

Study on Effectiveness of the Existing Performance Appraisal System for Academic Staff of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University

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Abstract- Performance appraisal systems (PAS) are required to be effective in order to improve and sustain the employee performance of an organization. Academic staff is considered as the most important stakeholders of a university. Their general objective is to generate knowledge and skills and disseminate them. They hold a very important place in modern society as they directly influence the personal development of the present and successive generations. Evaluation of performance and performance evaluation system for academic staff is a must because success of a university depends on its academia. This study aims to identify the effectiveness of the existing performance appraisal system for academic staff of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University. Independent variables used in the study are users' characteristics, system characteristics and perceived fairness. The existing performance appraisal system has not been evaluated for a long period. The study was conducted using quantitative methodology and was conducted at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU). Sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method. Stratified random sampling was used to choose the target group in the university. Stratified random sampling is an efficient research sampling design that provides more information in a given sample size. Before the actual study was conducted, a pilot study was carried out to test the validity and reliability of instrument used. For the actual study, the quantitative data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to the academic staff of KDU. The findings show that the existing PAS for academic staff is ineffective in terms of user's characteristics, perceived fairness and user's characteristics.

Index Terms- performance evaluation system, effectiveness, user's characteristics, system characteristics, perceived fairness, quantitative methodology, stratified random sampling, correlation

I. INTRODUCTION

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) was established in 1981. It is a state university directly governed by the Ministry of Defence. It is engaged in offering both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees to cadet officers and civil students on a payment basis. The KDU is also involved in Research and Development activities as well. The work force consists of civilian and military staff.

There are four categories of civilian staff, namely, Academic, Academic support, Administrative and Non Academic staff. Academic staff is directly involved in teaching and research

activities. The total number of civilian staff is 905. Among them 184 is academic staff.

Being the only defence university in Sri Lanka, it has a unique nature in administration and other work norms compared to other state universities. It adopts circulars and regulations of the University Grants Commission in relations to recruitment and compensation of civilian staff.

The university aims to be the best defence university in South East Asia. Therefore, it concerns on quality of the degree programmes. There is a high demand for academic positions at KDU. However, only the qualified staff is recruited on permanent basis. Further, it attracts retired academia from state universities in order to develop the KDU in par with other state universities.

The performance evaluation of academic staff at KDU is carried out by means of a format called "Annual Increment Form which is completed by the raters only. This evaluation is carried out for the sole purpose of granting the annual increment. However, it does not actually taking in to consideration of an individual staff member's performance progress during the period being evaluated. This format is distributed to the raters by the University administration in a confidential cover.

The components of the annual increment form are listed below; Section I –General information (name, division, date of birth, age, personal file number, designation, grade, date of appointment, salary scale, date of increment, increment rate, etc) Section II- E Bar and language proficiency requirement, details of last increment.

Section III- Leave particulars during the incremental year

Section IV – Report of the Head of the Department based on following criteria

a) Punctuality and attendance ,b) Work, c) Conduct, d) Application to work and industriousness, e) Output and quality of work, f) Reliability without supervision, g) Relationship with colleagues, h) Dealing with staff and public, i)Willingness to accept responsibility, j) Commendations/punishments in the incremental year

Section V– Recommendation and approval of the increment

The above criteria mentioned in section IV, is common to all academic, academic support, administrative, clerical and minor grade employees. There is no demarcation between the criteria of academia and that of other staff. In addition, specific criteria such as number of lectures conducted, number of practical classes conducted, extra activities and research components are not included. Hence, the rating has become more vague and problematic. Further there is no measurement scale for the criteria. Hence rating errors like halo effect, contrast errors,

recency bias, leniency bias, severity bias, self-serving bias is evident in many occasions. As a result both poor performers and high performers are rewarded in a similar manner. There is no effective link between the reward and the appraisal. Therefore, the existing PAS has unclear performance criteria and the format is identified as an ineffective rating instrument.

According to Opatha (2004) appraisal should focus on administration and development of the employee concerned. However, such achievements are not made in this appraisal system.

The process of performance appraisal lacks a proper structure and consistency with respect to organizational goals. Therefore, the higher management of KDU is in search of an effective PAS for the academic members of KDU. Thereby, it is expected to achieve academic excellence not only in the performance of the academia but also the KDU as a whole.

Lecturers are the most important staff category of a university. The same scenario applies to KDU. They are directly involved in producing quality graduates who will represent the quality of the KDU. In general, all the lecturers are engaged in lecturing the students. However, the magnitude of work conducted by an individual academic member is not measured by the current PAS. The performance measurements used in the existing PAS does not include number of lectures conducted, number of practical/assignment classes conducted, number of research publications etc. Hence, the academia who conduct large number of the lectures and those who do minimum number of lectures are rated and rewarded the same. An academia who has published so many publications per year is rated and rewarded the same compared to someone who has done minimum research.

Being a defence university, it has special activities which are unique to the KDU. There are so many development projects are carried out in the university and some of the consultancy services are obtained from suitably qualified academia on an honorary basis. Such academia has to sacrifice their personal time for such activities and sometime would hinder the research activities. Even then, they are rewarded the same.

Hence, there is a discussion going on in the university that the appraisal system has not been improved with the physical improvement of the university. Hence the need to revise the existing PAS is arisen.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The author considers the whole population of civil Academic Members of KDU in the year 2015. The total number of academic members is 166, ranging from Lecturer (Probationary), to Senior Lecturer Grade I from the population of the study. Assistant and Senior Assistant Librarians too are taken as academics as defined by the University Grants Commission.

The sample in this research was civilian academic staff members of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University with the number of 118 academia Sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method. Stratified random sampling method was used and a computer based random number generator was used to select the academic members at each level. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data by means of a structured pre tested questionnaire. Before the actual study was conducted, a pilot study was carried

out to test the validity and reliability of instrument used. For the actual study, the quantitative data was collected by distributing the questionnaire to the academic staff of KDU.

The items on the questionnaire are responded to using a 5- point Likert scale ranging from absolute disagreement, through disagree, neutral, agree, and ending in absolute agreement. Numerical ratings for the responses can be obtained by using values ranging from one point for “absolute disagreement” to five points for “absolute agreement”. The response scale is clearly ordinal. However the responses were assigned the values 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and averages were computed during the analysis.

The questionnaire consists of 58 questions. It measures the level of effectiveness of the PAS by the means of independent variables, user’s characteristics, perceived fairness and system characteristics.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Packages for the Social Scientist) statistical package which was set at the 0.05 significance level. The level of effectiveness of the existing PAS will be determined using the results of questionnaires in terms of user’s characteristics, perceived fairness and system characteristics.

All independent variables were given marks between one to five (1-5) for the analysis purpose. Allocation of marks for the respondent’s answers is as follows.

Table 01
Allocation of Marks

Answer	Marks
Absolute Disagreement	01
Disagreement	02
Neutral	03
Agree	04
Absolute Agreement	05

All data was analyzed by using mean value of the factors. Those mean values are interpreted as follows.

Table 02
Interpretation of Mean Values

Mean Value	Level of Effectiveness
Mean value between 4-5	Highly effective
Mean value between 3- 3.999	Effective
Mean value between 2 -2.999	Ineffective
Mean value below 2	Highly Ineffective

The level of effectiveness for each factor of the questionnaire was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The relationship of effectiveness of PAS and the variables; user’s characteristics, perceived fairness and systems characteristics were analyzed using Pearson’s correlation and coefficient. The statistically significant factors that affect effectiveness of PAS were determined by Analysis of variance test.

Statistical tests were carried out with the assumption that the population (N=166) was normally distributed. The response rate was 52.5%. The reliability test of Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the consistency. The alpha coefficient for the 58 items of the questionnaire was 0.986, suggesting that the items have very high internal consistency.

An assumption was made that all the survey participants answered the questions truthfully. Secondly, it is assumed that participant voluntarily expressed their views for the questionnaire. Thirdly, it is assumed that the responses collected during the relevant study period have provided a valid measure of the effectiveness of the existing PAS.

Data Analysis

The Level of Effectiveness of the Existing PAS in Terms of User's Characteristics, Perceived Fairness and System's Characteristics.

The total mean scores of the three main independent variables and eleven factors were compared in order to investigate how the respondents perceive each variable and factors with respect to the existing PAS.

Table 03
Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Level of effectiveness of PAS in Terms of User's Characteristics, Perceived Fairness and System's Characteristics. (N =62)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Level of Effectiveness
User's Characteristics	2.6163	.39940	Ineffective
Perceived Fairness	2.0735	1.01076	Ineffective
System Characteristics	1.8696	.73387	Highly Ineffective
Factors			
Employee Participation	2.2194	.93648	Ineffective
Instrument Validity	2.1237	.95525	Ineffective
Goal Setting	2.1129	.99670	Ineffective
Rating Technique	1.8450	.82407	Highly Ineffective
Distributive Justice	1.9960	1.03275	Highly Ineffective
Procedural Justice	2.1355	1.06926	Ineffective
Performance Feedback	2.0258	1.10882	Ineffective
Rater's Motivation	3.8198	.48282	Effective
Rater's Training	1.4128	.77514	Highly Ineffective
Rating Accuracy	1.7267	.84834	Highly Ineffective
Intended Purpose	1.6150	.91089	Highly Ineffective

The total mean for user's characteristics was 2.6163, which indicates that the respondents perceived that the existing PAS is ineffective in terms of user's characteristics. Rater's motivation and rater's training factors showed mean of 3.8198 and 1.4128

respectively. Only the factor rater's motivation has scored a mean value closer to 4 which denote that the existing PAS is effective in terms of this factor.

Descriptive statistics has revealed that the total mean for perceived fairness was 2.0735 with a standard deviation of 1.010. This indicates that the respondents have perceived the existing PAS is ineffective where procedural justice (M=2.1355) and performance feedback (M=2.0258) were rated as ineffective and distributive justice (M=1.9960) as highly ineffective.

The total mean score for the dependent variable systems characteristics was 1.8696 which reveals that the existing PAS is perceived as highly ineffective. The factors employee participation, instrument validity and goal setting have scored mean value closer to 2. However the factor rating technique, having a mean of 1.8450 is perceived as highly ineffective. The factor rating accuracy and intended purpose had mean values of 1.7267 and 1.6150, which indicates that the existing PAS is highly ineffective in terms of the said factors.

Table 04
Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Level of Effectiveness of PAS in General. (N =62)

	Mean	Std. Dev	Level of Effectiveness
Effectiveness of PAS	1.6709	.83105	Highly ineffective

The mean of effectiveness of existing PAS was 1.6709. It is revealed that the respondents had perceived that the existing PAS for academic staff is generally highly ineffective. Further the descriptive statistics show a negative result regarding the existing PAS for academic staff of KDU.

Table 05

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate
1	.928a	.862	.824	.34861

a. Predictors: (Constant), rater's training, rater's motivation, employee participation, instrument validity, procedural justice, distributive justice, goal setting, rating technique, performance feedback.

Model summary shows that the value of R-square for the model is 0.862. This means that 86.2 percent of the variation in the effectiveness of PAS (dependent variable) can be explained from the eleven independent variables. The adjusted R-square for the model is 0.824, which indicates only a slight overestimate with the model. The standard error of the estimate is only 0.34861

Table 06

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.996		2.777	22.854	.000 ^a
	Residual	4.010	3	.122		
	Total	29.007	2			

a. Predictors: (Constant), rater's training, rater's motivation, employee participation, instrument validity, procedural justice, distributive justice, goal setting, rating technique, performance feedback.

b. Dependent Variable: Effectiveness of PAS

ANOVA tests the statistical significance of the model. P values or in other words significance values is less than 0.05. The F-test was statistically significant, which means that the model was statistically significant. The results suggested that 86.2% of variance in effectiveness of PAS could be explained by factors in the model.

III. CONCLUSION

According to this study it is revealed that the existing PAS is ineffective with respect to user's characteristics, perceived fairness and highly ineffective with respect to systems characteristics.

The format used for evaluating performance is more general and does not measure specific duties of academia. Therefore, action has to be taken immediately to formulate a new PAS.

The performance evaluation format is a legal document which should on one hand defend the KDU and on the other enable fair and justifiable decision to the employees such as granting or not granting annual increments, termination, promotions and disciplinary actions.. Therefore it is recommended to obtain legal assistance in the process of developing the new PAS.

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