effectiveness.

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