

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY UNIVERSITY: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES



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Abstract:

Universities are generally regarded as top-notch higher education institutions where students study for acquisition of degrees and academic research is done. One of the ways by which Universities have striven to maintain their leadership status among higher education institutions is through the establishment of higher standards of performance for their staff and students. In an attempt to sustain the high standard of performance, universities inevitably find themselves competing with one another in an environment where only the most adaptable and most productive will survive and prosper. Despite the increasing competition, current performance results in contemporary universities are seen as not totally satisfactory by many policy makers, parents, community members, faculty and students around the world. The purpose of this paper is to make a review of performance management in the twenty-first century university. The paper examines the critical issues of performance management in the university system. It identifies the challenges facing performance management and offers strategies for improving performance management in the

twenty-first century university.

Keywords: Universities, students, degrees, academic research, performance management

Introduction

An important vehicle by which individual performance can be aligned with organizational strategy is performance management. Performance management (PM) is a structured approach to planning, organizing and evaluating personnel performance in a manner to cover the key elements of the job. The essence of PM is to achieve a balance between production of desired results and production capability.

Today's dynamic environment and the shortcomings of existing processes are prompting many organizations including frontline universities to rethink their processes and techniques of managing personnel performance. There is a strong competition among universities in an environment where only the most adaptable and most innovative will prosper

More than ever before, it is increasingly becoming critical to identify not only the key result areas of organizational activities but also the key performers and to distinguish them from the under-performers.

In the last two decades, however, frontline productive organizations are increasingly recognizing that performance management has potent effects on organizational performance than mere annual performance evaluation. (Nel, Haasbrock, Schultz, and Werner, 2004)

Comparatively, few universities (including Harvard University, Stanford University, Cambridge University, University of Capetown) have achieved strategic success by overhauling their outdated performance evaluation systems to yield place to

comprehensive performance management system. Strategic success lies in focusing attention at all levels of the organization on key business imperatives, which can be achieved through effective performance management. As a rule, the leading universities globally are those which make conscious attempts to plan, organize, and evaluate their personnel performance in alignment with their overall corporate strategies. Such universities are moving forward because they have established effective performance management not as a one-shot process but as an ongoing process. At the moment, majority of the universities in Nigeria, still adopt the traditional annual performance evaluation which is fraught with several limitations (Benneth and Minty, 1999; Louw and Venter, 2007).

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to examine the critical issues as well as the challenges and proffer strategies for improving the performance management of the 21st century university. The rest of the paper is divided into four sections. Section one makes a review of performance management process and the twenty-first century university, while the section two identifies the critical issues in performance management system of a University. The third section looks at the challenges facing performance management while the fourth section suggests strategies for improving performance management in the 21st century university.

Performance Management and the Twenty-first Century University - A Review

In this section, we review performance management process, the purpose of performance management as well as the 21st century university.

Performance Management Process

Price(2011), Richards(2019), Mellahi(2016), Bryman (2007) all

agree that performance management process has three stages namely, designing and launching the performance management process, coaching and mentoring, and finally evaluation of the individual performance.

Designing and launching the process: This stage consists of producing the performance management tools (rating scales, management by objectives, training of raters on the use of the tools) and aligning them with corporate and business strategy. It also involves alignment with departmental goals and the determination of how employee goals could add value to organizational performance.

Coaching and mentoring: This consists of interim checking of personnel progress, exploring causes of poor performance and offering of appropriate coaching and mentoring. Personnel progress is often checked through monitoring and continuous assessment of day-to-day performance.

Individual performance evaluation: At this stage emphasis is on measuring performance determining the amount of value added, allocating results of evaluation to human resources systems, reviewing new business strategy as well as departmental and employee goals.

Purpose of Performance Management

Yalokwu (2006) , Price (2011) both state that performance management serves amongst others, the following purposes:

First, it is a potent process of aligning individual performance to the organisation strategy. It is a tool for implementing strategy.

Second, it is a vehicle for cultural change, through the interactive processes between managers and subordinates.

Third, it is a tool that benefits both the organization and the

individual performers.

Fourth, it allows organizations to identify deficiencies in employee performance and take steps to rectify them. Fifth, it plays evaluative function, allowing organizations to reward good performance and punish poor performance when necessary. Sixth, it allows the organization to validate the efficacy of other human resource practices, such as selection, training and remuneration.

The Twenty-first Century University

University is a higher education institution where students study for degrees and where academic research is done. Universities are known traditionally to perform three major functions. They act as centres for providing higher level teaching and learning, for conduct of the world has witnessed several changes which in turn have impacted the structure and processes of University operations. Among these changes are the worldwide expansion of higher-education systems, the pressures of globalization, the growing competition to attract overseas students, the rise of international rankings and league tables, and pressures on both public and private funding of universities (Deem, 2011). Meanwhile, higher-education institutions have increasingly been permeated by markets (markets for students, for scholars, and for knowledge) and universities' traditional missions of teaching and research have been joined by new requirements for entrepreneurial and public-engagement activities. Moreover, the twenty-first century university is not just a brick- and- mortar organization but a virtual organization where e-learning of various programmes is given pride of place.

Critical Issues in the Performance Management of a University

System

A review of Thomas(2007), Albdulkareem(2011), Yeoh and Koronios(2015), Ferguson , Hall and Hopwood (2015) indicates the following critical issues that should be taken into consideration in the development and implementation of effective performance management system (PMS) of a university.

The Vision , Mission and Values

The Vision, Mission and Values of an organization constitute a veritable starting point in the discussion of any performance management system. According to Covey (2004) vision is seeing with the minds eyes what is possible in people, projects, programmes, in causes and in organizations. Vision results when the mind is joined with possibility. Serious-minded organizations formulate vision statements which usually contain long-term big audacious goals and a vivid description of what it would be like to achieve the goal (Collin & Porras, 1996). Such vision statements are clear, compelling, excites people, serve as a unifying focal point of effort, reinforces team spirit and applies to the entire organization. Examples of vision statement include.

- (a) Crawford University - To be a centre of excellence producing graduates with balanced education.
- (b) Hilton Hotels Corporation - To be the first choice of the world's travelers, by consistently delighting our customers, delivering innovative products/services, improving performance and increasing shareholder value.

Like the vision statement, the mission of an organization states the long term directional intent of an organization in a more detailed and perhaps in relatively specific fashion. A good mission statement usually contains four elements - the core purpose, the core strategies, core values and the core behavior standards. It answers the questions: What business are we in the

process of doing?

What skills, competences and competitive capabilities do we have?

Examples of mission statements include:

- (i) University of Capetown – To be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society.
- (ii) Crawford University – To be an international institution of learning for training the mind, body and spirit into a total personality to serve God and humanity.

Also very important in PM is the governing values (standards and ideals) of the organization. Organisational and individual values such as integrity, transparency, truthfulness, diligence, spirituality and fair play) should be anchored in principles so that organizational life will have a changeless core and inner source of security, guidance and power. Once the vision, mission, and the values are right, it becomes easy to define the goals and objectives,

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of an organization represent the short-term and the relatively more specific aspects of the strategic intent of an organization. While the goals of a University can be achieved in say 5 years, the specific objectives can be achieved in monthly, weekly or daily fashion. For instance among the goals of Crawford University are:

- Provision of relevant courses of instruction and knowledge in an environment of world class conducive learning facilities;
- Promotion of scholarship and advancement of learning;
- Facilitation of pursuit of relevant research.

It is from those important goals and objectives that the key performance areas can be derived.

Organisational Strategy

A strategy is hereby defined as the determination of long-run goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources to carry out the goals and objectives. Without a strategy an organization is like a ship without a rudder going round and round in circles. Whichever strategy (be it diversification, growth, or cooperative) it will inevitably affect the performance management system you choose and how you implement it. Frontline universities such as Harvard University, Rhodes University, University of Pretoria, University of London and Pan African University (Lagos Business School) do work with strategic plans. Strategic plans usually begin with the customers in mind and mobilize all the stakeholders in the product/service supply chain to make the organizations products/services possible. This includes those who supply the funds, the labour, the ideas, the materials, employees, and the community and environment that nurture the entire supply chain.

Job Description: Key Performance Areas (KPA) and Performance Indicators(KPI)

An important factor in PM is the job description. The job description details out the key tasks that the job holder is expected to perform. Below we discuss two aspects of job description, namely the key performance areas and the performance indicators/measures. The key performance areas consist of those key categories of tasks that are performed by the employee. For instance, KPAs for academic staff in universities, invariably revolves around teaching, research and publication, community/public service and administrative services. For the non-academic cadres of staff, such as Registrar, Assistant

Registrar, the KPAs centre around Servicing University Boards, Committees as well as College/Faculty Committees, facilitating the development of policy, and co-ordinating of faculty/departmental and administrative activities. As shown in Table 1 below it is possible to derive the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from the KPAs.

Table 1: THE KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS AND KPIs OF PROFESSORIAL CADRE (FULL AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS) STAFF.

S/N	KPAs	KPIs
1	Teaching	Develop Course outlines
2	Research and Publication	Produces Research proposals and undertakes research projects Assists Junior staff
3	Administrative and Professional Service	- Introduces new programmes - Membership of Committees
4	<i>Community Service</i>	- <i>Provides free professional services to the community.</i> - <i>Voluntary Service</i>

Table II: KPAs and KPIs for Non-Academic Senior Staff (Senior Asst. Registrar)

S/N	KPAs	KPIs
1	Servicing of Colleges, Departments and Committee activities	- Arranges meetings - Takes minutes
2	Co-ordinating faculty and departmental academic activities.	- Processes admission of new applicants.
3	Facilitating the development of policy	- Assists in activities towards development of policies
4	Preparation for graduation	- Assist in updating the list of graduations.

5. The Organisational Environment

The organizational environment consists of three subcomponents - the macro-environment, the industry or task environment and the internal environment. Although, the impacts of the three components of the environment on the organization tend to vary, the in-depth analysis of all the components are equally important in order to align the strategy to the goals of the organization. For instance, it is a must that the macro - environmental factors (socio - cultural, technological, political, economic and ecological) are critically analysed to determine the opportunities and threats to the organization. At the task environmental level, the industry environment must be analysed to determine the level of competition and the nature and strength of the customers. At the internal or organizational level, the strengths and weakness of the resources and capabilities of the organization should be rigorously analysed and utilized for strategy formulation and implementation. It is only after such in - depth analysis of the environment that the top management of the organization would be in a position to choose the option of either to adapt to the environment or to alter the elements of the environment in order to improve individual and organizational effectiveness.

Performance Standard: The standard of performance describes how well a particular job or task must be done, before the supervisor would say: "Well done" (Yalokwu, 2006). Performance standard is a statement of the conditions which must exist when the required result has been satisfactorily achieved. You can use the following checklist to set a standard.

- How much? (What quantity is expected?)
- How well? (quality)
- By what time should a job be finished?
- At what cost?

In establishing standard, you should determine:

- (a) What is to be measured e.g. what aspect of the course should be tested or examined.
- (b) What point of measurement constitutes effective performance e.g. When a student scores 50% in any of the examined course, he is adjudged to have passed.

Performance Evaluation: By performance evaluation (PE) we mean the judgmental process about the individuals past and present performance against the background of a given work environment and about potential future contribution to an organisation. Continuous assessment intended to feed the PE phase of the performance management.

Performance evaluation could take different forms - open evaluation, semi-open or confidential. PE can be measured on the basis of whether the type of judgment required is relative or absolute. In Nigeria, corporate organizations including universities are known to have adopted the open evaluation system in theory. But in practice many of them use the semi-open reporting system of PE. While the relative judgment form of PE is adopted in some countries (e.g. Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt) universities for certain segments of performance management, the absolute type of PE is adopted in most countries e.g. United Kingdom, Nigeria and Republic of South Africa.

Creation of Organizational Alignment

Successful performance management depends on all parts (individuals and departments) and all levels of the organization (top management, middle, management, first line management and junior workers) being aligned to the corporate strategy and working together to support the implementation of Strategy. As Louw and Venter(2007) stated, "the achievement of our goals in East London has only been made possible through an alignment

of all levels of our company to our target". In a university the goals of the college, faculty, departments, units, teams and individual must run in sympathy with the overall goals and mission of the university. Consider what would be the performance outcomes if all departments, programmes, and individual staff members of Crawford University, tailor their goals and objectives to run in tandem with the Crawford University motto (Knowledge with godliness) as well as the overall goals of the university. To create the necessary alignment, management needs to identify the various elements of the organisation and their interrelationship.

Organisational Trustworthiness

Many people see the organisation as a source of trust and as an entity that deserve trust. They could sometimes be right. But when trustworthy people work within structures and systems that are not aligned with the organisation's espoused values, the untrustworthy systems will dominate every time. You won't have trust. Through tradition and cultural expectations, these systems and processes become so deeply embedded in the organisation that they are far more difficult to change than individual behaviour (Covey, 2004). For instance, almost all organizations espouse the importance of team work and co-operation but they have deeply embedded systems that reward internal competition and individual intrigues. One of the greatest insights of Edwards Deming (1986) the father of Total Quality Management is that 90% of all organizational problems are systemic. In the sense that the problems are caused by wrong systems, structures and processes designed by management, and governance authorities. Virtually only 10% of the quality problems are caused by the operatives (workers). Organizational trustworthiness requires both organizational character and organizational

competence(Deem, 2009).

Performance Management Challenges

Several research reports(Achim,2017;;Deem, 2011;Yeoh and Koronios,2015) indicate a number of challenges facing PM in Universities and proximate organisations. Below are the three major categories of challenges : employer-related, management-related and employee-related challenges.

Employer-Related Challenges: These are

- Wrong organizational structure
- Lack of enabling environment
- Unsustainable values and mission
- Bad selection of Management team and employees
- Lack of enduring Management/Leadership Succession

Management Related Problems: These are

- Wrong assumptions about employee capacity to perform
- Consideration of employee as a thing (thing mind set)
- Wrong systems, policies and guidelines
- Sub-optimal goals/objectives
- Rater errors including recency, halo effect, central tendency, severity, etc.
- Low frequency of Performance Evaluation

Employee related challenges: These are

- Bribery and corruption
- Sexual harassment
- Laziness
- Inability to learn from mistakes
- Tribalism and nepotism

Strategies to Improve Performance Management in Universities.
Against the background of the challenges facing PM in universities, the following strategies are hereby recommended.
Create a Conducive Environment – A conducive environment is a must for effective management and leadership to thrive. The process of creating a conducive for proper corporate leadership is not a one-shot process. It is a dynamic and continuous process which requires commitment and doggedness on the part of all the stakeholders of the corporate entity.

Develop Clear and Compelling Vision and Mission

First, Universities, as going concerns must have a “clear and compelling vision of where they want to be in the near to distant future” (Fry, 2003). This vision should portray a journey that will give followers a sense of calling, of one's life having meaning, and making a difference.

Sound corporate management demands that vision and mission statements must be drawn as vital steps towards giving a sense of direction to the organization. Based on the mission statement, the goals and objectives of the various divisions of the organization can be developed. Properly crafted visions, and missions tend to clarify the direction in which the organization needs to move, and they energize the organization members to take necessary actions towards the implementation of the corporate purpose.

They should get followers excited about coming to work and give meaning to that work so that followers leave feeling more committed to the organization than ever. With proper sense of direction, the managers are able to influence their followers to buy into the corporate vision and thereby move the organization to a higher level.

Shared Responsibility to Promote Organisational Culture

Universities must have a culture that is aligned with spirituality and selfless leadership framework. This culture must embody the idea of altruistic love that provides both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The culture of spiritual leadership is one in which leaders and followers share responsibility. Ideas can come from anywhere and followers can become self-directed and empowered teams that replace vertical structures and functional boundaries (Fry, 2003). The culture becomes one where power is delegated to this enlightened team in which followers understand how their jobs are relevant to the organization's performance and vision/mission. Team members in this type of culture are challenged to persevere and do what it takes in order to meet challenging goals through hope and faith in the vision of the organization, their leaders, and themselves. The participation in these team efforts manifests followers who experience a sense of membership through recognition and celebration and who feel understood and appreciated.

Managing Diversity

Some higher-education scholars tend to accept the rhetoric of "globalization" at face value and consequently try to fit nearly anything they observe into a model that oversimplifies issues (Duderstadt, 1994). This paper recognizes both complexity and diversity in Universities across the globe. It stresses complexity over simplicity, divergences over convergences, local and national variations over global or international conformity. Greater account must be taken of the remarkable diversity that exists among universities pursuing "world-class" status – as well as those not pursuing this status (Deem, 2001). Indeed, diversity should be considered a strength, not a weakness, in University education, both from a strategic and from a systemic perspective.

Incorporate Leadership Training as part of Staff development strategy

The vision, mission and goals of the organizations may differ from organization to organization. However, in order to have a successful implementation of the vision, mission and goals, there must be practical provisions for on-the-job and off-the-job training of senior personnel on leadership processes (Achim,2017). They should be encouraged to participate in leadership conferences, seminars and workshops and also to further their leadership knowledge through executive education. It is only through such integrated approach to management development that both managers and the organization can benefit in their leadership roles (Yalokwu, 2008)

Establish Organizational Systems and Structures that Support PM.

As a rule every organizational system and structure should be adapted to the overall strategy of developing sound leadership, at corporate, divisional and functional levels of strategy management (Denise, 2016). For instance the Human Resource Management subsystem of the organization should ensure that the values and strategic thrusts are factored into the recruitment, selection, induction, training, performance management and labour relations structures and processes(Adelein,2013). Thus, in ensuring proper staffing, the criteria of recruitment and selection may be changed to consider people who are not only professionally competent but also demonstrate emotional and spiritual intelligences.

Promote Quality Leadership that Works - Corporate organizations are largely dynamic learning institutions, which by

reason of their changing environments are open to change from time to time. They therefore require transformational leaders rather than transactional leaders (Yalokwu, 2006). Transactional leaders cater for the self interest of their constituencies by means of contingent reinforcement. But transformational leaders raise awareness of their constituencies about what things are important, increase concerns for achievement, self-actualization and ideals. It is therefore instructive that corporate management should direct attention towards the development of transformational leaders, in as much that such a strategy will make members to go beyond their individual self interest to meet group, organizational and community needs.

Staff the organization with competent people – Competent people are critical to all organizations but since different organizations have different missions, goals and strategies, care should be exercised in staffing the organization. Against this background, different organizations require different types of skills, attitudes and behaviours as well as different types of human resources management systems and processes. Learning and the development of knowledge are critical for innovation and may require the organization to embark on continuous improvement programmes to assure excellence in knowledge and organizational effectiveness.

Create a Win-win Paradigm – One of the best paradigms of effective management and leadership is the win-win approach. In this paradigm, both the leader and the followers are expected to benefit. No one loses. Win-win according to Stephen Covey (2004) is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. Win-win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial and mutually satisfying. With a win-win solution, all members of an

organization feel good about their decision and feel committed to the action plan. Win-win sees life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. Win-win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.

Lead and Manage Change - It is now clear that to survive and succeed in the long term, corporate organizations need to respond to the environment in which they exist (Breakwell et al, 2008). To position themselves, organizations formulate a course of action or strategy. Corporate organization managers need not only to change strategy in response to the environment but also to implement strategy successfully. Successful implementation typically requires change in the elements of the organization such as technology, structure, processes and people (skills, knowledge, attitude, social relationships and performance). In the Nigerian task environment where changes take place by the day, every corporate manager must be open to and exercise adaptive capacity to change as a way of life.

Practice of strategic planning

To foster a robust PM system, management should institute strategic planning of the university on a continual basis. For most frontline universities (eg University of Capetown, Crawford University and National University of Lesotho), a 5-year strategic planning system is common.

Create the Cyberspace University

In this digital age, there is need to create a university that spans the world as a robust information network linking together students, faculty, graduates and knowledge resources. The advent of COVID-19 has fueled the need for the promotion of

cyberspace university and majority of universities in developed and developing countries are busy developing their e-learning and distance education structures and processes. In the face of current realities, what is called for is the creation of cyberspace universities side-by-side with traditional universities equipped with appropriate quality assurance standard and performance management processes that will enhance quality education on a sustainable basis

13. Create an enduring Leadership Succession

The University Leadership (be it President or Vice Chancellor) should play a critical role both as a leader and as an educator in designing, implementing and selling the transformation process in the twenty-first century University. Through the transformation process, an enduring culture of leadership succession should be promoted (Ferguson, 2015). A leadership succession system that grooms future leaders from among the University faculty would no doubt strengthen the University vision, mission and values and enhance overall performance of management, staff and students.

Conclusions

In the foregoing sections of this paper, we have highlighted the critical issues in the performance management of the twenty-first century university. We have observed that much as some universities are addressing these critical issues and challenges, many are not doing enough. Since no worthwhile organization can live with the mentioned challenges, it behooves on all concerned with organizational management, leadership and followership to demonstrate institutionalized moral authority and servant leadership. Institutional moral authority is the institutional capacity to consistently produce quality, trusting relationship with various stakeholders and keeping focus on efficiency, speed, flexibility and market friendliness.

While all universities do not have the same challenges, the institutions with moral authority know how to handle their challenges and move the organizations forward. This is because the power is in the system and not necessarily in the appointed or elected leader.. To ensure the sustainability of universities, the selection of Vice-Chancellors with the capacity to lead with integrity, character, vision and compassionate attitude cannot be over-emphasized (Yalokwu, 2008). In order to keep up the psychological and social contract, employees on their part should work with a sense of diligence, honesty and total commitment to the achievement of set goals. It is only in a situation where all stakeholders are striving to out-perform one another that we can have enduring and effective performance management in the twenty-first century university..

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