

DEVELOPMENT ORIENTED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM FOR THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PERSONNEL

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Introduction

Performance appraisal is an integral part of most extension organizations. There is a great degree of unhappiness in agricultural extension personnel with the present performance appraisal systems. The performance appraisal is not meant to be a mere reporting of an individual's performance once a year but serves as an instrument of motivation and development of employees (Rao, 1992). The development oriented performance appraisal system (PAS) is expected to help an employee to create learning spaces for himself in an organization and it can substantially contribute to the organizational health and facilitates multiplication of managerial resources (Mufeed, 1998). The above-mentioned changes in the performance appraisal offers a greater scope to improve the human resources of agricultural extension organizations. The quality of the human resources in an agricultural extension organization is a determining factor in its success or failure. Of a programme success the hinges largely on the performance of extension agents in the field. Performance appraisal is a critical management function in an extension organization and an effective way to improve performance of extension personnel (Davis, 1993). In an era where agricultural extension has the role of not only meeting the increased production but also conserving and protecting natural resource base, the effectiveness of extension workers' performance has become very important. For the ever increasing complexity of challenges facing extension organizations and the place of change, both signal the escalating pressures that will be brought to bear on extension personnel to play a proactive and strategic partner roles. Therefore, if development oriented performance

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appraisal system is implemented well, it can take the extension organization on a fast development track by meeting all the challenges through motivated, committed and competent personnel. In this context, the present study is aimed to design an alternative development oriented PAS for the extension personnel.

Methodology

This study was under taken in the State Department of Agriculture, Haryana (INDIA) and two Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in the state of Haryana (INDIA), were purposively selected. An exhaustive sample of eight sub-division level and eighteen circle level extension personnel and a random sample of fifty four village level extension personnel were taken from the randomly selected two district units of State Department of Agriculture. Fifteen extension personnel were chosen from each of the two NGOs on the basis of random sampling method. Thus, a total of eighty extension personnel from State Department and thirty personnel from NGOs were selected for data collection through personal interview method. In order to design the development oriented PAS for the extension personnel the following aspects were taken into consideration.

For the designing of an alternative development oriented performance appraisal system the following dimensions were considered, operationalised and measured.

(i) Identification of key performance areas (KPA's)

The KPA's of a role are those functions, which require priority attention. In the present study, Key Performance Areas of the extension personnel working at different levels were identified with the help of a schedule developed. All the functions that a role occupant expected to carry out were listed on the basis of literature search and discussions with agricultural scientists, experts and officers of the State Department of Agriculture. KPA's were weighed according to their importance for the role, which was measured through frequency of performance and level of performance on a 5-point continuum. For each task/activity, mean scores and rank ordering were worked out separately for each category of extension personnel working at different levels (village, circle and subdivision level) in State Department as well as for the extension personnel of NGOs. Five KPA's were identified for each category of extension personnel on the basis of higher mean scores and rank ordered.

(ii) Target setting:

In addition to the identification of KPAs, it is useful to consider the targets set for the extension personnel for a definite period. These targets should deal with the tasks expected to be accomplished by them under the KPAs. This was studied through a review of existing documents and in-depth interview of extension personnel with the help of semi-structured interview schedule.

(iii) Identification of critical behavioral attributes

The role can be analyzed to indicate what personal qualities and characteristics (called attributes) a role occupant should have in order to be effective in the role. Critical attributes are those which distinguish an effective role occupant from an ineffective one. Critical attributes include all kinds of qualities - educational, experience, physical characteristics, mental abilities, skills, personality characteristics, attitudinal characteristics, etc. In the present study, behavioral attributes for extension personnel, which might be required to handle different tasks, were analyzed with the help of a schedule developed for the purpose. As many as thirty attributes that an extension personnel were to required to perform their job were listed on the basis of review and discussions with agricultural scientists, experts and officers of the State Department of Agriculture. The responses on each attribute were obtained on a 9-point continuum ranging from least critical to very critical. For each attribute mean score and rank ordering were worked out for each category of extension personnel. Twelve most critical attributes were identified for different categories of extension personnel on the basis of higher mean scores and rank ordered.

Apart from the above dimensions other dimensions considered for the designing of development oriented PAS were:

(iv) Self-appraisal

(v) Performance analysis

(vi) Performance discussion

(vii) Identifying developmental needs and action planning

(viii) Final assessment**Findings and Discussion**

The development oriented PAS was designed which included the following components in it.

A. Identification of KPAs for different categories of extension personnel

Analysis of a role for its Key Performance Areas (KPAs) is necessary for performance appraisal because performance appraisal has to be done against certain functions and objectives on which a person works. Therefore, the identification of KPAs is an essential component of PAS. The KPAs of a role are those functions that require priority attention.

Key Performance Areas of the extension personnel working at different levels were identified and prioritized on the basis of job analysis (level of performance as well as frequency of performance) following the procedure as described in methodology part. The KPAs identified for each category of extension personnel are furnished in Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 1. Key Performance Areas (KPAs) for village level extension personnel (in priority order)

Key Performance Areas (KPAs)	According to frequency of performance Mean score	According to level of performance Mean score	Overall Importance Mean score
1. Visit to group of farmers to communicate technical know how and attending their different problems and queries	4.39	4.44	8.83
2. Inspiring and motivating farmers	4.72	3.59	8.31
3. Identification of problems and needs of farmers	4.20	4.07	8.27
4. Giving talk to group of farmers	4.61	3.59	8.20
5. Attending training conducted by subject matter specialists and superiors	4.04	3.69	7.73

Table 2. Key Performance Areas (KPA) for circle level extension personnel (in priority order)

Key Performance Areas (KPA)	According to frequency of performance Mean score	According to level of performance Mean score	Overall Importance Mean score
1. Supervision and constant professional advice to subordinates to assisting them in getting the message across to the farmers	4.67	4.56	9.23
2. Providing technical support to subordinates	4.22	4.22	8.44
3. Motivating subordinates	4.39	3.83	8.22
4. Visit to field to supervise field trials, to communicate technical know how and attending queries	3.78	4.11	7.89
5. Attending training conducted by subject matter specialists	3.61	3.89	7.50

Table 3. Key Performance Areas (KPA) for sub-division level extension personnel (in priority order)

Key Performance Areas (KPA)	According to frequency of performance Mean score	According to level of performance Mean score	Overall Importance Mean score
1. Providing technical support to subordinates	4.25	4.63	8.88
2. Conducting training for subordinates to accomplish their tasks and to improve their work performance	4.00	3.58	7.58
3. Organising meeting, training, seminars etc.	3.75	3.75	7.50
4. Inspiring and motivating people	3.75	3.50	7.25
5. Supervision and constant professional advice to subordinates to assisting them in their work	3.65	3.38	7.03

Table 4. Key Performance Areas (KPA) for NGOs' extension personnel (in priority order)

Key Performance Areas (KPA)	According to frequency of performance Mean score	According to level of performance Mean score	Overall Importance Mean score
1. Visit to farmers to communicate technical know how and attending their problems and queries	3.76	3.43	7.19
2. Identification of problems and needs of farmers	3.70	3.43	7.13
3. Organizing farmer's training, meeting, seminar etc.	3.90	3.13	7.03
4. Visit to field to supervise and arrange different field trials, demonstrations and other extension activities	3.23	3.42	6.66
5. Giving talk to group of people	3.67	2.83	6.50

It is evident from the data present in above-mentioned tables that KPAs and their priority or importance is different for different categories of extension personnel. Training and Visit System has been prevailing in State Department of Agriculture. The most important Key Performing Area of village level extension personnel, grass root level workers is to communicate the technical know-how to the farmers and attend to the problems and queries of the farmers during their fortnightly visit. Each circle level extension personnel supervises and provides constant professional advice to eight village level workers and assists them in getting the message across to the farmers. Above the circle level there is sub-division level where one sub-division level officer is responsible for conducting fortnightly training for circle level and village level personnel to providing technical know-how, technical support and helping them to accomplish their tasks. Each district of the State has two to four sub-divisions.

Experience has shown that identification of KPAs also leads to an understanding of difference of one role from another in the organization. It helps to remove the existence of role-ambiguity in different jobs leading to poor performance. Superiors realize that their KPAs have to be qualitatively different, indicating higher responsibility, from those of their

subordinates. They are forced to think of delegating to the subordinates, what they can do (Pareek and Rao, 1992). Thus, the specification of KPAs for different extension personnel not only serves the basis of their performance evaluation, but also for a general development of them in the organization. The identified KPAs are to be included in the performance appraisal format of development oriented PAS.

B. Target setting

It is not fair to assess the performance of any employee on tasks and targets that have not been made clear to him/her and that do not take into consideration of mutual consultations and discussions. Therefore, in addition to the identification of KPAs, it is useful to set targets for a set period. These targets should deal with the tasks expected to be accomplished by the appraisee with respect to their KPAs. The targets should be fixed at beginning of the year with consultations and discussions between the supervisor and extension personnel. The study revealed that the targets for different extension personnel usually set at the state level and district level with little/no consultations of the lower level extension personnel. The existing PAS do not take into consideration the targets set forth and their achievement by the extension personnel. Therefore, the proposed development oriented PAS would include the different targets and their achievements by different categories of extension personnel.

C. Identification of critical behavioral attributes required for the Job

Another important aspect of employee performance is the extent to which each employee exhibits the qualities desired for his/her job. Organization should identify a list of such qualities desired to be shown by different personnel and include these in performance appraisal (Rao, 1992). Appraising the behavioral attributes of employee periodically will enable the employees to strive for developing such attributes, which will help them to perform specific role better. This will help in improving the effectiveness of the role occupants. Critical attributes are those which distinguish an effective role occupant from an ineffective one. Critical attributes include all kinds of qualities - educational, experience, physical characteristics, mental abilities, skills, personality characteristics, attitudinal

characteristics, etc. In the present study behavioral attributes for extension personnel, that might be required to handle different tasks, were analyzed. The critical attributes required for different categories of extension personnel are reported in Table 5. It is evident from the table that critical behavioral attributes in priority order as indicated by the ranks (higher value indicates higher priority) are different for different categories of personnel. Basic knowledge of local agricultural situation as well as modern farm practices and problem-solving ability were found to be mostly required attributes for all kind of extension personnel.

Table 5: Critical behavioral attributes required for the job of extension personnel.

Critical Attributes	Extension personnel of State Dept. of Agriculture (n=80)			NGO's Extension Personnel (n=30) Mean criticality score
	Village level Mean criticality score	Circle level Mean criticality score	Sub-div. level Mean criticality score	
1. Basic knowledge of local agricultural situation	8.39 (1)	8.50 (1)	8.38 (2)	7.30 (2)
2. Knowledge of modern farm practices	7.78 (2)	7.56 (2)	7.88 (3)	7.60 (1)
3. Communication abilities (verbal, written)	7.30 (6)	7.28 (4)	7.13 (9)	7.16 (4)
4. Skills in conducting demonstrations, campaign meeting, etc.	7.22 (7)	7.00 (6)	7.88 (4)	6.43 (5)
5. Showing genuine interest in helping farmers	7.57 (3)	7.50 (3)	6.88 (11)	6.43 (6)
6. Motivation to influence others	7.04 (8)	6.83 (7)	7.38 (7)	6.00 (12)
7. Planning ability	6.50 (13)	6.61 (11)	7.38 (8)	6.03 (11)
8. Organizing ability	6.70 (12)	6.64 (10)	7.88 (5)	5.75 (13)
9. Problem solving ability	7.48 (4)	7.17 (5)	8.50 (1)	7.16 (3)
10. Team spirit	7.02 (9)	6.28 (12)	6.13 (15)	6.37 (7)
11. Persuasiveness	6.70 (11)	6.17 (14)	6.63 (13)	5.35 (15)
12. Initiative	6.48 (14)	6.22 (13)	6.38 (14)	5.70 (14)
13. Flexibility and openness	5.83 (15)	5.72 (15)	6.75 (12)	6.23 (9)
14. Decision making ability	7.35 (5)	6.67 (9)	7.50 (6)	6.20 (10)
15. Willingness to learn from others	7.00 (10)	6.78 (8)	6.88 (10)	6.37 (8)

Figures in parentheses indicate ranks/priority

For the relatively higher-level extension personnel (sub division level), skills in conducting training, demonstrations, etc; organizing and decision making ability are highly required attributes to perform their role better. Grass root level extension workers should show genuine interest in helping the farmers and have the effective communication ability to pass the message to the farmers properly. The development oriented PAS would make a provision of evaluating extension personnel on the critical attributes needed for their effective performance.

D. Self-Appraisal

At the end of the year or the appraisal period the appraisal process will begin with self-appraisal by each extension personnel. To appraise one's own self on KPAs, targets and qualities, the appraisee would go through a process of reflection and review. Provision has to be made in the development oriented performance appraisal form to include self-rating of appraisee on KPAs, targets and behavioral attributes. It has established beyond doubt that change is faster when it is self-initiated (Rao, 1992). Besides, when one reviews one's own performance, one also gets an opportunity become more aware of his/her own strengths and weaknesses. It would provide the employees with an opportunity to look back on their own performance (introspection) and to plan and work for achieving the improved performance (perspiration). Verma (1991) has also reported the need for introducing self-appraisal. For example, an extension worker might say to himself/herself that he/she has done well in conducting a demonstration, but failed to make the farmers understand the practice and to convince them about the benefits on its adoption. On the basis of self-appraisal he/she might discover his/her lack of interpersonal convincing skills and interpersonal communication skills. Thus, self-assessment helps extension personnel to discover their developmental needs and plan for development that also helps the organizational effectiveness.

E. Performance Analysis

The performance appraisal climate of an organization should ensure the communication between appraisee and appraiser. The appraiser should know more about the situation under which his appraisee is working, the difficulties he/she is experiencing and the contribution he/she is making. The appraisee

should also understand how he/she himself/herself is responsible for some achievements or non-achievements. To meet these objectives development oriented PAS includes the 'performance analysis' component in it. Under this performance analysis, extension worker reflects about his performance at the end of appraisal period and identifies factors that helped in doing whatever he/she has done and factors that prevented him/her from doing better. The appraisee then gives his/her analyses to the supervising officer who may add to the list other relevant issues influencing the performance.

F. Performance Discussion

The performance discussion on a prefixed date is intended to improve understanding and support between the supervisor and extension worker. The form of self-appraisal and performance analysis is submitted by the extension worker to supervising officer that serves as an initiator of discussions. Extension personnel may be able to share a lot of things in mutual discussions, which they may not be able to put in writing. The purpose of it for the extension personnel is to know more about the perceptions, expectations and assessment of the supervisor and also to communicate the difficulties and ask for support. For the supervisor, it is an opportunity to understand the subordinates better, help them to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and assist them to identify mechanisms for technical development and improve performance standard.

G. Identifying Developmental Needs and Action Plan

The performance analysis and performance discussion would generally lead to the identification of developmental needs. The poorly performed KPAs or targets not accomplished by the extension personnel may be indicators of inadequate understanding or lack of capabilities (Knowledge, skills, etc.). If it is lack of capabilities, development of capabilities through training, on the job-coaching, etc. becomes the action plan. If poor performance is due to lack of motivation, it should be dealt with during the performance discussion session. Developmental needs flow directly from the assessment (self-assessment as well as assessment by the appraiser) of performance. The appraiser should therefore, indicate the developmental needs of the appraisee and suggest

action. The suggestions are to be attended by the personnel department of organization and actions are to be initiated at the appropriate time.

H. Final Assessment

The final assessment will be given by the appraiser after completion of all the above mentioned components of PAS. By this stage the appraiser would have a thorough understanding of the subordinates, their accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses, developmental needs, etc. on the basis of which the appraiser is expected to be in a good position to prepare final assessment report of the subordinates. Besides, the development needs identified should get special attention leading to the implementation of action plan. The final assessment report would include the above-mentioned facts along with the future action plan to develop the extension personnel for the improved performance leading to enhanced organizational effectiveness. The final assessment will have to be communicated to the appraisee. In case of any strong difference the appraisee will have the scope to communicate his/her reaction to the higher authority.

Basic structure of a model format of development oriented PAS for extension personnel will include all the above-mentioned eight dimensions. The KPAs, targets, behavioral dimensions in the appraisal form will be different for different categories of extension personnel as mentioned earlier. Therefore, different appraisal form will have to be developed for different categories of extension personnel considering respective KPAs, targets, behavioral dimensions in the format.

Conclusion

The development oriented PAS is expected more likely to produce positive and less likely to produce negative outcomes than the existing PAS that are used only for control and administration. This development oriented PAS is expected to improve the performance appraisal climate which will have a positive impact on overall organizational climate and job satisfaction of extension personnel. This offers greater scope to improve the human resources of agricultural extension organizations at minimum cost. The need

to improve the human resources of agricultural extension organizations to face the emerging challenges arising out of present techno-economic scenario can be met through the implementation of development oriented PAS.

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