



RESEARCH ARTICLE



FACULTY APPRAISAL OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN SUDANESE GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION: A NEED TO RETHINK THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

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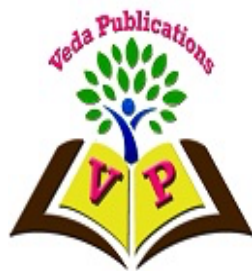
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to document the experience of Sudanese staff members of having their teaching effectiveness appraised. With this end in view, the study endeavored to find answers to three questions: how and how often do Sudanese faculty have their teaching effectiveness appraised? how many sources of evidence are used to get feedback on their effectiveness of teaching effectiveness? and when an overall appraisal of Sudanese faculty mission is conducted, which one of their multifaceted contributions (teaching, research, or community service) is emphasized? The study utilized a quantitative approach, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. The sample participating in this study was 12 faculty members from three governmental Sudanese universities. The study found out that teaching effectiveness appraisal system at Sudanese universities is deficient because it is rarely, if never, appraised systematically. In addition, the appraisal of teaching effectiveness at Sudanese universities is not evidence-based and depends on hearsay evidence. Moreover, the appraisal system does not use multiple sources of evidence and places greater emphasis on research and publication rather than on teaching effectiveness which the primary assignment of faculty members. To address these pitfalls, the study calls for an immediate countermeasure to rectify the situation. Sudanese universities need to foster a culture of accountability and faculty should take ownership of their roles, act with integrity, and be committed to achieving shared goals. In addition, teaching effectiveness must be due as a primary assignment of faculty members. It should be evaluated systematically and judging it should be evidence-based and use more than one key indicator of performance.

Keywords : *Appraisal, , Effectiveness, Faculty, Sudan, Teaching.*



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PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Performance appraisal has recently gained high status in all walks of life and become a powerful instrument for promoting organizational effectiveness. A comprehensive survey of the recent literature on performance appraisal reveals that it is now a generic term that includes and is, more often than not, used interchangeably with several terms such as performance assessment, evaluations, performance review or employee appraisal (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

In general terms performance evaluation is defined as a form of disciplined inquiry concerned with the determination of value (Cronbach & Suppes, 1969). Similarly, (Fletcher, 2001) points that performance appraisal has become a term used for a variety of activities through which organizations seek to assess employees to develop competence, improve performance, and allocate rewards. According to (Rynes, Gerhart, & Parks, 2005), performance appraisal serves two basic purposes: the first is evaluative (or administrative) as the term "appraisal" implies, and the second is developmental. In addition, Grote (2002) identified several purposes of performance appraisal such as providing feedback to employees about their performance, facilitating decisions concerning pay increases, promotions, layoffs, encouraging performance improvement, setting and measuring goals, determining individual and organizational training and development needs, confirming that good hiring decisions are being made, providing legal support for personnel decisions, and improving overall organizational performance. So, based on the literature on

performance evaluation, one can reasonably conclude that performance appraisal is an objective and goal-oriented process that seeks to gather fit-for purpose data in order to pass sound judgment on the quality, effectiveness or value of a policy, program or practice in terms of its contribution to a pre-established and well defined objectives and goals.

IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY

When it comes to universities and higher education organizations, performance appraisal is no less important as a strategic tool for improving organizational effectiveness. This is because in today's highly competitive world and with the quantitative and qualitative increase in the number of universities and institutions of higher education all over the world, excellence is a key determinant of every higher institution to gain a competitive advantage over rival universities and to fight for survival. According to this, (Hung. et al, 2011) is of the opinion that facing the highly competitive situation of recruiting students, all universities have to dispense with conventional management practices and replace it by applying concepts of business operations to achieve the ends of sustainable development and survival. This is due to the fact that universities and higher education institutions, now, are facing mounting pressure to enhance the quality and to excel in their mission (teaching/learning, research and technology, and community service) in order to play a pioneering role in the process of informing and positively transforming societies. Universities and higher education institutions also need to make sure to manage the process of enhancing these roles in a balanced manner and on an equal footing. However, without performance



evaluation that is evidence-based and uses key performance indicators, there will be no permanent improvement in the enhancement of the quality of the universities in their respective roles. This is because Earl and Timperley (2015) argue that evaluation methods and evaluative thinking provide tools for systematically gathering and interpreting evidence that can be used to provide information about progress and provide feedback for refinement, adjustment, abandonment, extension, and new learning. Based on Earl and Timperley argument we understand performance appraisal as a catalyst for development, improvement, innovation, excellence and positive change.

According to W.Wahyudi (2022), academics have three main tasks: providing quality teaching, conducting research to contribute to progress, and offering community service as an application of teaching and research. Regarding teaching and learning, which are one of the primary assignments of universities and higher education, the researcher strongly believes that these two processes should be closely monitored and carefully assessed in order for a university to gain a foothold in this highly competitive world as distinctive provider of quality education. This once again turns the spotlight on faculty performance evaluation as a mechanism for judging the value of the faculty instructional practices on the basis of pre-established goal, principles, or criterion.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SUDAN

The history of higher education in Sudan dates back to the British colonial administration, most importantly the in the year 1902 with the

establishment of Gordon Memorial College which evolved into the University of Khartoum by 1956. After 1956, expansion was slow until the year 1990 which is considered as a turning point of the higher education situation in Sudan. The year witnessed the birth of higher education “revolution” adopted by the National Salvation Revolution Government that came to power in June 1989. That government declared for an urgent need for reform of higher education because it believed that the situation of higher education in Sudan has been in a state of crisis in all aspects and this calls for an immediate, intense, and revolutionary action to prevent further deterioration. To address the pitfalls of higher education, a conference on higher education was held in Khartoum city in 1990. The *1990 Higher Education Act* that resulted from the conference deliberations mandated a reform to Sudan’s higher education system. This reform was generally referred to as the Higher Education Revolution and was designed to expand Sudanese higher education in unprecedented ways. Due to the “revolution”, both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sudan have witnessed rapid expansion. The number of public (HEIs) increased from five universities and one polytechnic in 1989 to 30 universities and the number of private (HEIs) is now approaching 43.

The newly born universities have faced many challenges and still there is a long way to go. While some progress may have been made, substantial steps remain before these universities reach their ultimate objectives. For newly born universities in Sudan and the old alike to survive and thrive, they need to achieve excellence by fostering a culture of accountability, continuous improvement, investing in



high-quality faculty development, leveraging data-driven decision-making, prioritizing student-centered learning environments and maintain quality teaching. In order for universities in Sudan to maintain quality teaching, strong system of accountability and evaluation for teaching effectiveness that stresses not only what is taught but also how it is taught is a necessity. So, the overarching objective of this study is to document the experience of Sudanese faculty member regarding the appraisal of their teaching effectiveness and classroom. To achieve this objective the study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. How often do Sudanese faculty have their teaching effectiveness and classroom practices appraised? (for example, annually, at the end of a semester, after the completion of a course, occasionally)
2. When necessity calls to take personnel decisions like promotion, and merit-based salary increases, how do Sudanese faculty have their teaching effectiveness appraised? How many sources of evidence are used, then, to get feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching?
3. When is an overall appraisal of Sudanese faculty tasks as a staff member is conducted to reach for personal decisions such as promotion, which of their multifaceted contributions is emphasized? Is it teaching, research, or community service?

METHOD

Introduction

The aim of this section is to set out the methodological approach undertaken to discover the staff members' personal experience regarding the appraisal of their teaching effectiveness and

classroom practices. In addition, the section will present the sample selected, set out the method used for data collection along with the process of data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research paper follows the qualitative approach because a qualitative approach is more relevant to undertake this study as it allows greater capacity to gain more depth and meaning based on individuals' experiences. According to (Corner *et al.*, 2019) the quantitative approach typically involves observing the population and conducting in-depth interviews or focus group discussions. Similarly, Cleland (2017) contends that qualitative research is concerned with understanding people's experiences in a simple, easy and analytical way and seeks answers to research questions using a systematically pre-defined set of procedures.

PARTICIPANTS

In this study the researcher recruited (12) staff members. The inclusion criterion was based on participants who are currently participating in the process of teaching as full-time staff members at Sudanese universities. Participants represent staff members from three governmental Sudanese universities, namely University of Shendi, Wdai Al-Neel University, and Merowe University of Technology. The researcher selected the participants randomly and purposively. Randomly to ensure every staff member has an equal opportunity for inclusion, and purposively to guarantee that the participants are not homogeneous in terms of affiliation with colleges, academic rank and years of experience.



Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Participants	University	College	Academic rank	Years of experience
Participant 1	Shendi	Education	Assistant professor	33
Participant 2	Shendi	Arts	Associate professor	24
Participant 3	Shendi	Law	Professor	21
Participant 4	Shendi	Economy	Professor	21
Participant 5	Wadi- Al-Neel	Education	Assistant professor	21
Participant 6	Wadi- Al-Neel	Archeology and Tourism	Assistant professor	25
Participant 7	Wadi- Al-Neel	Economy	Lecturer	28
Participant 8	Wadi- Al-Neel	Sharia and Law	Associate professor	30
Participant 9	Merowe	Administrative Sciences	Assistant professor	11
Participant 10	Merowe	Economy	Professor	20
Participant 11	Merowe	Science	Lecturer	11
Participant 12	Merowe	Economy	Assistant professor	25

PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

Participants were sought through personal contacts of the researcher. The researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with each of the participants individually. Each participant was presented with similar set of questions concerning their overall experiences of appraisal of their teaching effectiveness and classroom practices. The questions were mainly open-ended questions with a small number of closed questions relating to information such as academic rank, total number of years of experience, and length of unemployment. A smartphone was used to record interviews, and all interviews were fully transcribed. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language (Arabic). Once the participants responses were fully transcribed, coding began to spot and document the recurring of particular words, phrases, themes, or concepts within the respondents' responses.

DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the research objectives, the nature of the data, and the type of insights the researcher aims at and in order to generate deep insights and meaning to the interviewees' responses to the research questions, the researcher followed the content analysis method. According to Krippendorff (1980) content analysis is a replicable technique for making inferences from data to its context, allowing for the systematic examination of large amounts of qualitative data. Content analysis is also a systematic method used to quantify and analyze the presence of particular words, phrases, themes, or concepts within textual data. This method is especially useful when researchers need to objectively measure the frequency of certain themes or patterns in the data.

Following this method, the researcher developed a list of predefined categories or themes, and a coding frame based on the research questions or theoretical framework. Each category was defined,



and clear criteria are established for how segments of the data would be assigned to each category. According to (Sarandakos, 1998), when following content analysis method, the codes applied are keywords which are used to categorize or organize text and are considered an essential part of qualitative research. The researcher, then, performed an iterative analysis of the participants' responses using an inductive, interpretive approach. The codes were reviewed and analyzed and all the significant, relevant, nonrepetitive, and non-overlapping statements about the interviewees experience of having their teaching effectiveness and classroom were identified.

RESULTS

The primary aim of this study was to explore and understand the faculty members' experience about the appraisal of their teaching effectiveness and classroom practices. Specifically, the research sought to find answers to the research following questions. This section reports and documents the participants' responses to the research questions.

Question 1: How often do you have your teaching effectiveness and classroom practices being appraised and how is this carried out?

Eight participants responded that they had never had their teaching effectiveness and classroom practices being regularly and systematically appraised. Four participants responded that they rarely have their teaching effectiveness and classroom being appraised. When this happens, it is mainly informal, personal, or self-initiated. It is always in the form of peer evaluation, informal conversation with the students, and other self-evaluation

techniques that involve structured, honest reflection on one's own performance to identify strengths and improve student learning. The four participants also responded that they perform these techniques of evaluation to reflect on their own teaching successes, failures, and professional development. In addition, the participants pointed out that this form of evaluation usually takes place in complete absence of the university administration, and this implies a situation where oversight, management, or authorized guidance is totally unavailable.

Question 2: When necessity calls to take personnel decisions like promotion, and merit-based salary increases, how is your teaching effectiveness appraised? How many sources of evidence are used, then, to get feedback on the effectiveness of your teaching?

All participants responded that the common practice that the direct supervisor (head of the department or the dean) is in charge of passing judgement on their teaching effectiveness with final authority often resting with Deans. Based on his knowledge, assumptions, and intuition of the staff members, the dean rates faculty members teaching competences on a numerical rating scale (NRS) selecting a number from an ordered set (1–5). He fills out a form and responds to predefined teaching competencies by assigning points to each competence for evaluation. Also, all participants agreed that the decisions about the appraisal of their teaching effectiveness is not evidence-based practice (EBP) that moves beyond tradition or intuition, depending on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that provide objective evidence of progress toward specific strategic goals. Accordingly, the participants



pointed out that there are no true sources of evidence with significant input from peer review committees, students, classroom observation reports or specialized faculty evaluation coordinators to get feedback on their teaching effectiveness.

Question 3: When is an overall appraisal of your mission as a staff member conducted to reach for personal decisions such as promotion, which of your multifaceted contributions is emphasized? Is it teaching, research, or community service?

All participants responded that although all these tasks are appraised, they are not on an equal footing. Greater emphasis is placed on publication and paper presentations at conferences than on teaching effectiveness. More often than not staff members are rewarded and held in high esteem when they excel in research, but this is not the case when they demonstrate evidence of high quality in teaching. In addition, the participants stated that the appraisal of teaching effectiveness is not scientific and is based on hearsay evidence not on true sources of evidence like classroom observation. However, they maintained, in the case

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtain, it is clearly evident that faculty appraisal system of teaching at Sudanese governmental universities is deficient. Many factors have contributed to create and restore this status quo. To begin with, Sudanese universities and higher educational institutions adopt a laissez faire approach to performance appraisal of teaching effectiveness and, in consequence, the teaching and in-class effectiveness of the faculty are rarely (if not never) monitored or checked on systematically.

Furthermore, the faculty members have been given a free reign to teach students and the question of how to teach is entirely left to their discretion. Second, in Sudanese universities and higher educational institution, the faculty members who are not committed to the necessity and importance of continuous professional development feel no high pressure to stay familiar with the most recent changes, innovations, or improvement in teaching in order to excel at them because they are safe in the knowledge that poor performance in teaching does not result in the faculty members losing their job. Thirdly, despite the fact that teaching / learning is one of the primary assignments of universities and higher educational institution, little emphasis is given to the faculty members teaching effectiveness when taking faculty related decisions such as promotion, rewards, pay raise, tenure, or demotion. Finally, Sudanese universities and higher educational institution are still faithful to conventional management practice and the efforts to replace it by applying concepts of business operations that promote and foster the culture of accountability is still in its infancy.

In order to rectify this situation, address these pitfalls, and avoid dire consequences, immediate action must be taken. Sudanese universities need to foster a culture of accountability and faculty should take ownership of their roles, act with integrity, and are committed to achieving shared goals. In addition, teaching effectiveness must be due as a primary assignment of faculty members. It should be evaluated systematically and judging it should be based on more than key indicators of performance.

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