

SECTION 7

Appraisal

Introduction

Appraisal is viewed by many in the teaching profession, as in other areas of government service, as a bureaucratic process which has little relevance to the task of teaching and the process of learning. While the purposes of appraisal can be fully justified, it is the manner in which it has been carried out over the years that has brought it into disrepute. Teachers, Headteachers and others complete the appraisal proformas as a routine, if not boring, task and with little respect for the fundamental objectives of the system. Thereafter, the completed forms all too frequently lie unused or are placed in the teachers' files for no clear purpose.

Unless appraisal can be seen by all involved to have defined and transparent objectives which are of value to the teacher and the education system as a whole there can be no real future for appraisal.

Checklist

- (1) Are all teachers, Headteachers and Inspectors aware of the aims and objectives of appraisal?
- (2) As part of school development planning and teacher self-evaluation, have all members of the school staff been encouraged to set targets for themselves?
- (3) Is the system based on continuous assessment, ensuring that the teacher is aware of the quality and shortcomings of his/her performance?
- (4) Have promoted staff been properly trained to make assessments of the staff they supervise?
- (5) Have the appraisal proformas in use been designed specifically for the school situation?
- (6) Are the questions asked relevant, specific and able to be answered by the appraisee and the appraiser?
- (7) Is there an outcome to the process which leads the person appraised to see a benefit?

Policy Suggestions

For success, appraisal must be firmly rooted in a structured evaluation system. All teachers, whatever their rank, must have a clear job specification; school development planning should establish educational priorities of which every teacher in the school must be aware; subsequent preparation for implementing the development plan should require each teacher to review his/her own strengths and weaknesses in the priority areas; continuous assessment of performance by a colleague should reinforce this self-evaluation. Formal appraisal is the end product of this process.

The purpose(s) of appraisal must be fully understood by teachers and their managers. This requires a clear statement indicating that appraisal will be used for one or more of the following:

- (a) leadership qualities;
- (b) promotion;
- (c) salary increment;
- (d) professional development;
- (e) identification of incompetent teachers.

Without a policy based on these objectives teachers will always view appraisal with suspicion, resistance or outright opposition. The following are the main principles required to underpin a successful appraisal system:

- appraisal must be seen to be a coherent component of teacher management;
- it should be aimed, primarily, at improving teaching skills and teacher knowledge;
- all teachers, including Headteachers, must be included in the process, preferably on a continuous assessment system;
- appraisal should never be used as a disciplinary tool - separate procedures must exist to handle any suspected disciplinary offence;
- an appeal clause is an essential component of an appraisal system if teacher confidence is to be encouraged.

Procedures for Consideration

The appraisal scheme used by administrative departments of government, having substantially different aims and objectives, should never be imposed on the school system. If a successful appraisal scheme for teachers is to be formulated, it is essential that they and their professional associations are involved in its development.

When planning procedures for the appraisal of teachers the following points should be borne in mind:

- appraisal must have positive rather than negative outcomes;
- if appraisal is to be objective, rather than subjective, in nature it must be based on a clear job specification for every grade of teacher;
- effective appraisal should be based on teacher self-evaluation and a system of continuous assessment. It should be, therefore, formative, rather than summative, encouraging teachers to identify their shortcomings and to take action to improve their performance;
- formal appraisal should be carried out by an immediate superior who has responsibility for the supervision of the teacher's day-to-day work;
- an appeal system should be included to ensure that personality clashes can be overcome;
- clear links should be developed between a teacher's appraisal and a plan for his/her personal professional development.

References:

Progress through Self-Evaluation: The Path to a Better School

Unit 1, pages 8-14

Unit 2, pages 15-19

Unit 3, pages 30-32

Turning the Tables on Teacher Management

Chapter 8, pages 34-36

Why Delegate?

Chapter 6, page 28