

AN ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: A CASE STUDY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION -NAIROBI

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Abstract

Many organizations are faced with various challenges as they endeavor to gauge and improve employee performance. Organizations overall performance is affected by individual and group performance of its employees. Performance Appraisal system (PAS) is a critical component of the overall human resource management function in the Kenyan Public Service. It is predicated upon the principle of work planning, setting of agreed performance targets, feedback, reporting and is linked to other human resource management systems and processes including staff development(Devries et al, 1981).

The objective of the study was to assess employee perception of performance appraisal in the Department of Immigration with specific emphasis on the Headquarters and at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport which are the Departments` two stations in the Nairobi Region. A case study was deemed appropriate as the Department of Immigration was fairly representative of the Ministries in the public service and thus the findings could be applied to the public service. The research methodology was descriptive with a sample of 158 employees drawn from four stratum, namely the heads of departments, immediate supervisors, officers other than heads of departments in each grade and other supervisors and staff.

The study findings revealed that though performance appraisal on paper was built on solid principles, its implementation as relates to the scope of application, highlights of the old performance appraisal system, implementation of the new system, training as a direct result of performance appraisal, advantages and shortcomings of appraisal in the Department including use of the form GP 247, appraisal interviews, feedback process and quality and the relationship between appraisal and performance, motivation, reward and sanction management to a large extent falls short and thus greater sensitization was required to harness its full potential and benefits.

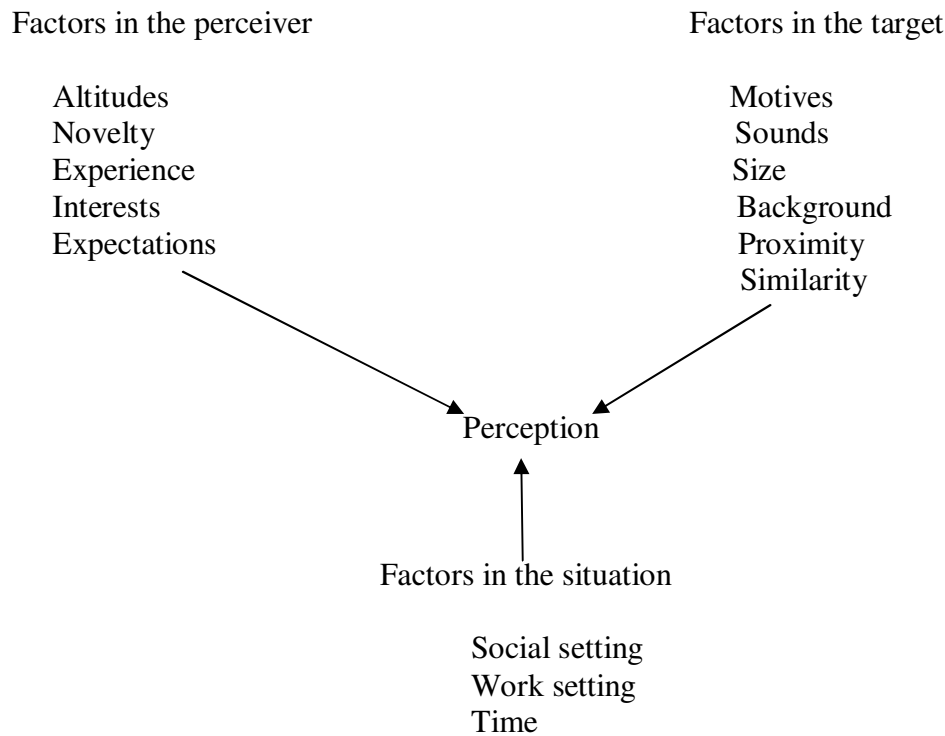
Key Words- Public Service, Performance Appraisal System, rewards management, sanctions, organizational performance, feedback, performance, perception and motivation.

Introduction

Background of the Study

Perception is the process of organizing, interpreting and integrating external stimuli received through the senses. It is the mental process involved in identifying and subjectively interpreting objects, concepts, behaviour and the attainment of awareness, insight and understanding (Cole, 2005). A number of factors influence shaping of perception as shown in figure 1

Figure 1: Factors influencing perception



Source: Nzuve, 1999

In 2006, Armstrong defined performance in output terms as the achievement of quantified objectives and how these objectives are achieved. High performance results from appropriate behaviour, especially discretionary, and the effective use of the required knowledge, skills and competencies.

Formal appraisal of employees has existed for centuries. In the 3rd century A.D., emperors of Wei Dynasty in China employed an imperial rater to rate the performance of official family members. In the early 1800s, Robert Owen of Scotland hang different colours of wood blocks

with each colour denoting different grade of behaviour in his cotton mill (white for excellent, yellow for good, blue for indifferent and black for bad). He was especially impressed with the way coloured blocks improved worker behaviour (French, 1987). In 1813, General Lewis Cass submitted to the war department an evaluation of each of his men though it was not clear how he did the evaluation. In the early 20th century, performance appraisal was mainly used in the army and governmental organizations (Devries et al, 1981).

Nzuve (2007) defines Performance appraisal as a means of evaluating employees work performance over a given period of time. It is the formal assessment and rating of individuals by their managers at, usually, an annual review (Armstrong, 1999). In 1996, Cole identified two types of appraisal as formal and informal. Formal appraisal is the systematic and planned assessment of employees in a more orderly and rational way as opposed to the informal which is the evaluation of performance of an appraisee by his manager in the normal course of work, is of an adhoc nature and is as determined by intuitive feelings as by factual evidence of results. It is a natural by product of the day to day relationship between the manager and the appraisee.

Dessler (2008) states that it is any procedure that involves setting work standards, assessing employee's actual performance relative to standards set, providing feedback with the aim of motivating, eliminating performance deficits and reinforcing exceptional performance. It is a crucial activity of the personnel function and management of the human resources and has roots in three well substantiated psychological principles:-people work, learn and achieve more when they are given adequate feedback as to how they are performing (the feedback being either negative or positive thus reinforcing expected behaviour and performance), having clear attainable goals which should be measurable and quantifiable and involvement in the setting of tasks. Performance appraisal has progressed over the years from the traditional one sided, once a year, top down and largely discredited bureaucratic system owned by the personnel department to the more modern participative approach of performance management.

The process of designing an appraisal system should be all inclusive involving all managers, employees, human resource professionals, internal customers as well as external customers in making decisions about measurement content (what can be measured is work content in such generic dimensions as quality, quantity, timeliness of work either in terms of developing one's competencies or the achievement of one's goals based on actual work duties), measurement of the appraisal process (containing three steps: defining the job, appraising performance and giving feedback) and defining the ratee, rater and administrative characteristics (Dessler, 2008). The starting point should be the strategic plan and objectives of the organization as the appraisal system should be consistent with the overall goals of the organization (Bernard, 1998).

The control of entry and residence of foreigners into Kenya dates back to the Immigration Ordinance of 1906 which sought to restrict the influx of foreigners and was in force until 1940. The issuance of permits was further tightened by the Immigration ordinance of 1948 which instituted a similar system of passes and permits as are now in force. The present Immigration Department was carved out of the police department in 1950 and its basis was the Immigration ordinance of August 1948. The immigration ordinances were revised in 1962 and 1964 and later

became the Immigration Act. The department is headed by the Director of Immigration Services formally the Principal Immigration Officer assisted by immigration officers formerly the statutory board.

At independence, the Department was placed in the Ministry of home affairs and later moved to the office of the President. The department is now under the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons together with the Departments of Refugees, Civil Registration, National Registration Bureau and Administration and there is expectation that the Department will become an autonomous body to better serve its mandate (Department of Immigration Report, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

One of the tools of performance measurement that has been used in the past is performance appraisal that has been reintroduced in a new format and design and implementation within the Immigration Department. The success of an appraisal system depends on how it is perceived by the employees for whom it is intended among other factors. Negative perception may result from the fact that performance management systems including performance appraisal in the public sector have not always been priority concerns and hence have not received the attention they deserve.

Just like other management practices, staff appraisal systems should be dynamic. In practice, at the department, the bureaucratic red tape and procedures do not allow for the constant reviewing of the appraisal tools so as to conform to organizational changes. There is continuous need for reviewing and updating the appraisal system to conform to organizational changes and the current management practices which has not been the case at the department and indeed the public service. The department has recently adopted a new performance appraisal system which will allow for greater involvement of both ratees and raters.

The researcher was not aware of any other study in this area for the Department of Immigration and believes it is critical for management to know how staff perceive the performance appraisal system.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to assess employee's perception of performance appraisal in the Department of Immigration.

Contributions of the Study

The findings of this study would be of value and interest to various stakeholders.

- a) The Immigration Department will directly benefit as the findings when implemented will result in the improvement of performance appraisal thus improved performance.
- b) The Kenyan Government will benefit as a result of improved implementation of performance appraisal resulting in improved service delivery and productivity in the public sector.
- c) The general public will benefit through improved service delivery due to a better motivated workforce.
- d) Other researchers and students of human resource management, public sector in Kenya and performance appraisal will find this study a useful guide in carrying out more research in this area

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The case study method was chosen in order to allow an in-depth investigation of the Department of Immigration as it is fairly representative of public institutions in Kenya. The study was based at the Departments Headquarters at Nyayo house and at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport which were the two stations in Nairobi. The two stations had a total of 1460 employees who were undergoing appraisal at the time of the study. A sample of 158 employees was selected as per table 1

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Group to be sampled	population	Sample	Percentage
Heads of departments/Shifts in Charge	14	14	100%
Immediate Supervisors	460	46	10%
Officers other than Heads of Departments in each grade	580	58	10%
Other supervisors and staff	406	40	10%
Total	1,460	158	

Source; Employee Data Records at Immigration Department

Respondents Characteristics

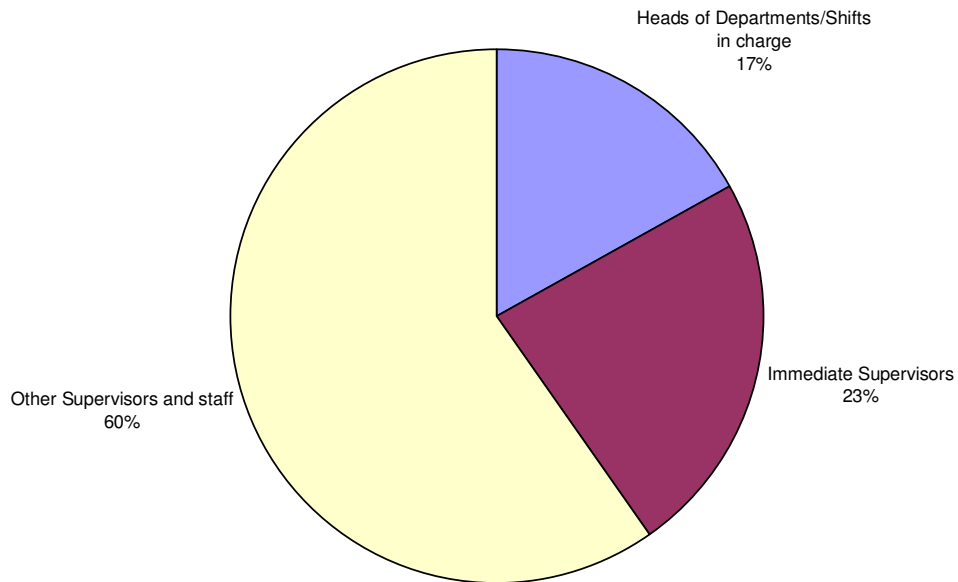
The response rate was 92% with a grade distribution as in Table 2

Table 2: Category of the respondents

	Job Group of Respondent	No. Of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Job group H(Lowest Job group undertaking performance appraisal)	27	19%
2	Between Job Group I and L	98	67%
3	Job Group M and above	20	14%
	Total	145	100%

Of this, 17% were Heads of Departments/shifts in charge, 60% were other supervisors and staff while 23% were immediate supervisors as per figure 2

Figure 2: Job Function of respondents



Respondent's level of education and length of service

Performance appraisal in the Department was implemented for Job Group H and above at the time of the study. Among the respondents, all had Diploma, first Degree or Masters with 75% having Degree, 11% Masters, 14% Diplomas and none had just a secondary certificate or doctoral.

Majority of the respondents had over 2 years experience.

Table 3: Respondents Highest level of education and length of service

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage	Length of service	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	-	0	Less than 2 years	12	8%
Diploma	22	15%	2-5 years	68	46%
Bachelors	110	75%	6-10 years	50	34%
Masters	14	10%	More than 10 years	16	12%
Doctoral	-	0%			
Total	146	100%		146	100%

Data Analysis and Findings

Understanding of the performance appraisal

The respondents understood performance appraisal with 13% having very good understanding, 36% had good understanding and 6% low understanding. 67% of the respondents agreed that performance appraisal is a critical component of the overall human resource management function at the Department, 14% thought it added no significant value while 19% were not sure of the importance or lack thereof.

Objectives of performance appraisal

The guide to performance appraisal for the public service identified objectives of Performance appraisal system as linking individual performance with organizational performance and goals, enabling supervisors and appraises to continually assess work progress, assess on a timely basis the learning and developmental needs of staff, promote accountability in the public service, promote communication, encourage continuous feedback between appraisee and supervisor, set the basis for which the officers performance is monitored, improve quality of work through better planning and fair participation in appraisal and provide information for decision making

on administrative and human resource issues such as renewal of contracts, promotions, delegation, training, deployment, reward and sanctions. (Guide to performance appraisal in the public service, 2005).

The respondents were asked to what extent they perceived performance appraisal achieved these objectives

Table 4: Objectives of Performance Appraisal

Objectives of Performance Appraisal	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linking individual performance with organizational performance and goals	3.9	0.32
Enabling supervisors and appraises to continually assess work progress	3.1	0.88
Assess on a timely basis the learning and developmental needs of staff	3.1	0.87
Promote communication	2.9	0.65
Encourage continuous feedback between appraisee and supervisor	2.7	1.12
Set the basis for which the officers performance is monitored	2.6	0.67
Improve quality of work through better planning and fair participation in appraisal	2.5	0.71
Provide information for decision making on administrative and human resource issues such as renewal of contracts, promotions, delegation, training, deployment, reward and sanctions.	2.0	1.16
Promote accountability in the Department	1.2	0.64

From the results in Table 4, performance appraisal has to a large extent linked individual performance with organizational performance and goals, enabled supervisors and appraises to continually assess work progress and allowed for assessment on a timely basis the learning and developmental needs of staff. It has however failed to promote accountability in the department while it has only to a slight extent Promoted communication, encouraged continuous feedback between appraisee and supervisor, set the basis for which the officer’s performance is monitored and improved quality of work through better planning and fair participation in appraisal

Implementation of new appraisal system

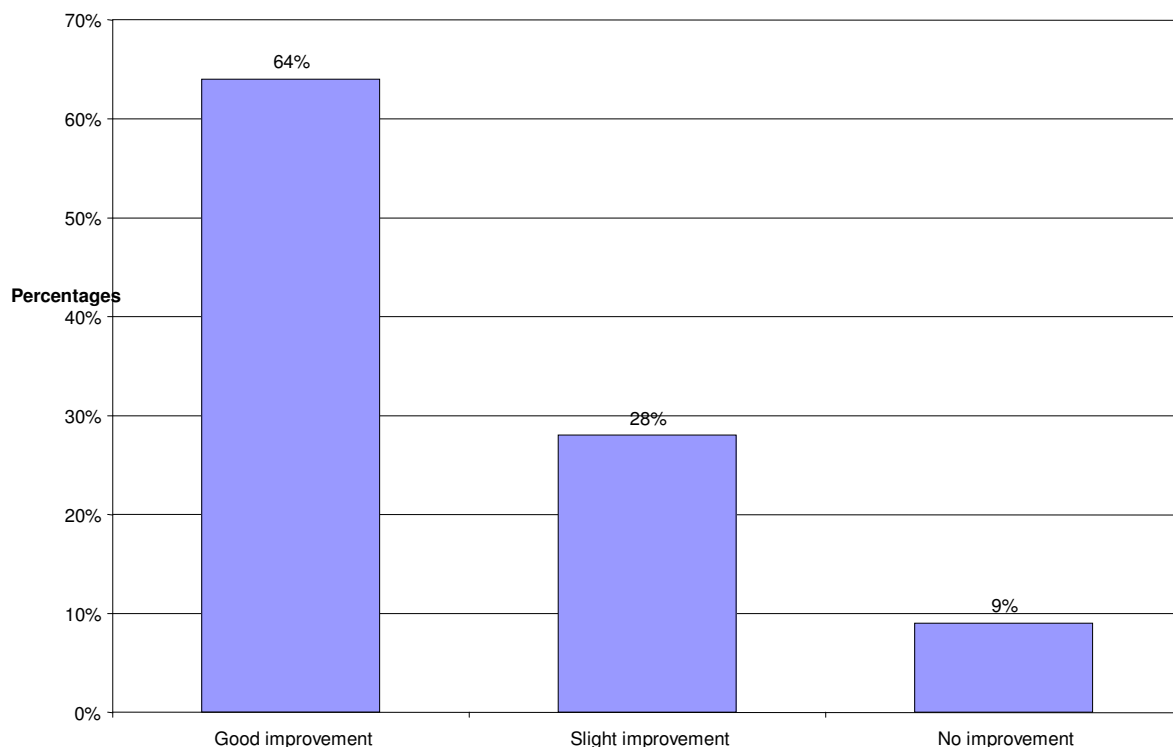
94% of the respondents had a fairly good idea of what necessitated the change over from the old appraisal system, had been advised that the change was coming, and actually supported the change and were not caught unawares with only 6% being unaware or not supporting the change. Of the 94%, 92% had ownership of the system, feeling it had improvement not matter how slight while 8% perceived the system was being imposed on them either by top management,

Directorate of Personnel Management or both.2% of the respondents were not really sure that the change would make any change at all.

Training

Respondents were asked whether they had been trained as a direct result of skills gap identified from performance appraisal process.64% had witnessed a good improvement in the training programme as a result of performance appraisal, 28% had not while 9% had were not sure.

Figure 3: Training as a result of performance appraisal



Familiarity with the Performance Appraisal tool: Gp 247(Revised 2006)

100% of the respondents were aware of the new GP 247 forms for appraisal with only 94% being fully familiar with the form.46% felt that the steps provided in the form for completing the form were exhaustive while 28% indicated that it was important to include a preamble to set the pace for filling the form. 26% felt that the procedure for filling the form should be incorporated at the beginning of the various sections of the form as opposed to the beginning of the form to avoid the inconvenience of going back and forth while filling the form.

98% of the respondents had no problem filling section 1 on personal particulars though 82% indicated they usually had to consult on the period under review. Section 2, on departmental objectives, to be filled by the appraisee as agreed with the supervisor posed no challenges to

100% of the respondents as these objectives were derived from the performance contract of the section and from the department's strategic plan. Section 3, on performance targets which were derived from departmental objectives and that were completed at the beginning of the appraisal period posed challenges to 94% of the appraisals and supervisors who admitted to copying from previous years forms and each other and guessing as well as modification of the actual truth to reflect impressive targets on paper. Only 6% of the respondents, with 5% of these appraisers, admitted to knowing how to derive targets that are suitable, realistic, measurable, achievable and timed.

On measurement of actual results achieved using the rating scale provided, 90% of the respondents admitted to fabricating figures especially as performance appraisal was not a core activity of the department and thus there was little or no time to properly measure or investigate the results submitted. Values or staff competency, in section 5(a) filled by the supervisor after discussion with the appraisee, was challenging to 87% of the respondents as the values were subjective and difficult to measure especially integrity, respect for national diversity as well as patriotism. Section 5(b) to 9 had between 88% to 96% support from the respondents except section 6 (a), midyear review as most of the respondents had never participated in this.

Performance appraisal interview

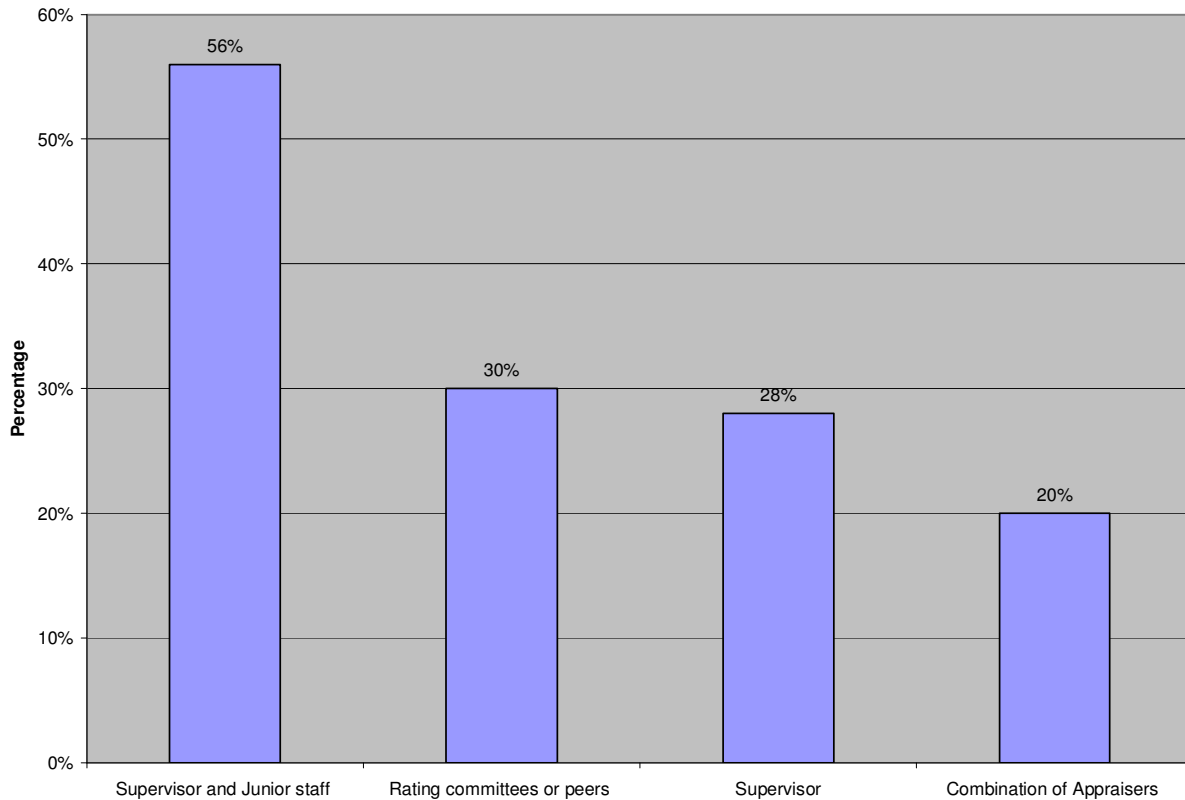
Only 12% of the respondent group had ever participated in an appraisal interview. Of the 12%, majority felt that they were ineffective and uncomfortable and would hesitate to carry out an interview in future. 88% blamed the formal uneasy working relationship between appraisers and supervisors that did not allow for free constructive interview while 63% felt that lack of time availability was the reason why appraisal interviews though important was not carried out.

Appraisals and Appraisers

The scope of application for performance appraisal is limited to officers in job group H and above in the department as well as the larger public service. 37% of the respondents felt that performance appraisal should be extended all job groups, 48% felt that there was no need for the extension as it would just add to the bureaucracy while 15% were uncertain on whether this would be advantageous or not.

The appraisal system had only the immediate supervisor as an appraiser. 56% of the respondents felt that over and above the manager or supervisor, upward appraisal should be allowed to enable rating of the supervisors while 30% preferred rating committees and peers to allow for more objectivity, 28% preferred the supervisor to remain as the appraiser while 20% preferred a combination of all or some of the above methods.

Figure 4: Appraisers Preference



Appeals procedure

The appraisal process has only the second supervisor as an appeal option. 68% of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of any appeal procedure embedded in the appraisal system, 27% were aware though they had never witnessed its application while 5% knew of it and had seen it being utilized with the appraisee eventually being victimised. 91% would hesitate to use this appeal option as they were not sure it would work and for fear of reprisals while 9% would use it but only when the appraisal outcome was severe enough to warrant such an action.

Feedback and Confidentiality of performance appraisal

The feedback received from appraisal was generally not productive according to 94% of the respondent group as there was no joint goal setting, problem solving and the forms were not filled together as envisaged in the performance appraisal system with only 6% feeling that the feedback was constructive to any extent. 48% felt that there was a level of confidentiality

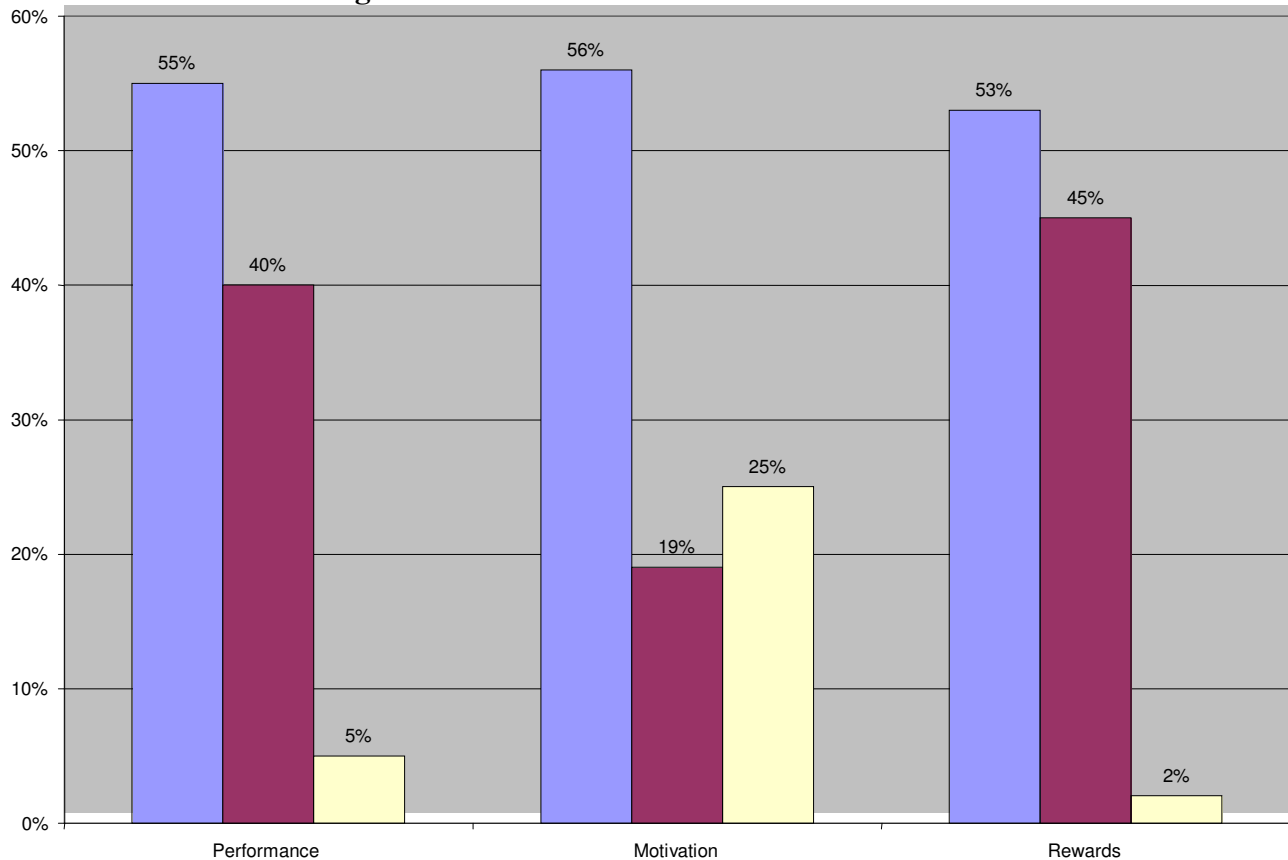
afforded by appraisal, 34% were not sure while the rest believed that there was no confidentiality.

Relationship between performance appraisal and performance, motivation and rewards management

55% of the respondents felt that there was no correlation between appraisal and performance. The targets set at the beginning of the period were forgotten as the year progressed and in most cases are set at the end of the review year while the performance indicators for actual results are fabricated, 40% were not sure whether there was any relationship. 5% indicated a positive relationship between performance appraisal and performance.

56% of the respondents felt that there was no relationship between appraisal and motivation, 19% were sceptical that performance appraisal could actually motivate them while 25% were positive if had improved their motivation. 73% indicated had no direct relation with either reward or sanction management, 25% were undecided while 2% felt that appraisal had been used to recognise or sanction performance.

Figure 5: Relationship between performance appraisal and performance, motivation and reward or sanction management



Guide to the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) in the department

A guide of the PAS GP 247 (Revised 2006) had been developed and launched jointly with the form. 15% of the respondents group were aware of its existence with majority of these respondents being in top management while 85% had never seen or heard of a guide and only followed the steps for filling the form at the beginning of the form.

Table 5: Awareness and knowledge of the PAS guide

Awareness and knowledge of the PAS guide	Frequency	Percentage
Aware and knowledgeable	24	15%
Not aware and knowledgeable	134	85%

Conclusion and Recommendations

Among the objectives of PAS as identified in the guide, only linking individual performance with organizational performance and goals, enabling supervisors and appraisees to continually assess work progress, assessing on a timely basis the learning and developmental needs of staff were seen as applicable while the rest, for instance, promoting accountability and communication and encouraging continuous feedback between appraisee and supervisor, setting the basis on which the officers performance is monitored, improving the quality of work through better planning and fair participation in appraisal and providing information for decision making on administrative and human resource issues needed to be strengthened.

It is also important to ensure that training needs or skills gaps identified from the appraisal process are addressed in a timely manner and feedback given as well to improve job performance. Training also needed to be done on how to conduct the appraiser interview and mechanisms put in place to ensure that this appraisal interview takes place. Greater sensitization was also required to ensure authenticity of results so that both all parties of the appraisal process jointly set targets at the beginning of the year, conduct continuous and midyear review and at the end of the year objectively report on actual results. Performance should be continuously monitored with milestones documented throughout the year to ensure adherence to the targets set with any negative deviations corrected in time.

Some parts of the GP 247 form needed revision especially the values or staff competencies. The feedback and confidentiality of the process also needed strengthening to ensure that the process has maximum benefits for the organization. The limited scope of application to only certain Job groups needed further investigation as the respondents were undecided on whether appraisal should be extended at all job groups. It is recommended that a different form that is not as intensive as the one currently in use be developed for other groups not captured and the various shortcomings of the current appraisal system addressed to make it more meaningful.

There was need to link the appraisal process more directly with reward or sanctions thus ensuring greater motivation. The guide to the appraisal system in the public service needed to be

further developed and availed to all appraisees and appraisers especially in electronic form in various websites easily accessible to all parties.

To move efficiently into the future, it is imperative to look into the past and learn as well as build on it. The form should have an inbuilt component capturing details of last year's performance. It is also important to develop the system online where parties are able to log in and fill the appraisal forms online. This would ensure cost cutting and creation of a database where it is possible to derive management reports and monitor indicators and performance easily.

The process also needs to have checks and balances to make it more meaningful. For instance, the targets set should be scrutinized by a third party, preferably a senior person, to ensure they are SMART and in line with organizational objectives. The appeals procedure should also be strengthened as it is difficult especially in a paramilitary organization like the Immigration Department to refer to the second supervisor for arbitration. Appraisees prefer to keep quiet when confronted with a difficult supervisor since no station is permanent and either party will be transferred soon enough.

Non measurable activities like attending to clients well, answering phones with courtesy and providing excellent services should be incorporated into performance appraisal. In the event of an appraisees transfer, promotion or reassignment of duties, the performance should be assessed on a pro rata basis. Upward appraisal should also be integrated into PAS to allow appraisees give feedback on whether there were any helpful discussions, effective guidance, leadership and direction and cordial relations between the supervisor and appraisee during the period under review. The form should have a section allowing for either reward or sanction since this should be the end result of appraisal. The reward may be some days leave, training or even financial and must be approved by the authorized officer. On the other hand, poor performance may be sanctioned by either a warning or in extreme cases, suspension or dismissal.

Suggestions for further research

Suggested areas for further study include

1. How to make the appraisal interview more comfortable and practical
2. How to measure and include in appraisal intangible action results for instance quality customer care.
3. How to implement Online Performance appraisal.

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