



Article History

Received: 08 Oct 2021; Revised: 19 February 2022; Accepted: 18 March 2022

Original Research

Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal Among Public School Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of performance appraisal among public school teachers of Kathmandu valley. Two head teachers and two permanent teachers of two public schools in Kathmandu valley were purposively interviewed to elicit in-depth information. Narrative inquiry was adopted to explore the participants' lived experiences about dimensions of performance appraisal. Herzberg's two-factor theory was adopted to overview the effectiveness of teachers' appraisal. This research revealed that performance appraisal was an annual process in public schools. However, the intention did not meet the expectations. Rather than being a regular process, the annual process was simply like a formality where the teachers were expected to submit one of their best works and get eligible for promotion rather than being provided with a detailed evaluative review of their continuous practice. Rather than involving the feedback from different members of the organisation, only one person got involved in the process, who usually got nervous about it for being blamed for being biased and, thus, provided positive grades only by hesitating to be critical. Teachers took this process as a burden and were not usually involved in it after securing their permanent position in the schools. Meanwhile, the temporary teachers were never made a part

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ISSN: 2091-0118 (Print) / 2091-2560 (Online)

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Journal homepages: ¹<http://www.kusoed.edu.np/journal/index.php/je>

²<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JER/index>



Published by Kathmandu University School of Education, Lalitpur, Nepal.

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of the process. This study concludes that performance appraisal is seen as no more than providing secret feedback without a proper rubric as a mere formality.

Keywords: *Performance appraisal, professional development, promotion, motivation*

Introduction

An organisation is a set of designated human resources with specific goals and programmes. Where there is a variety in designation and workload, all human resources aspire for growth and development. They need to be motivated through various activities to attain individual and organisational goals effectively and efficiently. There are three levels of teachers in school- primary, lower secondary, and secondary teachers. Teachers are motivated as they are active agencies who influence students and implement curriculum to the practice. Their performance is to be assessed, and they are to be encouraged. One of the most tangible and effective rewards is a job promotion. And there is a regular system of promotion based on teachers' performance. However, it is important to explore whether the notion of performance appraisal is going through the right alignment or not.

Performance appraisal is one of the major evaluation systems for promotion in bureaucracy. Phin (2015) addressed performance appraisal as a method of employees' behaviour evaluation in the workplace that comprises both qualitative and quantitative aspects of job performance. The objective of performance appraisal is to provide a basis for promotion and a plan for improvement. Performance appraisal of the employees denotes an evaluation of the employees to improve their weaknesses as well as it is an official procedure for their promotion. Stating the importance of performance appraisal, Azmat et al. (2018) claimed that an individual performance appraisal is required for any government or private organisation to ensure that the objectives are being attained and the responsibilities are properly performed. Performance appraisal of every individual, regardless of the nature of the organisation, is helpful to observe the status of organisational objectives and designated responsibilities.

Performance appraisal in a school is one of the approaches to evaluate permanent teachers for their promotion that is supposed to encourage all the teachers to perform well. Besides, the weaknesses of the teachers are also supposed to eradicate through

feedback and necessary packages. Concluding a research study, Padhaya et al. (2021) argued that though administrations were optimistic about applying teachers' performance appraisal, teachers were not motivated because it was conducted for promotion only, and they had no aspiration due to political influence rather than enhancing their profession and quality of the institute. It provokes that teachers' performance appraisal is to be focused on teachers' professional development and quality enhancement of the schools rather than mere promotion policy.

There are two ways of the permanent teachers' promotion in public schools of Nepal — written tests and file promotion through performance appraisal. In the context of Nepal, Teacher Service Commission (TSC) is an authority for the promotion of the teachers in two ways; twenty-five percent of posts are fulfilled through internal competitive examination, and seventy-five percentage based on work performance evaluation. There is a systematic process, and the guideline of TSC (2000) emphasises teacher's promotion only; it is not concerned with evaluation for other purposes and feedback mechanisms. The performance appraisal system has created unique importance in academic settings (Azmat et al., 2018). It is helpful in finding a base for promotion or compensation considerations. Likewise, it provides asset allocation data to ensure the right person is in the right job (Phin, 2015). Performance appraisal is commendable as it is applied for teachers' promotion, management of assets, and human resources.

The performance appraisal system of any organisation provides an opportunity for constructive discussion regarding performance and identification of the areas for development (Price, 2013, as cited in Gudyanga et al., 2014). However, the system has not been followed as per the notion in public schools of Nepal. Portraying performance appraisal in the universities of Nepal, Padhaya et al. (2021) claimed political influence as the major challenging component in the performance appraisal.

Likewise, in a case study done in a school in New Zealand, Timperley and Robinson (1997) concluded that there was a problem in policy implementation of teachers' performance appraisal. Firstly, the national level policy was prepared by the policymakers only. In Nepal's case, Dhakal (2019) critiques the education policymaking process for basically adopting a 'top-top approach' (p. 2). There is no representation of the school teachers, so there are problems in implementation.

Likewise, there has been a sporadic implementation issue due to political influence and lack of coordination. Similarly, teachers' performance appraisal was conducted for a bureaucratic purpose; it was not concerned with teachers' professional growth. So, the authors suggested that policy should be made in collaboration with teachers; their interest and feedback should be incorporated. The findings and suggestions are still relevant to the context of teachers' performance appraisal in Nepal. Similarly, from research conducted with teachers, deputy principals, and principals in Kenya, Gichuki (2015) added that teaching performance assessment in Naivasha and Gilgil districts was focused on achieving accountability rather than the professional development of the teachers.

On the same note, Machingambi et al. (2012) added that overall, teachers in Zimbabwe seemed to be dissatisfied with the performance management system; they blamed school heads for not conducting so transparently. For that, the authors further suggested that the system implementation could be improved by providing training on ethics by school heads to minimize abuse. Such pieces of training are equally important. Moreover, a punishment system for partiality could also be one of the solutions. The performance appraisal system in schools is to be modified. Teachers are to be provided feedback and pieces of training as per appraisal. The harmonious rapport between teachers and headteachers can flourish teachers' performance appraisal mechanism in public schools of Nepal.

Having a good notion, a tool for the teachers' promotion as a reward, and a useful reference for the school management, the performance appraisal of the teachers is likely to be appreciated by all the stakeholders. It is believed that head teachers and teachers are supposed to take it positively and be motivated. However, the performance appraisal system in academic institutions in Nepal does not seem well as its notion. Teachers of public schools do not have aspiration and motivation from appraisal mechanisms in Nepal due to political influence and lack of professional development (Padhaya et al., 2021). There were some studies on employees' performance appraisal and its impact on their work performance in different kinds of organisations. Gichuki (2015) portrayed the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of teachers' performance appraisal system in Kenya. Phin (2015) did research in the private education industry in Malaysia. Likewise, Dasanayaka et al. (2021) conducted quantitative research with a university's academic and non-academic staff. In the

context of Nepal, Padhaya et al. (2021) carried out qualitative research in three universities in Nepal. Similarly, Machingambi et al. (2012) portrayed the teachers' voice in the effectiveness of performance appraisal in Zimbabwe; Kagema and Irungu (2018) surveyed teachers' performance appraisal and its influence on their teaching profession. They found that teachers' performance appraisal system was complicated and was rather to be tailor-made. The authors cautioned that there could be bias if any teacher had tensions with the principal or immediate supervisor. Azmat et al. (2018) explored the effectiveness of the Government teachers' appraisal system in Punjab.

Most of the studies were done in non-academic organisations. Only a few studies were found exploring teachers' perception of the effectiveness of their appraisal. Moreover, there were only a few studies on public school teachers' performance appraisal; However, head teachers were excluded from the research studies. Head teachers' experience is also equally important to extracting the effectiveness of teachers' performance appraisal. Underlining this background, the purpose of the study is to explore the effectiveness of performance appraisal among public school teachers of the Kathmandu valley. Thus, this research covered the experience of both public schools' head teachers and teachers. Their voice is equally important in order to strengthen the research findings. The purpose of the study was to explore the effectiveness of performance appraisal among public school teachers of Kathmandu valley. To attain the purpose, the narrative inquiry was adopted comprising the research questions — How do teachers and head teachers experience performance appraisal of the public-school teachers? How does existing performance appraisal contribute to teachers' motivation in teaching? The study was delimited to the shared experiences of the public school teachers and head teachers related to the performance appraisal of the public school teachers.

Theoretical Referent

To study the effectiveness of performance appraisal in terms of the teachers' motivation and feedback mechanism for their instructional improvement, Frederic Herzberg's two-factor theory, also known as motivation-hygiene theory, was adopted as a lens for this research study. Herzberg (1968) states two factors affecting human satisfaction — the motivator and the hygiene. Motivators are the intrinsic factors such as achievement, promotion, recognition, and personal growth, whereas hygiene factors

are extrinsic such as administration, policy, supervision, salary, job security, and working condition. Motivators are the primary cause of satisfaction; however, their absence does not cause dissatisfaction. On the other hand, hygiene factors are important to avoid dissatisfaction.

Stating the positive relevance of Herzberg's theory, Lalwani and Lalwani (2017) concluded that motivators and hygiene factors had not changed job satisfaction. Promotion as a motivator leads to job satisfaction, and good administration as hygiene prevents job dissatisfaction. In this study, teachers' performance appraisal is for their promotion as well as for their professional growth through evaluation and feedback. Hence Herzberg's two-factor theory better suits for this study.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative standpoint within an interpretative paradigm. We used narrative inquiry as a method to gear up this study. Narrative inquiry was used to elicit grounded information from the participants' evocative experiences. We purposively selected four participants: two head teachers and two teachers in order to collect information because they addressed our expectations and purpose of research on the effectiveness of performance appraisal. The first headteacher, Mr. Bahadur had been working in ABC School as the head teacher for three years and he had worked as a teacher for more than two decades. The second participant, Mr. Prasad was a permanent teacher at ABC School; it had been his seventh year of a lower secondary teacher through the TSC. Likewise, the third participant, Mr. Nath had been handling XYZ School as a head teacher for nine years; he was a teacher in the school before. The fourth participant Mr. Bhakta had been a permanent teacher since 2005 in another school, and he transferred to XYZ School in 2013 and was able to be promoted through a written exam. An in-depth interview protocol was a tool to elicit information from the participants. We used four cycles to process the collected information. Firstly, information was transcribed into the English language and coded for the main idea expressed in the narratives. Secondly, themes were generated based on the coded information from the narratives of our four participants. Thirdly, information was analysed and interpreted, merging signature literature and theory. Finally, meanings were made by being informed by literature and theory.

Good Notion, Yet Below Expectation

Performance Appraisal of the teachers in public schools is an annual process that is an on-going process. It is conducted for the teachers' promotion purpose. Talking about the nature and process about PA, the principal of ABC School, Mr. Bahadur expressed:

Performance appraisal is conducted annually with a formal notice that is to be submitted by the permanent teachers, including their responsibilities and performance. The score is given as per their level-wise classes and subjects; geographical achievement ratio —the ratio between our score in a subject in comparison to the same subject inside our municipality. According to the ratio, the score is auto-generated. Recently, action research has also been added. It has been made a compulsory part of performance appraisal to be promoted. (November 28, 2021)

Performance appraisal consists of action research, and the score is auto-generated on the basis of geographical achievement and level of class. The principal revealed the process as a system and had a positive perspective on the procedure. Making clear regarding action research in PA, the teacher of ABC School, Mr. Prasad said, *“Performance appraisal is an evaluation of what we perform in a year. Though we do many works, we have to submit only one action research, and it is compulsory.”* It means the teachers can submit the best work as the action research, and it is mandatory to be included. The principal of XYZ School, Mr. Nath, also added, *“PA is an overall evaluation of teaching-learning, duties and responsibilities for 365 days under an education act and bylaw. Ultimately, the prime concern of PA is for the permanent teachers' promotion.”* According to him, PA is a legal process overarching the teachers' promotion on the basis of their duties and responsibilities. In simple language, he signalled it as file promotion. Bernardin (2013) also agrees performance appraisal has been the most litigated in personnel management practice. Likewise, a teacher of XYZ School, Mr. Bhakta also stated, *“Teachers have different capacities and performance differently. PA is a regular annual process that is good for the hard-working teachers.”* Performance appraisal is an annual process that evaluates the teachers' duties and responsibilities for their promotion, where action research is also mandatory. So, it could be beneficial to the hard-working teachers.

Highlighting a scenario from other than educational institutes, Phin (2015) states that performance appraisal is a once-a-year drill that is an ongoing process in order to evaluate employee performance systematically as it can affect the financial and programme components of an organisation. The statement enlightens that performance appraisal is a regular process of any organisation that is conducted in a system.

Performance appraisal in public schools is a secret process done by the head teacher and review committee. The prime concern of the appraisal is for the teachers' promotion. The notion of appraisal is to motivate teachers in teaching through the reward; it is expected to make teachers liable to school administration. It can be assumed that there is a harmonious culture in public schools. However, participating headteachers only felt somehow in that notion, and the participating teachers did not regard it as per the notion. The promotion factor could not motivate teachers toward teaching more effectively, as stated in Herzberg's two-factor theory. So, having a good notion, performance appraisal could not reach up to the teachers' expectations.

Paradoxes of Theory and Practice

The notion of performance appraisal in public school seems so ideal that it intends to reward good deeds, indicate weaknesses, and recommend promotion which is supposed to create good impact and reinforcement among the teachers (Herzberg, 1968). Talking about the existing practice of action research as a part of the performance appraisal, Mr. Bahadur elaborated:

In this concern, marking for action research is inadequate, i. e. only one mark. Moreover, whether it is in format or not, all should be provided full marks. It should be modified; there should be cross-checking mechanism whether they have really done research in a good format or not. Nevertheless, research is for self-improvement, and it should be done on a regular basis. On that note, marks should be increased to motivate teachers, and the action research should be categorised as A, B, C, and D grades. (November 28, 2021)

The head teacher's statements show that there is an issue between theory and practice because there is no cross-checking mechanism for the action research works of teachers. And the mark is also very low - just one mark. Moreover, the quality is not checked; whoever gets full marks. Though action research has a progressive notion, it would not motivate the energetic teachers, and a necessary change is needed.

Keeping all in the same basket is not a fair process. Talking about the existing PA practice in the same school, Mr. Prasad described:

For promotion, every year, we have to fill out the PA form regularly. Since it is mandatory, there is such practice in some schools that teachers fill out PA form without any work. But we fill it up to represent the way we perform our responsibility. (December 1, 2021)

It means there is a loophole in that process that the teacher could submit the form even without doing any significant work. Regarding the existing PA mechanism, another head teacher, Mr. Nath shared, *“It’s effective in this school, secrecy is assumed, and that is secret too. It is a file promotion according to the rule as promotion is done through written and PA. After 2062 BS, teachers have not been promoted. I think there’s a delay in process and TSC doesn’t work as a rule.”* He argued on delay system from the TSC. As Timperley and Robinson (1997) stated, one of the major problems in performance appraisal is ad hoc implementation of appraisal of employees. When teachers don’t get promotions for a prolonged time, they cannot be assured about the effectiveness of PA and might not be kept motivated for a long time. On the same note, Mr. Bhakta, the teacher from the same school, shared a distinct phenomenon:

Headteacher and review committee score marks; it can’t be said fair. It’s a three year cumulative evaluation by TSC. It was seen that one teacher was promoted whereas another was supposed to be promoted. Instead of annual, it should be based on monthly or trimester. Moreover, an average score is calculated from the result of grades 5, 8 and 10. Those who only teach these classes are in injustice. Marks should be scored by not only the headteacher but also by a committee including students and parents. (December 10, 2021)

The teacher was sceptical about the scoring system from the headteacher. He also unveiled the bias among the teachers who teach in different classes. With reference to Herzberg (1968), there are weak hygiene factors such as administration, supervision and work condition. Bernardin (2013) argued on the compulsion of internal and external customers’ involvement in content selection and performance appraisal process. Mr. Bhakta also urged that PA should be conducted in a short time and that students and parents be included in the teachers’ evaluation committee.

Stating the present PA system in one of the largest universities in the UK, Dasanayaka et al. (2021) argued that there was a high bias as teaching performance was given less attention than paperwork. Most of the academic staff members were not happy as they were evaluated as general staff. The performance appraisal process (PAP) focused on the quantity of research and a high load of paperwork. It can be understood that academic staff and general staff are to be appraised in different groups. PA is to be done systematically, on a regular basis, and in a more democratic way in order to create a positive impact among the staff.

Challenge in Implementing Performance Appraisal in Schools

The effectiveness of performance appraisal is not perceived in its notion by the respondent teachers and the headteachers. In response to the question about the challenges they were facing in the course of implementation, the headteacher of ABC School, Mr. Bahadur became nostalgic and shared the real evidence:

A few years back, our teachers were facing difficulty being promoted whereas teachers from other schools were promoted whose academic qualifications and work experience was lower than our teachers. Teachers could easily calculate a score of qualification and experience. Then they blamed me and ... it is seen that some headteachers don't want to take this kind of risk and send full marks to all the teachers. This kind of activity even creates more challenges in such schools where teachers are given scores on the basis of norms and criteria. (November 28, 2021).

He indicated that there is no triangulation or verification mechanism in the marking system for performance appraisal of the teachers. Moreover, the transparent marking system even keeps headteachers at risk. Talking about the existing challenges, the teacher from the same school, Mr. Prasad, shared the reference from other teachers, *"I heard that action research of one teacher would be kept in another teacher's file. Most of the teachers don't fill out PA forms, which is another challenge."* The scenario indicated that most of the teachers were not hopeful and documents could be manipulated, which was a serious matter. Machingambi et al. (2012) also portrayed that the teachers in Zimbabwe accused school heads of contaminating the performance management system. The head teachers need to be ethically transparent.

Highlighting the challenges for implementation, the headteacher of XYZ School, Mr. Nath revealed a distinct phenomenon:

There are three types of teachers: the first types are those who are about to be retired soon. They take filling out performance appraisal forms as a burden. They create propaganda, and they are very difficult to be motivated. They are to be given the responsibility of their interest and capacity, such as in a library, administration, scouts, extra activities, etc. The second type is recently permanent teachers who are fearless; they are confirmed their job is secured now. And they don't work as per rule since the appraisal form is to be filled by those with at least five years of permanency. Lastly, the third type of teacher is temporary teachers who are obedient and hard working. However, they are not allowed to fill out the appraisal form. So, there are lots of loopholes in the performance appraisal of the teachers. So, our roles have been very complicated. (December 10, 2021)

Headteachers face different levels of challenges regarding performance appraisal. Teachers are to be motivated and treated as per their type and their attitude. Talking about policy arguments on head teachers' efficacy, DeJaegherea et al. (2009) urge to design effective, efficient, and scalable training programmes to fulfill the gaps in specific skills. Such trainings are to be contextualised and targeted for an effective role-play.

Mr. Bhakta from the same school indicated nepotism. For him, political influence is common, and due to the earthquake and recently Covid-19, there has been another kind of challenge in evaluating teachers' performance. Overall, the headteachers experienced the threat of being blamed by the teachers for the haphazard marking system and the difficulty in treating different types of teachers. Likewise, teachers experienced manipulating documents from the top level, including nepotism and political influence.

PA for Teachers' Motivation and School Administration

The notion of performance appraisal is to evaluate the teachers' performance, recommend them for promotion, and provide feedback for their improvement. So, it is expected to have a good impact on teachers. The headteacher of ABC School experienced PA as creating a positive impact on school administration as teachers obey him and their responsibilities. However, the teacher from the same school did not

express such a positive impact. Giving the reference to the promoted teachers, he shared:

They have been promoted after a very long time, so I don't find them motivated. There should be certain time boundaries for promotion in schools, like in the health sector. There is no exact evaluation and feedback mechanism in our school. PA should be for the teachers' professional development as well rather than only internal promotion. Teachers don't care about PA, nor are they afraid of it.
(December 1, 2021)

He implies that teachers can be motivated when they are promoted at a certain time and provided feedback and professional development programmes. From the lens of Frederic Herzberg's two-factor theory (1968), promotion as a motivator could motivate the teachers toward better performance. However, the effectiveness of promotion and appraisal seems nominal; neither promoted teachers were motivated due to excessive delay nor teachers were interested in submitting PA forms. Nevertheless, the teacher of XYZ School perceived it positively, *"Those who were promoted to second class from the third class were motivated to promote to first class. So, there is a positive impact of PA. However, PA is not complete for evaluation. Pieces of training and professional development programmes are to be conducted regularly."* On the same note, Gichuki (2015) also emphasised that teachers' performance appraisals did not effectively emphasise teachers' professional development. Both teachers stressed teachers' professional development over performance appraisal for file promotion. As implied by Herzberg (1968), those who were promoted from third class to second class had the aspiration of first class. That denotes the promotion worked as a motivation factor that creates job satisfaction for the teachers, as Lalwani and Lalwani (2017) mentioned in their article.

Asking about the effectiveness of performance appraisal, the head teacher of XYZ School had a very positive perception, *"It's a good record-keeping system. This encourages teachers to make a lesson plan, identify strengths and weaknesses, perform their own duties, conduct research, and present reflection. It is also to identify different capacities. When students fail, the teachers' average achievement will also be low."* Talking about the feedback mechanism, the participants agreed on a common point that feedback and instruction are given in general at the meetings.

However, it is not given at the individual level as per the notion of performance appraisal. In a study with both head teachers and teachers, Asiago and Gathii (2014) conclude that most of the teachers were not aware of the significance of their performance appraisal. Thus, teachers are to be trained on its significance, and head teachers are to be trained on its administration.

On the whole, the notion of teachers' performance appraisal is good. On the one hand, it evaluates teachers' performance throughout the year. They need to conduct action research, and they are supposed to be liable for their responsibility and the school administration. On the other hand, teachers are supposed to get feedback from the head teachers and do self-evaluation. However, the principle and reality were found to be different in the research sites. The head teachers were somehow convinced that teachers became self-disciplined and accountable for their responsibility and school administration. But the teachers neither were interested in submitting the PA form nor regarded the head teachers and administration. Moreover, head teachers found it challenging to implement the PA because they had a risk of scoring marks as the process is transparent. Teachers also shared issues like manipulation of documents, hopelessness, and political and relational influence. There was no feedback mechanism in both schools. It was found that though teachers had aspirations to some extent, the PA system could hardly motivate them to perform better to be promoted.

Conclusion

Performance appraisal of the public school teachers is an annual process for their promotion purpose, and it is supposed to attract teachers. However, the intention does not meet the expectation. Permanent teachers consider it as just a formality to fill the form along with their one best work as action research. Meanwhile, the temporary teachers are never made a part of the process. Headteachers have a threat of being blamed since the process is transparent. On the other hand, teachers don't have the aspiration of being promoted due to issues on administrative work, nepotism, and political influence. Headteachers have prime authority to provide scores to teachers. It aims for the teachers to be liable toward head teachers and school administration. On the other hand, there is a chance of misuse of power. Moreover, the result of the appraisal is not regarded for feedback; nor for the professional development of the appraisees.

The conclusion of this research signifies the importance of performance appraisal in the development of quality education as it highlights a high expectation out of the appraisal but a low implementation process. This study reveals the need for proper training and rubric development for the effectiveness of performance appraisal. Teachers and headteachers are already aware of the challenges in its execution, so further detailed study on this will inform the teaching fraternity on the purpose of performance appraisal, its role and significance to the teachers, and its effectiveness for headteachers as well. With these, the headteachers' and teachers' efficacy in the aspects of leadership, management, course supervision, and service will be positively impacted, ensuring quality education.

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To cite this article:

Subedi, D., & Ghaju, B. (2022). Effectiveness of performance appraisal among public school teachers: A narrative inquiry. *Journal of Education and Research*, 12(1), 114-128. <https://doi.org/10.51474/jer.v12i1.596>