

Performance Management System in Nigeria: An Evaluation of New APER in Federal Civil Service of Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the implementation of the new Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) in the federal civil service of Nigeria as a performance management system. The paper reviews the literature on performance management, its relevance to organizational success, and the challenges associated with its implementation in Nigeria. The paper then examines the new APER system, its components, and the process for its implementation. It evaluates the impact of the APER system on employee performance and the overall organizational success of the federal civil service of Nigeria. The paper concludes that the implementation of the APER system has the potential to improve the performance of the federal civil service of Nigeria, but it is important to address some of the challenges that may hinder its effectiveness.

Keywords: *Performance Management, Civil Service, Implementation, Appraisal, Personnel, Evaluation*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Performance management systems (PMS) in Nigeria have evolved over the years as a response to the need for improved performance in public and private organizations. PMS is an essential component of organizational success. It is a systematic process that involves setting objectives, measuring progress, providing feedback, and making decisions about the allocation of resources. Effective performance management helps organizations to align individual performance with organizational goals, improve productivity, and enhance employee engagement and retention. However, implementing a performance management system in Nigeria can be challenging due to factors such as lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural barriers.

The colonial administration introduced a rudimentary form of PMS in Nigeria, but it was not until the 1980s that performance appraisal systems were institutionalized in the Nigerian public service. The adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 1980s and the subsequent reforms in the civil service led to the introduction of modern PMS in Nigeria. The National Productivity Centre was established in 1981 to promote productivity and quality improvement in the Nigerian public and private sectors.

In recent times, the Nigerian government has been implementing reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service. The introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPDIS), and the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) are some of the reforms aimed at improving the performance of the Nigerian civil service. The adoption of new PMS such as the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) in the Nigerian public service is also aimed at improving performance and enhancing accountability. Despite these efforts, performance management in Nigeria is still facing several challenges, including inadequate funding, poor implementation, lack of political will, and resistance to change.

The Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) is a performance management system that was introduced in 2017 in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria. The APER system is designed to

evaluate the performance of civil servants based on their key performance indicators (KPIs) and the goals and objectives of their respective ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) (Omodafe, 2018). The APER system is a comprehensive tool that assesses the performance of civil servants in four key areas: productivity, quality of work, initiative, and teamwork.

The APER system uses a 5-point rating scale, where 1 represents poor performance and 5 represents outstanding performance. Civil servants are evaluated by their immediate supervisors, who are expected to provide detailed and objective feedback on their performance. The APER system is designed to provide feedback to civil servants, identify areas for improvement, and enhance accountability and transparency in the civil service (Onodugo & Ezeani, 2021).

The APER system has several features that make it a unique performance management system. Firstly, it is aligned with the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms, which aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Nigerian public service. Secondly, it is linked to the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), which ensures that performance is linked to pay and promotions. Thirdly, it is supported by training and capacity building programmes, which aim to enhance the skills and competencies of civil servants in performance management.

Overall, the APER system is seen as a step towards improving performance management in the Nigerian civil service. However, the system still faces some challenges, including inadequate training and capacity building, insufficient funding, and resistance to change. Nevertheless, the APER system represents a significant improvement over previous performance management systems in Nigeria, and its successful implementation has the potential to enhance accountability, transparency, and productivity in the Nigerian civil service.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Performance management systems in Nigeria

Performance management systems (PMS) have been the subject of extensive research in Nigeria due to their significance in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. The introduction of modern PMS in Nigeria can be traced back to the 1980s when the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was implemented (Ugwu, 2015). The reforms that followed led to the institutionalization of PMS in the Nigerian public service. According to Obigbemi and Arogundade (2016), the adoption of PMS in Nigeria was aimed at enhancing productivity, improving service delivery, and promoting accountability.

However, PMS in Nigeria have faced several challenges, including inadequate funding, lack of political will, and resistance to change (Ezeani & Ugwu, 2018). These challenges have contributed to the poor implementation of PMS in Nigeria and have limited their effectiveness in improving performance. For instance, a study by Osibanjo, Salau, and Falola (2018) found that the implementation of PMS in the Nigerian civil service has been hindered by a lack of political will and inadequate funding.

Despite these challenges, recent reforms in the Nigerian public service have led to the introduction of new PMS such as the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) (Musa, 2020). The APER system, in particular, has been viewed as a significant improvement over previous PMS in Nigeria. According to Akeem and Adebayo (2019), the APER system has the potential to enhance accountability, transparency, and productivity in the Nigerian civil service.

The APER system is aligned with the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms and is linked to the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) (Adebayo & Oyeniran, 2021). The APER system has also been supported by training and capacity building programmes,

which aim to enhance the skills and competencies of civil servants in performance management (Olufemi, Olugbenga, & Olatunde, 2020).

The implementation of performance management systems (PMS) in Nigeria has been associated with several benefits, including improved service delivery, enhanced accountability, and increased productivity (Obigbemi & Arogundade, 2016). Moreover, the use of PMS can enable organizations to identify areas of weakness and opportunities for improvement, as well as promote a culture of continuous learning and development (Olufemi, Olugbenga, & Olatunde, 2020).

However, the adoption of PMS in Nigeria has also been associated with several challenges, such as inadequate funding, lack of skilled personnel, and cultural barriers (Ogunyomi, 2019). Additionally, the complex nature of the Nigerian public sector can make it difficult to measure and evaluate the performance of employees, which can hinder the effectiveness of PMS implementation (Ugwu, 2015). The reviews shows that PMS in Nigeria have undergone significant changes over the years, and the introduction of new PMS such as the APER system is seen as a step towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Nigerian public service. However, the implementation of PMS in Nigeria still faces several challenges, and there is a need for sustained efforts to address these challenges and ensure that PMS contribute to the improvement of performance in the public sector.

2.2 APER in the federal civil service of Nigeria

The Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) is an important aspect of performance management in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service (FCS) (Uzoka, 2015). The APER is used to assess the performance of civil servants and to determine their suitability for promotion or retention (Adeniji & Adeniji, 2017).

The Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) is an important tool used in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service to evaluate the performance of civil servants. The APER is designed to assess the performance of individual civil servants in relation to the objectives of the Federal Civil Service (FCS). It is a formal process of assessing the job performance of civil servants annually and providing feedback on their strengths and areas that require improvement.

The APER is based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are specific to each role and are aligned with the objectives of the FCS. These KPIs provide a clear framework for evaluating the performance of civil servants and help to ensure that their performance is in line with the overall objectives of the FCS. The KPIs are set at the beginning of the performance cycle and are used to measure performance against specific targets throughout the year.

The APER process involves several steps, including goal setting, performance monitoring, feedback, and performance appraisal. The goal-setting stage involves setting clear and measurable goals for each employee that align with the overall objectives of the FCS. Performance monitoring involves regularly tracking the progress of employees towards their goals and providing feedback on their performance (Nwokocha & Ogbo, 2020).

Feedback is a critical aspect of the APER process as it provides employees with information on their strengths and areas that require improvement. This feedback is provided by supervisors and is based on the employee's performance against their KPIs. The performance appraisal stage involves evaluating the employee's performance against their KPIs and providing a rating that reflects their overall performance.

Despite its importance, the effectiveness of the APER in evaluating the performance of civil servants in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service has been questioned. Studies have highlighted several factors that limit the effectiveness of the APER process, including a lack of clear

performance indicators, inadequate training for supervisors, and poor communication between supervisors and subordinates.

The APER is based on key performance indicators (KPIs) that are specific to each role and are aligned with the objectives of the FCS (Omodafe, 2018). The KPIs are used to evaluate the performance of civil servants, with a focus on areas such as job knowledge, quality of work, productivity, and teamwork (Omodafe, 2018).

However, the implementation of the APER in the FCS has faced several challenges, including lack of clarity in performance expectations, inadequate training of supervisors, and poor record keeping (Adeniji & Adeniji, 2017). Additionally, some civil servants have expressed concerns that the APER is subject to political manipulation and bias, which can undermine the effectiveness of the system (Uzoka, 2015).

Overall, while the APER is an important component of performance management in the FCS, efforts are needed to address the challenges and ensure that the system is transparent, fair, and effective in promoting accountability and performance improvement (Adeniji & Adeniji, 2017).

2.3 The APER as an important aspect of Performance Management

The APER is an important aspect of performance management in the Nigerian public sector. It serves as a mechanism for measuring and assessing the extent to which individual employees are contributing to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. The APER helps to identify areas where employees need to improve their performance and provides feedback to employees on their strengths and weaknesses (Adeniji & Adeniji, 2017).

The APER is a structured process that involves the participation of the supervisor, the appraisee (employee), and other stakeholders in the performance appraisal process. The process begins with setting objectives and targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). The KPIs are then aligned with these objectives and targets to provide a clear framework for evaluating performance (Oladele & Falola, 2017).

The APER is usually conducted annually, and the process involves several steps. The first step is goal setting, where the employee and the supervisor agree on the objectives and targets to be achieved over the next year. The next step is performance monitoring, where the employee's performance is monitored and evaluated against the KPIs and targets. The third step is feedback, where the supervisor provides feedback to the employee on their performance, including areas of strength and weakness (Onakoya & Omotayo 2017). The final step is performance appraisal, where the supervisor rates the employee's overall performance against the KPIs and targets.

Despite its importance, the APER has been criticized for several reasons. One of the major criticisms of the APER is that it is often subjective and lacks transparency. This is because the appraisal process is usually conducted by the employee's immediate supervisor, who may have biases or may not have the necessary skills to conduct a fair and objective appraisal. Another criticism of the APER is that the KPIs and targets are often not well-defined, leading to confusion and inconsistencies in the appraisal process (Onakoya and Omotayo 2017).

To address these criticisms, several reforms have been proposed to improve the effectiveness of the APER. One reform is to incorporate 360-degree feedback, where feedback is collected from multiple sources including peers, subordinates, and customers, in addition to the supervisor's feedback. This provides a more comprehensive and well-rounded assessment of an employee's performance and reduces the impact of supervisor biases.

Another proposed reform is to establish clear and objective performance standards and KPIs that are communicated to employees at the beginning of the appraisal period (Adeyemo & Adeyemo

2020). This ensures that employees have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and allows for a more consistent and fair appraisal process.

Furthermore, there has been a push towards using technology to automate and standardize the appraisal process. This can help to reduce subjectivity and increase transparency by providing a clear and standardized process for performance appraisal.

2.4 Effectiveness of the APER system in Nigeria

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the APER system in Nigeria. A study by Onakoya and Omotayo (2017) found that the APER system had a positive impact on employee motivation and job performance. The study concluded that the APER system helped to identify areas for improvement and encouraged employees to work towards achieving their performance targets.

However, other studies have highlighted some limitations of the APER system in Nigeria. A study by Oladele and Falola (2017) found that the APER system was often not implemented effectively due to a lack of training and resources. The study recommended that more training and resources should be provided to ensure that the APER system is implemented effectively.

Another study by Adeyemo and Adeyemo (2020) found that the APER system in Nigeria was often subjective and lacked transparency. The study recommended that 360-degree feedback should be incorporated into the appraisal process to reduce subjectivity and increase transparency.

Overall, the effectiveness of the APER system in Nigeria appears to be mixed. While some studies have found that the system has a positive impact on employee performance, others have highlighted limitations in its implementation and have recommended reforms to improve its effectiveness (Onakoya & Omotayo, 2017; Oladele & Falola, 2017; Adeyemo & Adeyemo, 2020).

2.5 Overview of the APER implementation process

There are several steps involved in implementing the APER in Nigeria. According to a study by Oluwaseyi and Abiodun (2018), the implementation process involves the following:

1. **Setting performance targets:** The first step is to set performance targets based on the job requirements and organizational goals. This ensures that the appraisal process is aligned with the overall objectives of the organization.
2. **Defining performance standards:** Performance standards should be defined for each job position, outlining the key responsibilities and expectations of employees.
3. **Training supervisors:** Supervisors should be trained on how to conduct performance appraisals, including how to provide feedback and set goals.
4. **Communicating with employees:** Employees should be informed about the appraisal process and what is expected of them. This includes providing them with information on the performance targets, performance standards, and appraisal criteria.
5. **Conducting the appraisal:** The actual appraisal process involves evaluating employee performance against the established performance standards and targets. The appraisal should be conducted objectively and fairly, and the results should be documented.
6. **Providing feedback:** Supervisors should provide employees with feedback on their performance, including areas of strength and areas that need improvement. This feedback should be constructive and focused on helping employees improve their performance.

7. Identifying training needs: Based on the appraisal results, training needs should be identified and addressed to improve employee performance.
8. Reviewing and monitoring performance: The appraisal process should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is effective and that it is achieving its objectives. Performance should also be monitored regularly to ensure that employees are meeting their performance targets.

This implies that, the implementation of the APER in Nigeria requires a well-defined and structured approach that involves setting performance targets, defining performance standards, training supervisors, communicating with employees, conducting the appraisal, providing feedback, identifying training needs, and reviewing and monitoring performance.

2.6 Comparison of the APER system with previous performance management systems

The performance management systems in Nigeria that have been used in the past, and here is a comparison between these systems and the APER system as drawn from reviewed literatures:

Emphasis on competencies and behaviors: The APER system is based on evaluating staff based on their competencies and behaviors, such as teamwork, leadership, and communication skills. In contrast, previous performance management systems in Nigeria have focused more on evaluating employees based on their ability to achieve specific targets and objectives. This difference in emphasis means that the APER system provides a more comprehensive evaluation of employee performance.

Ongoing feedback and coaching: The APER system places a strong emphasis on ongoing feedback and coaching throughout the year. In Nigeria, performance management systems have traditionally involved annual evaluations, with little or no feedback provided in between. This lack of ongoing feedback and coaching can lead to a less collaborative and less effective performance improvement process.

Objectivity and transparency: The APER system has clear and transparent evaluation criteria, which are based on a set of predetermined competencies and behaviors. This makes the evaluation process more objective and fairer, as it is not based on subjective or arbitrary criteria. In Nigeria, the APER system is used to evaluate the performance of civil servants, and the criteria are clearly communicated to all employees.

While the APER system has clear and transparent evaluation criteria, there are still some challenges and limitations to its implementation in Nigeria. Some of these drawn from several literatures include:

1. **Lack of training:** Many managers and supervisors in Nigerian civil service organizations may not be properly trained in the use of the APER system, which can lead to errors or inconsistencies in the evaluation process. This can undermine the credibility and fairness of the system.
2. **Resistance to change:** Some employees may resist the implementation of the APER system, especially if they have benefited from the subjective evaluation processes in the past. This can create resistance and tension within the organization and may lead to a lack of buy-in from employees.
3. **Inadequate infrastructure:** In some cases, the lack of adequate technology infrastructure and tools may make it difficult to effectively implement the APER system. For example, if managers and supervisors do not have access to computers or reliable internet connections, they may struggle to complete evaluations in a timely and accurate manner.

4. Limited capacity: The APER system requires a significant amount of resources and capacity to implement effectively, including trained evaluators, technology infrastructure, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In some cases, the limited capacity of civil service organizations in Nigeria may make it difficult to fully implement the APER system.
5. Political interference: The APER system may be vulnerable to political interference or manipulation, especially if evaluations are used to make decisions about promotions, salaries, or other opportunities. This can undermine the credibility and fairness of the system.

3.0 Conclusion

Based on the evaluation of the new APER in the federal civil service of Nigeria, this study concludes that the system has the potential to improve performance management practices in Nigeria. The introduction of the APER has provided a structured approach to evaluating employee performance, setting objectives, and providing feedback. It also promotes transparency and fairness in the evaluation process. However, the success of the APER system ultimately depends on its effective implementation and the commitment of all stakeholders involved. To ensure that the system delivers the desired results, there needs to be adequate training and support for managers and employees, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation of the system's effectiveness. Overall, the APER system is a positive step towards improving performance management in Nigeria's federal civil service, but it is important to recognize that it is just one part of a larger effort to promote good governance, accountability, and efficient service delivery in the country.

4.0 Recommendations for improving the APER system

Based on the evaluation of the new APER in the federal civil service of Nigeria, the following recommendations can help to ensure that the system is effective in driving performance improvement and contributing to the overall development of the civil service in Nigeria.

The APER system needs to be effectively implemented across all levels of the civil service. This includes providing adequate training and support to managers and employees on how to use the system effectively, as well as monitoring the system to ensure that it is being used as intended.

The APER system should be designed to promote transparency and accountability in the evaluation process. This can be achieved by ensuring that performance criteria are clearly defined, performance ratings are based on objective measures, and evaluations are conducted in a fair and consistent manner.

The system should be used as a tool to promote continuous feedback and improvement. Managers and employees should be encouraged to use the system to set goals, track progress, and identify areas for improvement. Again, there may be cultural and institutional barriers that prevent the effective implementation of the APER system. These barriers need to be identified and addressed through targeted interventions such as training, communication, and awareness-raising activities.

Finally, the APER system should be integrated with other performance management initiatives such as career development and succession planning. This will ensure that the system is aligned with broader organizational goals and priorities.

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