Effective performance appraisal: Asking the right questions

Professor Carol Cardno

Unitec Institute of Technology

Auckland, New Zealand

Listen to the sound of performance appraisal in practice!

Be nice to Penny (performance review)

* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7CEmBZyGF8

Valued and hated – equally!

* Organisations invest considerable time and effort in systems for performance to be appraised

* People invest considerable energy and emotion in appraising others or being appraised (or trying to avoid it)

* Shouldn't we be asking ourselves how effective this investment is?

* There is a small literature about appraisal in higher education settings but it does not reflect the challenges or the tensions we all know are barriers to effectiveness

* So – here's an opportunity to do some useful research to add to what is already known

Why appraisal can be demanding

* Managing performance appraisal is one of the most demanding tasks that managers are responsible for because:

* It has multiple purposes:

* It is there for organisational accountability and reporting purposes

* It is used to confirm that people are meeting expectations and achieving work/task goals

* It is also supposed to be developmental and provide support for individuals

And it is demanding

* It should focus on how well people are achieving and what improvements could be made
* It should foster positive and affirming relationships
* Managers of appraisal should implement processes that allow several purposed to be met
* Managers actually have to do it!
* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTSxzfeji6A

Appraisal creates a leadership dilemma for managers

* In order to meet the needs of the organisation on one hand and maintain effective relationships with colleagues on the other hand, managers can find themselves between a rock and a hard place!

* Dilemmas in appraisal contexts can be managed if:

* - the dilemma is recognised and articulated

* - there is open and productive conversation about issues

* - change is agreed and monitored

What is well known is that dilemmas are normally avoided and appraisal is also often a non-event

* See for example, Cardno, C. (2012). *Managing effective relationships in education.* London: Sage.

Intentions and actualities

Espousals

* **The policy and the promises state:**
* What the appraisal system is expected to deliver
* What the institution expects in terms of results
* What is expected of the effective manager (appraiser) and what they will do
* What is expected of the staff member (appraisee) to meet multiple appraisal purposes

Actions

* **The practice and the reality reveal:**
* What the system is capable of achieving
* What the institution is capable of achieving
* How managers (appraisers) are performing and experiencing appraisal
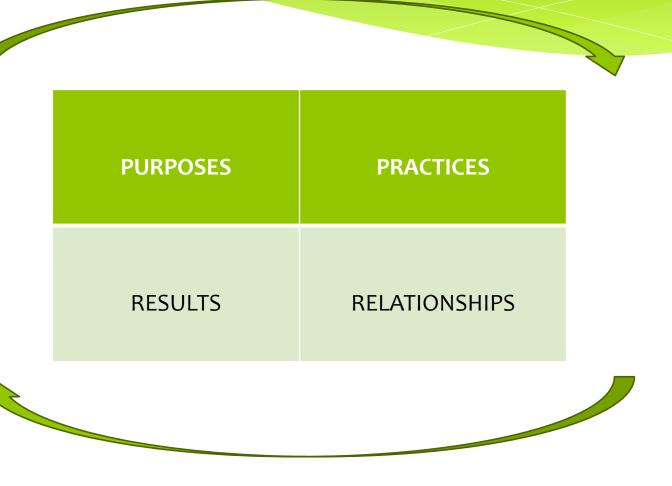* How staff members (appraisees) are performing and experiencing appraisal

Policy analysis

* Four publicly available staff appraisal policies from New Zealand polytechnics were analysed to establish standards for evaluating the quality of policy documents based on these aspects:

* Policy context and scope

* Policy intent and values

* Policy construction

* Constituent elements and process required by policy

* Implementation expectations

* Policy review and links to institutional evaluation

Policy evaluation standards for checking

* **Handout 1:**
* **Appraisal Policy-Practice Evaluation Standards Framework**
* Let me show you what this looks like
* This is a draft evaluation standards framework for examining the effectiveness of performance appraisal policy – by asking the right questions

* **Challenge**
* Creating an evaluation standards framework for appraisal practice – four categories are suggested

Practice categories – identifying the elements of effectiveness that we need to check by asking the right questions

PURPOSES	PRACTICES
RESULTS	RELATIONSHIPS

Focus on practice

* **Handout 2: Elements of Effective Appraisal Practice**
* I am seeking your input here
* What is essential for practice to be effective in relation to: purposes, practices, relationships and results?
* What practices are valued in terms of what we experience as appraisers or appraisees in relation to purposes, practices, relationships and results?
* Your ideas about the questions that should be asked will help to identify **elements** that should be investigated

Organising your feedback
one category per group

BACK LEFT OF ROOM	BACK RIGHT OF ROOM
Group 1 PURPOSES	Group 2 PRACTICES
Group 4 RESULTS	Group 3 RELATIONSHIPS
FRONT LEFT OF ROOM	FRONT RIGHT OF ROOM

Collaboration Partners

* It would be great to set up a collaborative group of tertiary partners to participate in this study
* It may also be useful to explore ATEM's interest in helping with a collaboration

* The key research question will be:
* What are the features of effective performance appraisal policy and practice in higher education?
* You can contact me at ccardno@unitec.ac.nz