



SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF TRANSPARENCY AND FEEDBACK IN ENSURING TIMELY PROMOTION IN BUTIAMA DISTRICT, TANZANIA

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Abstract:

This study examines the views of secondary school teachers on the impact of transparency and feedback in ensuring timely promotion in Butiama District, Tanzania. It is framed within Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and the Feedback Intervention Theory, and looks at the developmental function of performance appraisal in relation to employee motivation and career development. The study was guided by an interpretive research paradigm, within which a qualitative research approach was employed. A phenomenological design was used to capture teachers' views, which was crucial for revealing the core meanings of timely promotion as perceived by participants. Purposive sampling was used to select the study area and participants, including four heads of school, four Ward Education Officers, one Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) officer, one District Human Resource Officer and 20 secondary school teachers. Thus, the study involved a total of 30 participants. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary review were conducted to collect data. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The results show that the appraisal process was felt to be lackluster

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and poorly communicated, lacking transparency and regular feedback from district level to teachers. These limitations led to a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of performance appraisal, lowered the perceived fairness of the process, and hurt the ability to move on and, thus, decreased professional performance. The study also indicates that while the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) has been superseded by the Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS), the success of performance management reforms will rely on enhancing the developmental aspects of appraisal and not just on new administrative systems. The study also makes an important contribution to the field of human resource development, as it elucidates the link between transparent appraisal and consistent feedback and employee perceptions of procedural fairness, motivation, and career progression in the public sector context. It suggests building supervisors' ability to offer transparent, participatory, and feedback-based performance management.

Keywords: transparency, feedback, timely promotion, performance appraisal, secondary school teachers

1. Introduction

Performance Appraisal is one of the key elements of human resource development (HRD) as it influences employee learning, performance improvement, career development, and the organization's effectiveness. The modern approach to performance management focuses on more than just assessing employee performance; it's about transparency, employee engagement, ongoing feedback, and support for growth (Awan *et al.*, 2020; Kaufman, 2020). In this developmental view, performance appraisal is not only an administrative tool for holding employees accountable, but also a tool to enhance employee motivation, competence building, and employee commitment to the organisation.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, the public sector performance appraisal systems were historically under-resourced, lacked employee involvement, had vague performance requirements, and provided infrequent feedback (Kaufman, 2020; Modipane *et al.*, 2019; Samwel, 2018). These practices frequently led to experiences of inequity, discrimination, and constraint to career development. Similar problems were experienced in Tanzania, where teacher promotion in the 1970s and 1980s was largely based on teacher information provided by the head of school (HOS) on Education Form No. 117. Supervisors' evaluations formed the main basis for making appraisal judgments, with no structured discussions and clear performance criteria. Promotion decisions were often perceived as inconsistent and based on subjective judgments, including interpersonal relationships between supervisors and teachers, which often influenced appraisal outcomes. Such practices limited fairness, professional growth, and trust in the appraisal system (Anosisye & Nyoni, 2024; Maria-Telesphora & Bago, 2022).

To address these deficiencies, the Government of Tanzania adopted the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) under the Public Service Act No. 8 of 2002 and Circular No. 2 of 2004, and this was implemented throughout the country since 2009. OPRAS aimed to create a clear, outcome-focused performance management system where the responsibility for setting performance goals was shared, monitoring was done, and performance was discussed regularly (Mtasigazya, 2024; Nchimbi, 2019). The reforms of the performance appraisal system were supposed to address the weaknesses of the existing system, which involved largely administrative, confidential, and non-participatory evaluation and assessment of employees. The system was developed to enhance accountability and to facilitate employee growth by establishing clear performance targets, ongoing monitoring, transparency, and feedback to support employee performance and career development, with the expectation would enhance fairness, involvement, and decisions for the promotion of staff (Mbukwini & Chacha, 2023; Mtasigazya, 2024).

The HRD literature has repeatedly stated that transparency and feedback are the critical factors of good performance management systems that can foster employees' perceptions of procedural justice and trust, whereas frequent feedback will create opportunities for employees to learn, perform, and advance in their careers, including promotions (Murphy, 2020; Schoeman & Chakwizira, 2023; Upadhyay, 2020). If adhered to consistently, these practices should improve individual performance and organisational effectiveness.

These potential gains notwithstanding, experience in Tanzania has shown that OPRAS implementation has faced several challenges of organisation and operation. Studies have reported inconsistent application of appraisal procedures, lack of supervisor competence, limited adherence to agreed performance standards, favouritism, weak feedback practices, and lack of institutional support (Abulu *et al.*, 2024; Maria-Telesphora & Bago, 2022; Matimbwa & Mwasimba, 2018; Mbukwini & Chacha, 2023). These weaknesses led to employees losing trust in the appraisal system and doubts about its value in advancing their careers.

The Government's response to this was the Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS), which was implemented in 2023 to digitalise the performance management processes, enhance transparency, increase accountability, and integrate performance data with other human resource management systems (Anosisye & Nyoni, 2024; Mwita & Andrea, 2019). While the implementation of PEPMIS is a significant institutional change, it is not just a technological advancement but also a solution to the existing issues of transparency, feedback, and employee trust in their appraisal systems.

Studies to date have mostly focused on the challenges involved in implementing OPRAS at the organisational level, and comparatively less work has been done to investigate the experience of OPRAS at the employee level, especially for secondary school teachers, regarding the developmental aspects of performance appraisal. In particular, there is sparse research on teachers' conceptions of transparency and frequent

performance monitoring as tools that support timely promotion. Given the strategic position of teachers in the process of education quality and national development, knowledge of these perceptions plays two roles as follows: as part of HRD scholarship and public sector performance management practice. Thus, based on this, this study focuses on secondary school teachers' views on transparency and regular feedback in attaining timely promotion of teachers in the public education system in Tanzania.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

OPRAS was designed to promote transparency, participatory goal-setting, measurable performance indicators, and continuous feedback within the public service to overcome the challenges of the Confidential Appraisal System (Mtasigazya, 2024). Empirically, however, there are signs that implementation is not as expected. The studies indicate the lack of consistency in the appraisal procedures, poor feedback, lack of transparency and lack of supervisory capacity, all of which affect the employees, reduce their confidence in the appraisal process and their career advancement (Ayege, 2019; Mwita & Andrea, 2019; Mungai & Kweni, 2020). While implementation problems with OPRAS have been reported, there is relatively little empirical evidence that can shed light on teachers' perceptions of the developmental aspects of performance assessment in relation to timely promotion, despite the introduction of the Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) in 2023.

Consequently, the frequent reforms of appraisal systems, the underlying sustainability measures, and the strategies for improving their effectiveness remain questionable. This is an important gap in the HRD literature, as the perceptions of employees can affect the credibility, acceptance, and effectiveness of performance management systems. Thus, this paper intended to bridge the gap by examining the views of secondary school teachers on the impact of transparency and feedback in ensuring timely promotion in Butiama District, Tanzania. The findings provide insights into developmental appraisal practices and how this can be used to reinforce performance management reform in the public education sector of Tanzania and other similar public sector settings.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study examines the views of secondary school teachers on the impact of transparency and feedback in ensuring timely promotion in the context of Tanzania. The study's emphasis on the teachers' experiences of developmental appraisal practices brings insights into understanding how performance management aids career development in the public education sector.

In particular, the study aims to:

- 1) Investigate teachers' perceptions of transparency in the appraisal process.
- 2) Discuss the experiences of teachers receiving regular feedback during appraisal and how this feedback is perceived to impact the speed of promotion.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What is the teachers' perception of transparency in the performance appraisal procedure in secondary schools?
- 2) What are secondary school teachers' beliefs about the frequency of feedback and its impact on timely promotion?

2. Literature Review

Effective appraisal depends heavily on transparent administrative practices at institutional and school levels. Literature shows that leadership roles, supervision mechanisms, documentation processes, and communication structures significantly determine whether appraisal achieves its intended purpose of enhancing accountability, professional development, and performance improvement (Ilomo & Anangisy, 2020; Mungai & Kwen, 2020).

School leadership (particularly heads of school and deputy heads) plays a foundational role in ensuring effective appraisal. Several studies emphasise that the commitment, competencies, and managerial behaviors of school leaders determine how well the appraisal system is adopted and operates within schools (Damayanti & Usman, 2021; Mtasigazya, 2024; Samwel, 2018). Heads of school are responsible for guiding teachers through goal setting, ensuring alignment between individual performance objectives and institutional goals, and fostering a culture of openness and accountability (Wenzel *et al.*, 2019; Mwita & Andrea, 2019).

Research also demonstrates that school leaders act as mediators between policy directives and classroom practice; thus, their interpretation of appraisal procedures greatly influences teacher compliance and motivation (Kasonde & Mutti, 2020; Upadhyay *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, research highlights that mentoring practices help teachers internalize performance standards, reflect on individual weaknesses, and build capacity for professional growth (Damayanti & Usman, 2021; Ratemo *et al.*, 2021; Mtasigazya, 2024). A lack of leadership commitment often results in a lack of trust, poor monitoring of targets, and minimal follow-up on performance outcomes (Kalogiannidis, 2021; Mulisa, 2021). Conversely, schools where leaders actively support transparent appraisal processes report increased teacher engagement, better coordination of appraisal cycles, and improved instructional quality (Raymond, 2019).

Studies in Tanzanian schools have shown that inadequate supervision often leads to appraisal processes being rushed at the end of the year without meaningful engagement between supervisors and subordinates (Matimbwa & Mwasimba, 2018; Mwita & Andrea, 2019; Nchimbi, 2019).

Communication breakdowns between teachers, school leadership, and District Human Resource Officers (DHROs) further undermine the effectiveness of the appraisal process. For example, reports show that failure to communicate evaluation results in a timely manner contributes to frustration that weakens the motivational potential of performance and increases perceptions of unfair treatment in timely promotions (Iqbal *et*

al., 2019; Mgetta *et al.*, 2025). Generally, the literature shows that the success of effective appraisal depends not only on the design of the system but also on the administrative practices that support its implementation. Thus, highlighting the critical need for strengthened leadership capacity and institutional support systems within public sectors.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The findings are based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1968) and Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) to explain teachers' perceptions of performance appraisal and career advancement as a result of transparency and performance feedback.

According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, hygiene factors cause dissatisfaction and motivational factors cause satisfaction and increase performance. In the context of performance appraisal, in particular, transparency of procedures, equitable supervision, and supportive organizational policies are hygiene factors that lessen perceptions of injustice. The motivational factors that promote commitment and better performance are recognition, achievement, professional growth, and promotion. The theory, then, offers a helpful framework to analyse teachers' motivation and perceptions of career progression in the context of appraisal practices.

Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) is a theory that looks at the effect of feedback on individual behaviour through the eyes of "*directing attention to performance standards and improvement opportunities*" (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback is timely, specific, and constructive – it helps staff understand what they are expected to do, and helps them see how they are doing and what they have to do to change. On the other hand, feedback may be inconsistent, late, or poorly communicated, leading to decreased motivation, uncertainty, and diminished trust in appraisal systems. FIT is thus especially relevant when considering the experiences of teachers of regular feedback in the appraisal process.

2.2 Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

Both theories can contribute to an understanding of the developmental role of performance appraisal. Herzberg's theory underscores the motivational role of equitable and transparent organisational practices, and Feedback Intervention Theory provides a context for understanding the motivational potential of ongoing feedback to learning, performance, and professional development. They propose that, when combined, appraisal systems with transparent, frequent feedback are better able to promote employee trust, motivation, and perceptions of fair promotions. These theoretical frameworks guided both the analysis of the effects of appraisal practices on teachers' perceptions of timely promotion and the interpretation of the participants' experiences.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to gain deeper insights into the experiences of secondary school teachers with regard to performance appraisal and the perception of how performance appraisal influenced timely promotion. The method of phenomenology is suitable for analysing how people make sense of and understand common organisational experiences (Adler, 2022; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The thirty participants were purposively selected as they were directly involved in the performance appraisal process. A total of 20 secondary school teachers, four heads of schools, four Ward Education Officers (WEOs), one District Human Resource Officer (DHRO), and one Teachers Service Commission (TSC) officer formed the sample. The teachers were chosen to make sure that they varied in gender, teaching experience, and years of service, and the education administrators were chosen according to their job responsibilities in supervising and implementing performance appraisal.

3.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document review were used to gather the data to support methodological triangulation.

The teachers, heads of schools, WEOs, the DHRO, and the TSC officer were allowed to share their experiences and perceptions about the transparency and feedback received in the appraisal process, as well as promotion. The interview format included enough flexibility to explore new topics and keep the interview on track with all interviewees.

To elicit common reflections and shared experiences of secondary school teachers on appraisal practices, two focus group discussions were held. The conversations took place in two anonymised schools (Schools SA and SD), and informed consent was obtained.

The data obtained from the interview was complemented with data from the analysis of relevant policy documents, OPRAS and PEPMIS guidelines, and promotion records kept by the Teachers Service Commission.

3.4 Data Analysis

Themes were identified and analysed by applying Braun and Clarke's (2013; 2024) thematic analysis approach. These analysis stages were repeated six times: familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme searching, theme reviewing, theme definition and naming, and final report. This analysis was useful for identifying trends in transparency, performance feedback, and time to promotion.

3.4.1 Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was used, as well as prolonged engagement with participants and member checking in the interviews. Systematically documenting the analytical process added to the dependability, and participant and institutional anonymization ensured confidentiality and more open responses.

4. Results and Discussion

Two major themes emerged from the thematic analysis of teachers' experiences of the developmental dimensions of performance appraisal: First, the lack of transparency during the appraisal and promotion process, and the second was the lack of regular developmental feedback. The above themes show how the lack of confidence in the credibility of OPRAS and its ability to support timely promotion was dampened due to implementation weaknesses.

Theme 1: Limited Transparency in the Performance Appraisal Process

The participants always reported a lack of transparency in the appraisal procedure, from school to district authorities. Participants reported that if both supervisors and teachers were asked to set goals and rank appraisal forms, this process was not always followed. Rather, appraisal papers were turned in with little opportunity for discussion, clarification, or corroboration of performance ratings. An interview with a senior teacher from a rural school said the following:

"In practice, OPRAS lacked transparency from the school to the district level. Supervisors did not adequately monitor the quality and key criteria of the appraisal. We used to complete OPRAS forms every mid-July and then send them to the district office. Then there was complete silence until the following year, when we were required to fill the form again".

Teachers also felt that promotion was unclear. A large number of people heard about promotions via rumours, colleagues, or salary increases, instead of official notification. One teacher explained:

"We used to fill in the OPRAS forms annually, send them, and then nothing until the next appraisal cycle, and we never found out how we were being judged and whether the OPRAS forms were having an effect on our promotions"

A couple of participants stated that they got to find out years later that they were eligible for promotion, but they were not told. Delayed communication caused loss of trust in the appraisal system as well as financial loss in terms of salary adjustments and salary arrears.

Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and Teachers Service Commission (TSC) officers were also interviewed, and inconsistencies in the implementation of the appraisal procedures were confirmed. WEOs noted that sometimes appraisal forms were not filled in jointly as stipulated in the standing order, and the officer of the TSC said that there were some different stages in the promotion process that teachers were not aware of. Teachers were therefore largely denied the opportunity to learn about the implications of the appraisal outcomes for their promotion.

The accounts of participants were confirmed by the document analysis. Although government requirements dictate that appraisal records be maintained in personnel files, most reviewed personnel files did not have full OPRAS documentation. Inconsistencies were also indicated by the absence of supervisor comments for some students, as well as by incomplete appraisal records.

Overall, participants considered transparency to be essential to the integrity of a performance management system. The fairness of the appraisal outcomes, however, was significantly undermined by poor communication, poor adherence to procedures, and limited accountability.

Theme 2: Lack or Delay in Developmental Feedback

The second theme was that of the lack of feedback on performance after appraisal. Teachers reported that they rarely received written and verbal feedback on performance and progress towards objectives and promotion eligibility after submitting appraisal forms. As one participant commented:

“Once the forms were handed in, there was silence afterwards, nobody said if the objectives were ok or if the appraisal had been considered.”

Participants also reported that mandatory mid-year reviews are very rarely carried out. New teachers reported that they were not provided with structured developmental guidance and instead depended on colleagues for this instruction. An interview with a newly employed teacher confirmed this:

“As a new teacher, I expected guidance after submitting OPRAS. But there was nothing. No review, no advice, no discussion. I just copied what older teachers were doing because there was no feedback to show me whether I was on the right track”.

School quality assurance visits sometimes provided feedback on classroom practice, but these visits had been unrelated to OPRAS and therefore did not support performance appraisal or promotion activity, participants reported.

The TSC officer admitted that the process of responding to teachers' queries concerning promotion was mostly an informal and irregular one, as the number of promotion cases was huge and administrative procedures were cumbersome. As a result,

educators faced extended periods of uncertainty in their job evaluations and advancement.

In all interviews and focus group discussions, participants saw regular feedback as a necessary component to improve performance, to gain insight into their progress and identify development needs, and to gain insight into promotion decisions. Without systematic feedback, OPRAS was turned into an administrative exercise that had little or no perceived value.

5. Discussion

The results reveal that the principles of development that guided the process of OPRAS implementation were partially manifested in practice. Two interrelated weaknesses: insufficient transparency and lack of regular feedback; decreased teachers' confidence in the appraisal system; and decreased support for career development.

The need for transparency became an essential requirement for effective performance management. Participants felt that transparent appraisal procedures were fair, trustworthy, and had confidence in the promotion decisions. However, there were some issues with communication, documentation, and employee participation, and this was seen as an injustice in the process. These results are consistent with earlier studies that showed that transparency in performance management improves employee engagement, organisational commitment, and feelings of fairness (Kang & Sung, 2017; Murphy, 2020; Shah *et al.*, 2022). Literature also suggests that organizations must ensure the performance appraisal evaluation process is not only transparent but also participatory, leading to accuracy assessments of employee performance. This implies that teachers should be appraised and ranked transparently and equitably in their workplace (Ayege, 2019; Kalogiannidis, 2021; Kessy, 2020; Samwel, 2018).

On Herzberg's Two-Factor theory, transparency acts as an organisational condition that helps to decrease dissatisfaction by increasing the sense of fairness and recognition for the employees. When appraisal processes are not open and consistent, staff will feel less likely to have an acceptable say in their promotion, and so motivation and commitment will be lowered.

The results also underscore the importance of feedback in developmental performance management. Teachers referred to appraisal as being one-way and involved in the process of completing forms without discussion or developmental feedback. This result is consistent with the results observed in earlier studies, which noted that appraisal feedback was not widely used in the public education sector in Tanzania (Elitumaini *et al.*, 2021; Mtasigazy, 2024; Osinaike, 2021).

These findings are consistent with the theory of feedback intervention. Feedback helps employees to reflect on and compare their actions with expected standards, adjust their actions, and enhance their performance. Without timely and constructive feedback, teachers were not able to assess progress, adjust performance goals, and grasp the

relationship between performance and promotion outcomes. Thus, appraisal became significantly less developmental.

Overall, the results show that how well it is implemented is more important than its presence on paper for the effectiveness of public-sector performance management. In the absence of clear processes and ongoing developmental feedback, appraisal systems are not likely to reach the goals they should achieve, including educational development, motivation, and professional development of the staff.

5.1 Implications for Human Resource Development Practice

The results have some implications for HRD practice in public education systems.

First, appraisal systems need to enhance the transparency of the procedure, providing employees with an understanding of the performance criteria, the outcome of the appraisal, and promotion decisions throughout the appraisal cycle.

Second, supervisors need ongoing professional development on developmental performance management, specifically in how to lead performance conversations and constructively provide feedback.

Third, digital performance management platforms should be designed to automate the administrative process, but also to enable ongoing communication, feedback in writing, and the inclusion of the employee.

Last but not least, HRD practitioners should assess performance management systems on the basis of employee experiences of fairness, learning, and professional development, and not just on procedural compliance.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that secondary school teachers felt that the lack of transparency and feedback were serious restraints in the effective utilization of performance appraisal and timely promotion. While the system was developed as a developmental performance management system, it was not implemented consistently, which undermined its credibility and lessened its impact on employee development.

The findings also enrich the HRD literature for the following reasons: It helps bring into the literature the ideas that transparency and continuous feedback are more than administrative characteristics of performance appraisal; rather, they are key elements of how appraisal can facilitate motivation, trust, and career development. Going forward, further development of these dimensions is recommended to enhance employee engagement and the sustainability of Tanzanian public-sector performance management reforms under the Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) being implemented.

Further studies are needed to assess how employees experience PEPMIS and whether it has a positive effect on transparency, feedback, and career development in public organisations.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest or competing financial or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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