

Performance Evaluation as a Tool for Achieving the Goals of Educational Organizations

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Abstract

Performance evaluation is a major topic in theories of administrative organization because these theories seek to help organizations achieve their goals efficiently and effectively. To achieve the organizations' goals efficiently and effectively, the process must be dealt with systematically with the participation of all parties who can benefit from the results such as using performance evaluation. Evaluation needs to be adapted based on changes to work content, methods of performance, employee cognitive characteristics and skills, and the factors that affect the nature of the organization's work. Therefore, performance evaluation should be as comprehensive as possible with a deep awareness of the parties involved because the overall performance of the organization is based on the performance and interaction of individuals. This paper examines the performance evaluation of employees in the Petersburg City public school district.

Keywords : *performance evaluation- Goals of Educational Organizations*

Performance Evaluation, Evaluation Process, Evaluation Report Form, Human Recourses, Education, School District

Stability is a vital part of any organization, especially a school district because of the importance of education to the long-term health of a community. Organizational stability depends on many factors, one of which is evaluating employees' performance. Performance evaluation is a major topic in theories of administrative organization because these theories seek to help organizations achieve their goals efficiently and effectively. As a result, this is one of the most important processes practiced by management at all levels. In order to

achieve the desired objectives, the process must be dealt with systematically with the participation of all parties who can benefit from the results. Evaluation might need to be adapted based on changes to work content, methods of performance, employee cognitive characteristics and skills, and the factors that affect the nature of the organization's work. Therefore, performance evaluation should be as comprehensive as possible with a deep awareness of the parties involved because the overall performance of the organization is based on the performance and interaction of individuals.

Focus of the Study

This paper has examined the performance evaluation of employees in the Petersburg City public school district. This analysis has been supported by data from interviews with Dr. Marcus Newsome, the superintendent of the school system, who also formerly served as superintendent of Chesterfield County public school district, one of the biggest school districts in the US (Petersburg City Public Schools, n.d.). This paper was guided by the following research question:

RQ: What is the status of performance evaluation within the Petersburg City public school district?

Overview of the Petersburg City Public School District

The Petersburg City public school district has been tasked with providing the highest quality education possible for all students. Its mission focuses on developing 21st century citizens able to effectively collaborate, communicate, and innovate. The school system has made strong efforts to develop schools and build new budgets

that support their goals and improve student performance. According to the Virginia Department of Education (n.d.), the Petersburg City public school district, located in Petersburg, Virginia, has a diverse population of over 4,275 Pre-K and K-12 students with a student-teacher ratio of 14 to 1. Within this school district, the most recent official demographic data indicate that over 75.3% of students are economically disadvantaged, 11.1% have disabilities, and more than 5.1% are English learners (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.). In terms of ethnicity, 90.5% are African American, 2.7% are White, 5.6% are Hispanic, 0.5% are Asian, 0.7% are two or more races, and 0.3% are Native American.

Based on current data about local teachers gathered by the Virginia Department of Education (n.d.), in the 2017-2018 school year, 10.5% of teachers in Petersburg were not properly licensed, 33.6% were provisionally licensed, and 16.4% were inexperienced, that is to say, having less than one year of teaching experience in the classroom. In addition, 2% of teachers had provisional special education credentials in 2016-2017, which increased by 2% in 2017-2018, 52% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, 40% had a master's degree, and 2% had a doctorate.

According to the budget for the 2019 fiscal year, during the previous three years, the Petersburg superintendent and school board have made changes to the organization at the administrative level in order to focus more attention and financing on the instructional programs offered in the district (Petersburg City Public Schools, 2018). In the 2017 fiscal year, one assistant superintendent position was

eliminated, and three executive director positions were added. This divided the organization into three areas: 1) instruction/academics led by the chief academic officer, 2) student support led by the executive director of student advancement, and 3) operations of the division led by the executive director of human resources, finance, and operations. In the 2018 fiscal year, the school district established a director of teaching and learning and a director of counseling, college, and career readiness. In addition, policymakers changed two other positions from directors to supervisors. As a result, each school principal now has a partner to implement professional development and support in areas such as data analysis, teacher evaluations, and other critical areas. In the 2019 fiscal year, to focus more on professional development of staff, the district has added two positions: an assistant director of teaching and learning and a human resources talent manager; both of these positions are grant funded.

Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation is an important process implemented by organizations, in this case school districts and schools, at all organizational levels to determine the quality of work outcomes from senior management to regular employees based on the responsibilities and duties of each person's position and the department they work in (Cummings & Worley 2014). Dr. Newsome mentioned in his interview that the Code of Virginia requires that every teacher, principal, and superintendent receive a performance evaluation. Cochran-Smith (2003) suggested there has been a dramatic change in the conception of

quality teaching, and this change has centered on the relationship between teacher qualifications, teacher preparation, teaching performance, and educational outcomes. As a result, these areas require more accountability at all levels of performance and management.

The Importance of Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation is conducted at the end of every year because it shows how the organization has improved and where its weak points are that require greater attention in the future. Dr. Newsome stated in the interview that the board of education is responsible for establishing teacher, principal, and superintendent guidelines, including performance standards and evaluation criteria, to assist school divisions in implementing educator evaluation systems. In 2010, the Virginia Department of Education embarked on a major statewide initiative to revise the uniform performance standards and evaluation criteria for teachers, principals, and superintendents.

Performance evaluation not only benefits the organization as a whole, in this case the Petersburg public school district and the schools it contains, but also benefits and empowers teachers and other employees. Regarding this issue, Dr. Newsome stated the following in the interview:

Performance evaluations help clarify the goals and expectations for the employee and school. They also support employee personal and professional growth and development, provide guidance for improvement, and

provide documentation to enforce disciplinary action. High performing employees benefit schools and students.

Therefore, performance evaluation helps the Petersburg public school district achieve its educational objectives. However, such evaluation and feedback also help teachers and other employees see areas where they can improve in their positions and correct problems they might not otherwise have been aware of if not for the evaluation. The issue of performance evaluation is thus of paramount importance for the district, local schools, policymakers, management, teachers, and staff.

Similar to the views expressed by Dr. Newsome in his interview, Rebores (2015) stated that the establishment and implementation of an evaluation process for any school district is needed because this evaluation helps employees focus their efforts on reasonable self-development, identifies a variety of tasks that employees know they are capable of performing, determines their staff development needs, improves employee performance over time, helps the organization decide whether certain employees should be retained, indicates what their salary increase should be, and helps decisionmakers determine the proper placement or promotion of employees.

Evaluation Process

Evaluating an employee's performance requires a systematic process for the evaluator to follow. According to Rebores (2015), a significant aspect of any employee evaluation process is measuring the employees' performance against their job duties as enumerated in their job description. In addition, in developing an evaluation

process, the board of education must build a policy on employee evaluation that provides direction to the different divisions within a school district. These divisions are subsequently accountable for producing objectives directed at achieving the goals of the school board. Furthermore, each employee is accountable for promoting personal objectives that assist the divisional objectives. Consequently, employee performance is measured based on the degree to which each individual has achieved his or her personal objectives. Feedback data are then ready for use in deciding whether divisional goals have been reached.

The performance evaluation process is a tool to provide meaningful feedback to document, assess, and ultimately improve employee performance. In the interview, Dr. Newsome mentioned that teachers and principals who do not meet their expectations are typically required to develop and implement a performance improvement plan. If teachers do not meet the requirements of the plan or if they violate school board policy, those teachers can be recommended for termination. Tenured teachers and principals have a right to due process and may appeal this recommendation for termination to their local school board. Non-tenured teachers do not possess such rights and can therefore be more easily removed from their position. Termination, however, is considered the least desirable option compared to employee development, as developing current staff avoids the time, effort, and expense of finding a replacement. However, terminating employees is sometimes necessary to maintain the integrity of the school system, meet the school district's objectives, and ensure a

successful learning environment and positive learning outcomes for students.

Types of Evaluation Report Forms Used by the School District

Changes in the needs and expectations of education have led to changes in how teachers are assessed. Many management consulting firms have developed evaluation forms that are easily adapted to the requirements of a given school district (Rebore, 2015). The development of evaluation forms is not complex, particularly with the many archetypes available from neighboring school districts. The types of forms differ from one district or city to another. Therefore, each school district uses the evaluation forms that best fit their area's needs and objectives. The Petersburg public school district uses many different evaluation procedures. Dr. Newsome mentioned that he used four types of evaluation forms. First, the Virginia Department of Education publishes a sample form that includes the seven required evaluation standards and the indicators to support each standard. Dr. Newsome also uses a form called a professional growth plan. On this form, the supervisor and employee identify two or three annual goals for which the employee can grow and develop. During the mid-year conference, the supervisor and employee discuss progress toward meeting the goals. A third form often used is a self-evaluation form. Finally, some supervisors use a 360-degree evaluation process that involves an anonymous survey completed by the employee, supervisor, peers, subordinates, and other stakeholders.

Rebore (2015) stated that the most suitable method of evaluating performance uses a trait instrument to ascertain an individual's overall performance combined with a

results-based approach to develop performance improvement objectives. The results method also helps ascertain whether employee objectives are promoting divisional and school board objectives. Employee objectives can be quickly improved if overall performance has been covered.

Relationship between Objectives of the School District and Employees

According to Rebore (2015), “the ultimate goal of all school districts is to educate children and adolescents” (p. 208). As a result, a core objective of any school district is to create a professional, high-quality education environment for students. Accomplishing this goal depends on a multitude of subordinate goals and objectives.

Quality education in a given school district depends on the performance of teachers, staff, administrators, and the superintendent performing well in each of their individual positions and working together with others. Because of this fact, all of these stakeholders have to have realistic goals that can be achieved and evaluated. The goals of teachers depend on the goals of their school, which in turn depend on the goals of the school district. Therefore, the goals at each level must complement and support one another.

Evaluators

Because of the importance of employee evaluation, it is important to have experienced, knowledgeable, competent people conducting the evaluations. In the interview, Dr. Newsome stated that the supervisor is primarily responsible for evaluating employees. Other specialists, assistant principals, and instructional coaches also often conduct formal classroom observations, but they do not have the authority to evaluate in an official capacity.

Conclusion

The process of evaluating performance should be a tool for employee development, improvement, and education rather than one solely concerned with accountability. This process requires open communication, participation, cooperation, dialogue, and clarification of the functions of a given position being evaluated and the standards it is evaluated against. This evaluation helps employees improve in their work and schools meet their educational objectives for students. The interview helped answer the research question about the status of performance evaluation within the Petersburg City public school district. The interview indicated that the district has a robust evaluation system in place to ensure teachers, schools, and the district as a whole are making progress toward their objectives and meeting the needs of its diverse student population.

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