

Abstract

The research was based on the premise for the need for public sector performance management and specifically performance appraisals for performance management in order to explore the soft aspects of performance management which has in particular been neglected. It explored the relationship between the due process of performance appraisals and the uses of performance appraisals within the public sector of Sri Lanka. It also looked at the impact of user interpretation and user manipulation on such relationship to answer two research questions namely; (a) what is the relationship between the due process of performance appraisals and the uses of performance appraisals; and (b) what is the impact of user interpretation and manipulation in the relationship between the due process of performance appraisals and the uses of performance appraisals?

A conceptual model was developed by the researcher for the purpose and three propositions were developed around it. Three models of performance appraisals; namely the rational, political and justice model were used as a basis in arriving at the propositions for the study. The rational model was used to understand the degree of effectiveness of performance appraisals provided they incorporated elements that should exist for performance appraisal success which were; adequate notice, fair hearing and judgement based on evidence which was derived from the justice model of performance appraisal. The political model was introduced to understand the social and political context of performance appraisals in the real world and how it may have an impact on the successful implementation of performance appraisals. The theoretical underpinning was the need to take an integrated view in conducting performance appraisal research which suggested the integration of the rational, political and justice models of performance appraisals in combination rather than in isolation. The Social Rule System Theory was also used to interpret the empirical findings in a more meaningful manner. The study was based on a post positivist paradigm and adopted a qualitative approach. Two cases from the Sri Lankan public sector were chosen for the study where 20 in-depth interviews were conducted in the two cases, 10 each. The respondents were officer grade employees and their immediate superiors. A semi structured interview protocol was used which was developed with input from the literature review that was conducted. It was further revised based on another five in-depth pilot interviews that were conducted with

officer grade employees of the public sector. The pilot interviews were done prior to the data collection from the cases to get a general understanding of the performance appraisals within the public sector of Sri Lanka. The analysis indicates that there exists a relationship between the due process of performance appraisals and the purposes of performance appraisals, but that the existence of performance appraisals alone does not necessarily achieve the purposes of performance appraisals. It also supported the propositions with regard to the impact of user interpretation and user manipulation on the relationship between due process of performance appraisal and the uses of performance appraisal. The empirical findings enabled an extension to the initial proposed conceptual model, indicating more two way relationships between the concepts of due process of performance appraisals, uses of performance appraisals, user interpretation and user manipulation. While establishing the need to look at performance appraisals through a holistic and integrated manner, the research suggests that the public sector of Sri Lanka should show special emphasis on deriving meaningful outcomes for performance appraisal and the articulation of such if it is to utilize performance appraisals successfully and thereby manage performance in the sector. The findings also indicated that performance outcomes should be emphasized more and that the appraisal process should be designed with the end in mind or rather a retrogressive or backwards approach to be adopted.

More insights would have been gained provided research had considered the Sri Lankan government's strategic level plans for its human resource management, and other varied opinions of performance appraisals within other levels of appraisals and appraisers.