



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MAURITIUS: DOES IT SERVE ITS PURPOSE?

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Abstract:

This paper examined the implementation of the performance management system (PMS) in state secondary schools. It investigated about the motives for the implementation in schools and its effectiveness. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample size of 100 educators from 5 state secondary schools. Individual interviews were also carried out with 5 school principals to gather information about the implementation of PMS in state secondary schools. The mixed method approach highlighted the motives for the introduction of PMS in schools and the perceptions of the participants of the effectiveness of its implementation. This study reveals that educators do not have a positive view about PMS to improving their performance in teaching. However, principals have rather positive attitudes to the implementation of PMS. The findings have proved to be mixed. For example, though educators approved the implementation of this tool, yet they are stressed and they are frustrated. It hampers collaborative work and the sharing of good practice among educators. This affects the school effectiveness. It is recommended that there is an urgent need to review the process to ensure that the principles of PMS are taken into consideration for it to be successfully implemented in schools in Mauritius.

Keywords: performance management system, implementation, schools

1. Introduction

Education is defined as the processes which transmit the relevant knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, aptitudes and practices of culture in order to facilitate the cognitive, emotional and social skills of the students, and hence their moral thinking, feelings, actions and reactions (Das, 2017; Belle, 2018). The sustainable development goal (SDG) 4 stipulates that countries should lay emphasis on quality education so that children may

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grow into responsible citizens for the development of the economy. Indeed, the quality of education should be the heart of education (UNESCO, 2011). Educators are the providers of education, and therefore, they have the responsibility of transmitting quality education. One of the methods for the education authorities to ensure that students are receiving it is through educator appraisal and performance management system. Performance management system (PMS) is designed and incorporated in the education sector to act as a parameter to evaluate the educators' performance. It is also designed to identify the means to achieve the goals of the organisation through continuous assessment and feedback; this may result to performance improvement (Huprich, 2008). Performance management system is comprehensively defined as *"a continuous process of improving performance by setting individual and team goals which are aligned to the strategic goals of the organisation, planning performance to achieve the goals, reviewing and assessing progress and developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of people"* (Armstrong, 2015).

The performance management system was introduced in Mauritius in 2006 in three administrative departments of the public sector on a pilot basis; it was successfully implemented as there was positive feedback of stakeholders (Pay Research Bureau, 2003). Following its success, it was implemented in twenty-five ministries in 2010 (Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, 2013). It was in 2008 that the PMS was introduced in state secondary schools on a pilot study to measure educator effectiveness. After the pilot study, it was implemented in all state schools across the country. It was being introduced along with the continual use of the Annual Confidential Report (ACR). The ACR was in practice as a tool to measure employee performance since 1963.

The ACR, however, was highly criticised because it did not help to improve performance. It was simply used to rate the individual employee's performance. There was a need to introduce a new system to assess employee performance because the ACR system was obsolete. It was a closed system that was a unilateral process, it was too subjective and employees did not receive feedback after the appraisal process (Sharma, Sharma & Agarwal, 2016). It should be emphasised that globalisation was an additional drive for the introduction of the performance management system (Ramguttty-Wong, 2014). The government of Mauritius aimed at building up a civil service labour force that is dynamic, forward-looking and proactive in doing their tasks; this would help achieve the aims and objectives of the government in having a sustainable development (Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, 2013). The system was imposed by the Pay Research Bureau, through the government, onto all the ministries for the performance appraisal of the civil servants. Since its inception and initial year of implementation of the PMS, the researcher witnessed various forms of perceptions of the new system among educators. Thus study examined the motives behind its implementation and the extent to which it is effective from the educators' views (appraisees') and the principals' views (appraisers').

2. Literature Review

The performance management system has been used primarily in business organisations. Following its success in the business world, the education system has adopted it in the management of teachers' performance as well. It is important in this study to determine the reasons why it has been introduced in schools. The motives for introducing and implementing this performance management system are numerous. Some of them are discussed here.

According to Philip Bulawa's study of the implementation of performance management system at schools in 2010, there is improved planning at school level as planning makes people more conscious and they know they must establish goals and meet them too (Bulawa, 2011). Besides, there is better accountability in terms of clarity and transparency since staff is held accountable for their performance. The performance management system checks and reviews performances on a regular basis and thus any under-performance issues are identified and addressed objectively. This is consistent with the view of Prahalad and Bettis (1986) that one of the motives of performance management is to differentiate between poor and good performance. Performance based budgeting, pay for performances are part of performance management system (Heinrich, 2000).

Performance management system is not limited only in assessing staff performances, but it also involves monitoring, and giving feedback. It is a continuous process and it influences the individual's behaviour for the achievement of the organisational goals. The appraiser should give at least one feedback to the appraisee after each appraisal (Van der Walt, 2004). As a matter of fact, Sangwani (2003) pointed out that employees are involved in improving the effectiveness of the organisation. Marlinga (2006) claimed that constructive feedback is needed and wanted by the employees.

When there is effective communication, there is likely to have coordinated results (Armstrong 1995). The performance management system allows the organisation and the employees to develop together by having a good communication, which ultimately helps to improve its organizational performances. According to Van der Waldt (2004), a two-way communication between the appraiser and the appraisee promotes good communication and improves work performances. Indeed, communication is an important principle of performance management as it improves organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Aguinis (2011) outlines that the strategic purpose of any organisation is to help the top level management to meet its strategic business goals by linking organisational objectives with the individual's objectives. Secondly, there is the administrative purpose, meaning that the rewarding systems will be based on the information yielding from the performance management system. Besides, performance management system information assists in HR important decisions such as promotion, increment, or other benefits. Similarly, the information can be used for litigation if employees enter a case against the appraiser for unfair appraisal or practicing discrimination.

Performance management system serves as a tool to make the individuals aware of how they are doing their work and they are provided with assistance where improvement is needed (Aguinis, 2011). In addition, using performance management information as development plan helps staff in improving their skills. From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the performance management system is an important tool for an organization and that its implementation may drive the latter towards more efficiency and better employee performance. Lawler (2003) and Halachmi (2005) summarise the motives of performance management system as follows:

“A performance management system should include, motivating performance, helping individuals developing their skills, building a performance culture, determining who should be promoted, eliminating the poor performers, and helping implement business strategies.”

According to Wiener and Jacobs (2011), for teacher evaluation in service of increasing their effectiveness the public school system need to address a set of inter-dependent responsibilities. These comprise the setting up of clear expectations and measurement of structures and processes to conduct significant evaluations and to act on the information that has been produced; the development of a continuous improvement process that gives developmental guidance to educators and assesses the efficacy of the assistance; the implementation of systematic reforms that modernises the other organisational aspects to support this work. Wiener and Jacobs (2011), in their study, have outlined the principles of a comprehensive and effective performance management system in the education context and it includes the following:

- a) The vision and educational purpose shall guide in designing and implementing the system.
- b) Measuring the matched goals and the purposes of the system.
- c) The responsibility and the risk are along the system, not only down into the classrooms.
- d) The educational and the political leaders shall commit to collaboration and to communication in the system.
- e) There should be continuous improvement throughout the system.
- f) The effectiveness of the teacher shall implicate every box in the organizational chart.

Egan (1995) identified that performance management system should not just be a system of control because employees want direction, encouragement and freedom to do their work. Strebler (2001) recommended some principles that are required for performance management system to work effectively which comprises of having clear objectives and metrics for success criteria and it should be designed with the involvement of the concerned persons and must be understandable and simple to operate. All the employees should have a clear sight of their goals and that of the organisation. The focus should be on improving performance and role clarity and there should be a good training and development infrastructure. There should be continuous

review and a transparent link to reward. Armstrong and Baron (1998) added to the principles of having a focus on the development of the individual and not the pay. Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994) suggested that there should be support and commitment from the top level management of the system. Winstanley and Stuart-Smith (1996) added the ethical principles among the criteria for performance management system to be effective.

3. Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a mixed approach was used to collect data about the motives for the implementation of the performance management system in Mauritius and to determine the effectiveness of its implementation in schools. Mixed methods provide a deeper understanding of the performance management system as a process and the extent to which is being successfully implemented in schools, on the basis of its underlying principles (Creswell Plano-Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). Better insights into the implementation of the system are obtained from the mixed methods as the validity of the research findings is enhanced when the researcher uses them (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Quantitative data analysed the facts objectively while qualitative information strived to help understand the views and meanings of the participants about the implementation of the performance management system in schools in Mauritius.

Convenience purposive sampling method was used for the purpose of data collection as it confined to those who have the desired information, either because they are the key informants or they conform to some criteria set by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Lodico, Spaulding & Voegle, 2010). The goal of the researcher was not to obtain a large and representative sample, but rather to obtain sufficient but the richest and most detailed information which help to find answers to the research questions. For this study, the sample is a small proportion of the population selected for data analysis and interpretation.

For the quantitative study, a pilot study was conducted with a representative sample of 20 educators and for the qualitative study; the semi-structured interview is carried with 2 school principals.

A structured questionnaire was distributed to one hundred secondary school educators and individual interviews were carried with five secondary school principals in the Flacq district of Mauritius. The response rate was 82%.

4. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to assess the implementation of the performance management system in secondary schools. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (a) To analyse the motives of the implementation of the performance management system in schools;

- (b) To determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the performance management system in schools.

5. Research Findings

The findings of the current study are discussed in this section. The motives for the implementation of the performance management system (PMS) in schools were to enhance the accountability of educators in terms of their practices, to provide feedback to educators about their performance, to communicate educator performance and how to improve it, to provide for professional development, and to monitor educator's performance in schools in Mauritius.

5.1 The motives for the implementation of PMS in schools in Mauritius

5.1.1 Accountability

50% of the respondents claimed that they are more accountable as the performance management system brings more clarity and transparency in line with their performance. In fact, 46.3% agreed to this while only 3.7% of them strongly agreed. The mean value (3.26) implies that the respondents are neutral to agree to the fact that they must be accountable for their performance at school. Principals A and B opined to the fact that educators are more accountable. On this issue, Principal B stated, *"Educators fall under my responsibility and I am the appraiser, so they must be accountable to me."*

However, Principal C contradicted this finding by pointing out, *"Educator accountability level depends on the attributes of the educators who may know higher officials than the principal to whom they are accountable and they are friends."* Also, 43.9% of educators agreed that PMS allows identifying poor and good performance and only 32.9% of them concluded that underperformance issues are addressed in an objective manner.

5.1.2 Providing Feedback to the Educators

The appraiser should give feedback to educators in the implementation of performance management system. However, 57.3% of the educators agreed that PMS assesses only their performance and 54.9% of them agreed that PMS encourages communication between the educator and the principal, who is the appraiser. This implies that PMS is not a good tool for giving feedback to educators (Mean varies between 3.29 and 3.4), which means that educators do not get the most appropriate feedback on their performance as they regard little communication exists to give educator feedback. These findings from the educators contrasted those given by the selected principals. They all concurred that they give feedback at least three times annually with the implementation of PMS. Principal A shared the view: *"I believe that it is my duty and responsibility to give feedback. However, the right feedback is not given to educators."* Principal C justified this view about the feedback by the latter by stating, *"If feedback is genuinely given, I may be in trouble. Feedback is dangerous."* Van der Walt (2004) claimed that the appraiser must give feedback to the appraise at least once.

5.1.3 Communication

Communication is used as a tool for feedback but also to increase the educator performance and hence the school performance in terms of their students' academic results. However, this study found that most educators do not agree with this assertion found in the literature. Only 30.5% of the educators and 21.9% of them consider that PMS contributes to an increase in communication about the educator performance and the school performances (mean of 2.59 and 2.72 respectively). The very low mean values clearly imply that PMS has a very low positive influence in communicating the educator performance and the school performance. The selected principals in this study came to the consensus that they discuss the criteria for assessing educator performance when they do the PMS. Yet, Principal C complained, *"PMS is not implemented in the proper way and educators do not want to improve as they always use a defensive mode when they are asked to improve their performance."* This finding is inconsistent with Armstrong (2015) who asserts that there are coordinated results when there is effective communication.

5.1.4 Performance Related Pay

36.3% of the respondents agreed that the rewarding system in the education sector is based on the outcome of the PMS while 25.4% of them disagreed with this motive of PMS. Besides, 31.6% agreed that the Public Service Commission (PSC) uses the PMS for their promotion or for their annual incremental credit. Both statements highlighted that many educators perceived that the outcome of PMS does not really influence their pay. Their low value of mean (2.94 and 3.06 respectively) imply that the educators do not have a clear cut view of this motive of the PMS as 42.7% of them have no idea of the importance of PMS to the PSC in relation to their promotion or their increments. Principal B acknowledged the absence of the link of pay to performance, and convincingly asked himself the pertinent question about the motive of the PMS: *"Who has not got his/her increment since the PMS implementation in schools in Mauritius?"* The findings are not consistent with Aguinis (2011) who stated that the educators are rewarded based on the outcome of the PMS about his/her performance.

5.1.5 Professional Development

Professional development is one of the motives for the implementation of the PMS. The study found that PMS does not allow educators to know about their performance and they do not have opportunities for professional development based on their annual PMS report. Indeed, 53.7% of the respondents do not consider the PMS as a tool for their professional improvement and development (mean 3.07). 46.3 of them do not even know about their performance despite the PMS implementation (mean =2.74). This finding is in congruence with the views of the principals in the interviews. Principal B, C and E concurrently pointed out that they are not change agent for educators to improve their performance in the process of the PMS. In this regard, Principal B reasoned: *"I ask myself whether we provide for professional development to our educators, whether continuous professional development exists in schools."* Principal E regretfully

added: *"I may identify a poor performing educator, but I do not have the authority to send him/her for training."*

5.1.6 Monitoring

Only 35.3% of the respondents considered the PMS to be a useful tool to monitor their performance whereas 45.1% of them claimed that it does not help monitor their performance at school. This is reflected in the low mean value of only 2.87. In contrast to the findings from the questionnaires, the interviews with the selected principals revealed that the latter came to the consensus that PMS is used primarily to monitor the performance of educators. Principal D supported this consensus by the statement: *"Yes, I use PMS to gauge the performance of my teachers, how effective teaching and learning is taking place and to keep track of the input from the teacher."* Besides, though Principal C agreed with Principal D, yet she added that, *"PMS does not bring any change in the students' results in examinations."* The finding on monitoring educators' performance is mixed in the sense that the sample educators are not of the same views as the principals. They are partly inconsistent with Armstrong (2005) who claims that one of the motives of PMS is monitoring the employee performance.

5.2 The Effectiveness of the Performance Management system in Mauritius

The study also examined the extent to which the implementation of PMS in schools is effective in influencing the educator's performance. It was found that it discourages teamwork and sharing of innovative ideas; though pay is considered to be related to work performance, high performing educators do not get a higher salary; feedback from the PMS exercise promotes a greater commitment from educators; PMS does not improve the educators' performance; with PMS, there is no scope for professional development in schools. The study found that the implementation of PMS in schools is ineffective.

5.2.1 Performance Related Pay

One of the principles of the effectiveness PMS is linking performance to pay. 43.9% of the educator agreed that linking performance management to pay makes them frustrated. However, this high percentage of 30.5% of educators who are neutral about the statement is striking. This implies that it is a debated issue of the PMS. Besides, this principle of effectiveness discourages teamwork and sharing of ideas. 46.3% of the respondents agreed that PMS is a disincentive for educators to work in close collaboration as a team and to share ideas concerning effective teaching and learning. The mean value 3.26 is a clear indication of the ineffectiveness of PMS when it is linked to pay in Mauritius. All the selected principals argued that though pay is related to performance, yet high performing educators do not get higher pay. The statement of Principal C summarised well this state of affairs: *"PMS in terms of pay or increment is biased and false. If you rate less than 2 or more than 4, you will have to explain. So, normally the principal gives the average of 3 to every educator for him/her to receive one annual increment."* This implies that performance is not done in practice for reasons such as *"to avoid problem or to*

make teachers happy." (Principals B and C). These findings are supported by Chubb, Reilly and Brown (2011) who ascertain that not paying according to performance promote a "felt fair" perception of equity among employee as otherwise it tends to be discriminatory and it demotivates most of the employees at the expense of a few high performers who are highly paid based on their performance.

5.2.2 Continuous Review

Continuous review is another important principle of effectiveness of PMS. 53% of the educators in the survey acknowledged that the principal gives them feedback after the PMS exercise, but only 34.2% of them considered that PMS makes them more committed to their tasks. This implies that the feedback given by the principal is, to a smaller extent, effective on the educator performance. Principal C justified this lack of effectiveness as follows: *"Teachers perceive feedback from the principal in a negative way,"* despite the fact that *"Feedback is given at the planning stage, mid-term review and final step for grade agreement"* (Principal E). So, the interviews revealed that there is performance review only at three stages of performance management; it is not done in a continuous manner throughout the academic year. Principals give the least amount of feedback on educators' performance. Principal C lamented in this regard: *"If you give the right feedback, it is not taken to be something good. If you say something which critics performance...err...the educators will react negatively. So, I give feedback that pleases them."* The findings in this study are consistent with Van der Walt (2004) that it is important to give the appraise at least one feedback.

5.2.3 Performance Improvement

This study found that educators are rather neutral to the extent to which PMS brings about an improvement in educator performance (Mean = 3.01). 36.6% of the respondents agreed that PMS helps educators identify areas of improvement in their teaching, in contrast to 35.4% who disagreed with this principle. So, the opinions of the sampled educators are almost shared equally on this principle of PMS effectiveness. Nevertheless, the interview with the principals revealed that there is no performance improvement with the implementation of PMS in schools. On this analysis, Principal C succinctly stated: *"You can have any statistics about how many underperformers have been identified and how much improvement we have got and whether there is a change in their performance. But this does not mean exist!"* The findings are in contradiction with Strebler (2001) who asserted that the focus of PMs should be performance improvement.

5.2.4 Professional Development

Professional development of the employee remains the ultimate motive of the implementation of PMS and one of its main principles. The study found that PMS contributes to a lesser extent in developing the professional practice of educators. Indeed, only 23.2% of the respondents agreed that PMS assists in this respect, compared to 50.1% of them who disagreed with this principle of PMS in Mauritian schools. The low mean value of 2.63 reflects this lack of professional development of educators in

connection with PMS implementation. Consistently, Principal B affirmed: *“I ask myself whether we provide for professional development. Continuous professional development is in the form of mentoring and training, but the principals do not send poor performing teachers on training for improvement in their performance. They are not given the opportunity for continuous professional development. There is no follow up from the school to the Mauritius Institute of Education based on the PMS rate of educators for professional improvement. The PMS report is done only for administrative purpose and record.”* This finding is not in consistency with the study of Elliot (2015) who found that PMS assists in developing professional practice of educators.

The mean of the statements under the theme of PMS effectiveness is 3.20. This indicates that the implementation of PMS in Mauritian schools is ineffective. The most striking area of PMS is that no educator strongly agreed with the principle that PMS assists in professional development (Strongly Agree = Nil). Educators are rather frustrated and they decry that they cannot share ideas and work in team as a result of the implementation of PMS in schools.

6. Discussion

The implementation of the Performance Management system in Mauritius is found to be a practice that does not really meet its original motives, from the educators' perspectives. Though it makes their performance measurable in terms of clarity and transparency as the educators and the school head know what are the expectations about the former's tasks, yet they are neutral about whether they should be accountable for their performance. This is because they perceive that the school head, who is the appraiser, does not provide adequate constructive and developmental feedback about their performance. In Mauritius, feedback is provided only thrice a year – at the beginning of the financial year, at the mid-year when the educator's performance is reviewed and at the end of the year when the performance is measured for the purpose of the allocation of the annual salary increment. PMS does increase communication between the appraise and the appraiser in schools, but it does not lead to an improvement in educators' performance.

One of the main objectives of PMS is to motivate educators to be more effective, yet in the Mauritian context, there is no link between the educators' performance and the salary paid to them. Performance-related pay is one of the basic principles of PMS. However, the outcome of PMS in schools does not influence their pay. PMS does not really contribute to their ability to earn their annual increment not does it help them in having a job promotion. Besides, the Ministry of Education and the school head do not provide them with the opportunities to upgrade their performance in areas that have been identified by the PMS exercise. There are no provisions for professional development for the identified poor performers among educators. In fact, school heads in Mauritius do not have the authority or the power to provide or recommend training for their educators nor do they organise training workshops for them. Professional development is only provided by the designated Mauritius Institute of Education or the

Open University of Mauritius which are not the appraisers. So, it is evident that the provisions of educator professional development are centralised, whereas it should have been decentralised within the school; this would have given the school head the authority to decide, plan and organise such professional development workshops relevant to the needs of the educators and the school as an organisation.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it should be recommended that the number of performance reviews between the appraisee and the appraiser must be made more than thrice so that the performance of the educator is communicated to him/her more regularly. This will enhance the communication between the two and hence the educator would receive more and regular feedback about his/her performance, creating opportunities for the latter to take cognizance and find solutions to any weaknesses in performance.

Besides, to make the educators more accountable for their performance and hence making PMS more effective, the appraisal must be related to pay and promotion. This will ensure that educators perform better and will motivate them to give their best in the hope of having a job promotion or a higher salary increment every year.

The Ministry of Education should enforce the manner the PMS is implemented in schools. This will allow reducing subjectivity of the school head in appraising educators. An objective and impartial PMS is likely to increase job satisfaction and hence better performance.

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