SUSTAINABLE PERSPECTIVES & PROGNOSES OF 720 DEGREE APPRAISAL - A FARTHER ZENITH BEYOND 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

A step further towards the sustainable Human resource development praxis aimed at continuous improvement of performances within the organisations by a system that allows an improvement plan which can be measured again after a spell of time on the same criterion laid down for the appraisal of performance. The entire process is aimed at attaining organisational effectiveness by large making human resource development possible at all levels. The present review paper based on past and contemporary research studies is an attempt to untangle the idiosyncrasies of 720 degree appraisal for today's business world, focussing on its perspectives, practices and future scope from an individual as well as organisational viewpoint, differentiating it from its origin-360 degree appraisal, working out the merits and demerits of the appraisal source.. 360 degree appraisal as a source of appraisal is notably a precursor to 720 degree appraisal proposed for measurement of performance on a continuum rather than a transient phenomenon, leading to a strategic human resource development approach. The research study also provides directions for future research which could be carried out for further contribution to the area of performance appraisal management.

KEYWORDS: *360 degree appraisal, 720 degree appraisal, employee empowerment, feedback, training and development.*

INTRODUCTION

In organisations either the individuals' or teams' performances are considered to be rated, the rater may specifically be an individual, work group, division, or organisation as a whole or at multiple levels. Two conditions necessitate a group level appraisal-group cohesiveness and difficulty in identifying individual performances. Group cohesiveness refers to the shared feelings among work team members. There is a clear understanding to accomplish tasks which are interdependent. At the same time the difficulty in identifying individual contribution is also significant to consider. The point here to be noted is that all employees must become appraisees to ensure every ones performance is rated within the organisation. In terms of research, there is greater interest in issues such as psychological variables that underlie the appraisal process and

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user reactions to the facets of the system *(Cardy & Dobbins 1994, Judge & Ferris 1993, Waldman 1997)*, rather than just appraisal instruments and accuracy. Simply put, there is now greater concern with whether employees are satisfied with the appraisal process a firm uses. Likewise appraisal technique that managers employ to deliver feedback are increasingly unlikely to be traditionally one way rating exercise as practitioners adopt techniques of self, peer, 360 multi-rater appraisal. These twin forces for change intersect at a point where the field embraces multi rater appraisal partly in belief that it will increase appraisal satisfaction *(Lublin, 1994)*. That is since multi- rater appraisal involves more people, gives employees a voice in the process and impacts a sense of control *(Farh et al., 1988)*.

Employee acceptance & satisfaction should follow in appraisals *(Giles & Mossholder, 1990, Korsgaard & Roberson l995)*, since appraisal systems are designed to help organization retain, motivate and develop their employees *(Mount, 1983)*, there can be little hope that these outcomes will occur if individuals are dissatisfied with the process. If ratees are dissatisfied or perceive a system as 'unfair' they will be less likely to use evaluations as feed back to improve their performance *(Ilgen et al., 1979)*. *Villanova et al. (1993)* noted that raters who show high levels of appraisal discomfort are more likely to provide inflated ratings.

An appraisal process may be designed to motivate employees and inspire their continuous efforts towards goals, but unless its participants are satisfied with and support it, the system will ultimately be unsuccessful *(Carrol & Schneir, 1982; Morhman & Lawler, 1989)*. Performance appraisal often includes equipping employees with new knowledge and skills it may also contribute to the employees perceived investment in employee development- Using a social exchange lens *(Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004; Eisenberger et al., 1990, Lee & Bruvold, 2003)*, employees who believe their organization is committed to providing them with developmental activities may feel an obligation to repay the organization through high work performance. In the of the above discussion, the objectives for present research paper are laid down as such;

- o to study the perspective of 360 degree appraisal as a source of performance evaluation in organisations
- o to study the different dimensions and merits/demerits of using 360 degree appraisal in organisations
- o to study emerging trend of emergence of 720 degree appraisal as an extension of dual evaluation to 360 degree appraisal and its merits and demerits
- o to assess the need for 720 degree appraisal in the modern world business organisations and provide directions for future research.

Further, the study is based on secondary data using books, journals, magazines and reliable online sources/digital repositories. The research papers analysed are either conceptual studies or empirical assessments of 360 and 720 degree appraisals. It has been ensured that research papers considered for this review paper are relevant to the perspectives, practices and prognoses of subject under study.

CONCEPT OF 360 DEGREE APPRAISAL

The 360 degree appraisal is made by self, superiors, peers, subordinates and clients, it can help an employee be rated from different sides, different people who can give a wider perspective of the employee's competencies, overall personality and behaviour at workplace *(Shrestha, 2007)*. It has also been used widely for HRD appraisal and pay decisions *(Stone, 2002)*. During the last few years, *T.V. Rao* regarded as *"The Father of Indian HRD"*, has been popularizing the methodology of "Developing Leadership through Feedback by Known People" (DLFKP), which was developed by him in mid 1980's at IIMA (*Indian Institutes of Management, Ahmadabad)* and worked on it along with other experts. This methodology is now termed by other specialists as 360 degree feedback methodology.

Historically the German military first began gathering feedback from myriad origins, so as to rate performance during the Second World War. Through the concept of training groups, others also explored the use of multi-rater feedback in this period of time. In 1950s, at Esso Research and Engineering Company occurred one of the soonest recorded uses of surveys to collect data about the employees. The momentum of 360 degree feedback made headway from there and this concept was imbibed by most of the human resources and organizational development professionals by 1990s. However, either via complex manual calculations or lengthy delays, the gathering and comparing the feedback necessitated a paper based endeavour. While as the manual calculations led to dismay and despair on the part of practitioners, the lengthy delays led to a gradual erosion of commitment by the recipients.

First developed and implemented professionally at corporate level in General Electric US 1992, the system has become quite popular in India as well as Reliance Industries, Crompton Greaves, Godrej, Infosys, Wipro, Thomas cook and are utilizing the method with larger gains. Apart from evaluating performance, some other imputes of the assessee-talents, behavioural quirks, values, ethical standards, tempers and loyalty are evaluated in the 360 degree method by the people best placed to do it. Rating committees are used by umpteen employers to assess the employees. And such committees often comprise of six members as depicted in the figure 1.1.

Fig. 1.1: 360 degree appraisal - meaning and six parties involved in it, kalyan-city.blogspot.com (Gaurav, 2011)
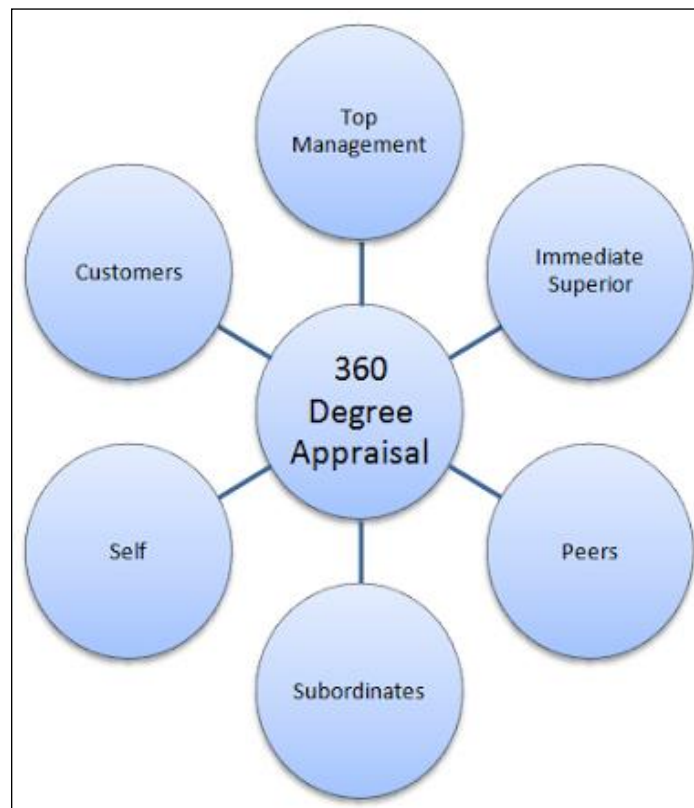
Research suggests that, in organizations, the flux of feedback information is distinctively the flow of such information in organizations which is typically restrained *(Ashford, 1989)*. Generally, within organizations, it is accepted that feedback is priceless. Numerous suggestions have been put forward to free up feedback channels- 360 degree feedback is one such mechanism. There is an efficacious and ethical pressure in working organizations to assess employees in an objective, persistent and honest way *(Bacal, 2000; Greenberg, 1986 & Mufeed, 2008)*. Therefore organizations are increasingly implementing high performance work practices such as 360 degree feedback interventions in hopes of improving workplace attitudes and performance *(London et al., 1997; Tornow & London, 1998, Sujith, 2017)* which is further improved to its newer version.

360° appraisal or multi-source appraisal, the process in which subordinates, peers, supervisors and customers provide anonymous feedback to recipients, has grown in popularity over the past decade. A sort of propensity is there for the use of 360 degree appraisals of performance for the appraisal of occupational competencies. *(Cheung 1999, Yammarino & Atwater., 1993)*.

An organisation can be benefitted in a number of ways by 360 degree appraisals, to sum up with the following;

- It can be used for executive development. *Wiley (1993)* found that executives are less likely to participate in group training programmes and they rarely get in depth performance feedback or developmental coaching from their bosses. 360 degree feedback can be used to provide such developmental feedback to executive.

- It can be used solely for developmental purposes. *Romano (1994) and Atwater (1993)* found that the most common use in the area of training and development.

- To facilitate cultural change such as to accelerate a shift to team work and employee empowerment *(London & Beatty, 1993; Reilly, 1994).*

- The organization can use it as part of its succession planning systems *(Nowack, 1993; Tornow, 1993)* because the instrument evaluates what skills and abilities certain individuals are perceived to have, these individuals can be matched to corresponding positions which demand such skills and abilities.

Feedback from multiple raters' arrests enhancement in the dependability, candour and credence of the data by the person being rated *(London et al., 1990),* as the feedback is received from multiple sources and not just one source. It may have a positive effect on managerial performance. *Van Veslor and Wall (1992)* found that performance by some managers is enhanced after getting poor ratings during evaluations. Having an actuating proportion, the individuals can considerably decrease discrepancies between themselves and their actual behaviour by sheer motivation *(Van et al., 1997).* It serves directional purpose because recipients of feedback receive valuable information about their strengths & weaknesses which can guide them in formulating career development plans *(Tornow, 1993).* It can help uncover and resolve conflict *(London, 1997). Hazucha et.al. (1993)* suggested that individuals get an opportunity to praise or criticize their co-workers anonymously.

Regardless of the wider acceptance, some questions remain in the shadow as to whether it is a good idea and how well it works. *Bracken et al. (2001)* were of the view that these questions become paramount as organizations literary behold on making use of results for decision making like performance appraisals, pay findings, taking over plans, job placement or even curtailment.

360 degree feedback captivates enhanced pressure on managers as the burden of the feedback may be more than they can actually deal with, more so when the results are damaging and all of the rater's agree on the negative areas. Such type of assessments can lead to uncertainty and threat on part of both the managers and their superiors, if the results turn unfavourable. Organizations may become saturated with forms or as described as "survey

fatigue" *Kalpan (1993)*. This can add complexity to the administration process *(London & Beatty, 1993; Tornow, 1993)*. When the individual being rated is allowed freedom of choice of raters he/she has an opportunity to choose friendly raters and may attempt to cheat the system *(Bracken, 1994)*. *Bernardin et.al. (1993)* found that subordinates are qualified to evaluate only certain aspects of manager's behaviour. According to *Campbell (1995)*, the 360 degree feedback process can be expensive. He approximates that it is ten time more expensive than the standard reports. *Brett & Atwater (2001)* found that individuals who received feedback most discrepant with their own ratings believed that feedback was less accurate & less useful. *Johnson & Ferstl (1999)* found that the under rated individuals actually showed a performance decline following feedback. Researchers predominantly maintain that difference between that actual & rated performance should not be considered to be measurement error but forces in the organization that discourage accurate ratings *(Murphy & Cleveland, 1995)*. To do away with such discrepancies organisations strive hard to make the system au courant with such real time challenges. The 360 degree feedback suffers from the limitations that it is time consuming, costly, partial and lacks confidentiality and reliance owing to troubles and tensions to several staff on extension of exchange feedback as a result of evaluation *(Jency, 2016)*. In order to improve 360 degree feedback methodology organizations should pay more attention to communication about the behaviour of individual employees with each level of dimension *(Stoker & Heijden, 2001)*.

CONCEPT OF 720 DEGREE APPRAISAL

The latest addition to 360 degree appraisal method that has been introduced in New Economy Companies is 720 degree appraisal which can be stated as two fold 360 degree appraisal i.e. when the appraisal is done and the targets are set and the second time the feedback is given for further improvement towards achievement of goals. The new economy is the result of the transition from a manufacturing based economy (old economy companies) to a service based economy. 720 degree appraisal, considered an 'all round' appraisal, is one of the most recently introduced concepts. The major setback in the other methods was that it did not guide the employee after the appraisal hence 720 degree appraisal was introduced when the employees performance is measured, analysed and targets are set in the first appraisal and after a short period his/her performance is evaluated again and proper feedback and guidance is given to ensure that the employee achieves the target. Hence it can be stated as twice 360 degree performance appraisal *(Jency ,2016)*. The phases of 720 degree appraisal are as under;

a) **PRE APPRAISAL FEEDBACK**

After the feedback is collected from the different dimensions i.e. self, peers, superior, customers and subordinates, the performance is finally rated, targets are set for the employee and feedback meeting is organised to intimate the appraisee about where he/she stands. This phase also allows the organisation to facilitate the appraisee for any training needs recognised in the feedback from various stakeholders. This phase is indicated in the figure 1.2 as P1.

Fig: 1.2: Representation of Phases of 720 Degree Appraisal
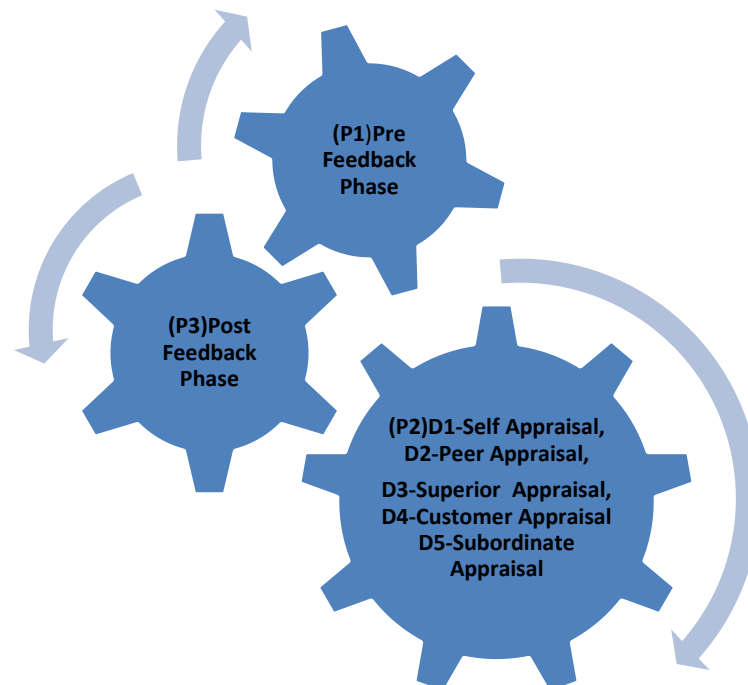
b) SELF APPRAISAL

The employee evaluates his/her own performance through appraisal of self. This steps gives appraisee an opportunity to express ratings based on his/her judgement of strengths and weaknesses. Self appraisal is denoted as D1 in figure 1.2.

c) PEER APPRAISAL

In this dimension, feedback from the peers is taken to apprehend the capabilities of the employee to work in a team, with full cooperation and coordination with others by motivating them towards the task oriented goals. Peer appraisal is indicated as D2 in figure 1.2.

d) SUPERIOR APPRAISAL

The performance is assessed by the boss/immediate manager of the employee based on appraisee's role and responsibilities and attitude at work. Superior appraisal is denoted as D3 in figure 1.2.

e) CUSTOMER APPRAISAL

Undoubtedly employees are the prime focus of the organisation in appraisals, yet taking feedback from the customers recognising them as stakeholders and their feedback as an invaluable tool for further improvement of employees and services at large, is surely going to yield promising results. This step is also aimed at achieving greater customer satisfaction apart from improving the employee as well as the organisation. Customer appraisal is denoted as D4 in figure 1.2.

f) SUBORDINATES APPRAISAL

To evaluate the employee's communication, leadership and motivation skills, ability to delegate the task to subordinates and managing his/her role and responsibilities, subordinates are required to give feedback about their bosses. This appraisal is indicated as D5 in figure 1.2.

g) POST APPRAISAL PHASE

In this step, the performance is again evaluated based on the targets pre determined during the P1 phase of the 720 degree appraisal and feedback from the respective multi rater group. It is the post appraisal phase that distinguishes 720 degree appraisal from the 360 degree appraisal. Thus with the twin objective of facilitating the appraisees for further improvement by organisational support and provision of timely feedback to them from various dimensions, the dual objectives of 720 degree appraisal are met. This phase is exhibited as P3 in the figure 1.2.

Further, 720 degree appraisal is a method that gives paramount importance to feedback as there is a pre and post feedback session. From a study based on six IT companies, it is concluded that most of the appraisers and appraisee respondents do not know about the 720 degree appraisal method and are not satisfied with the current performance appraisal method owing to occurences of bias and prejudice during rating *(Anupama et. al. 2011, Jenifur, 2016).*

NEED FOR 720 DEGREE PERFORAMNCE APPRAISAL IN THE MODERN BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS

There is a dire need for the modern day business organisations to evaluate its employees based on the sources which are reliable so that the appraisees trust on the performance appraisal system remains unshaken. Mutual participation of both the parties –appraiser and the appraisees is as significant as having an appraisal system within organisations, 720 degree appraisal allows an appraisee to participate fully in the performance appraisal process, which after the first feedback session becomes an improvement tool for the appraisee. Following are the other benefits of 720 degree appraisal;

- It helps in bringing about a synergetic environment in workplace by helping the employees perform at their best.
- It facilitates the organisation in analysis and re-analysis of the employees' performance by encouraging them to work out their deficiencies if any, within a specific time period.
- It allows the appraisee to receive feedback from various stakeholders including clients, making it more development oriented appraisal source.
- It helps in team building and cooperation by providing a platform for performance discussions continually.
- In the services sector 720 degree appraisal system, the organisation gets invaluable information from the customers about the employees, in particular the front office staff for further improvement.
- It brings transparency and justice in the performance appraisal system PAS, rendering the entire system of performance assessment as highly reliable for the appraisees and appraisers.
- It is a powerful appraisal source for supplementing training and development functions in a better way.
- It ensures reduction of the appraisal errors such as rating bias, discrimination or prejudice due to the high involvement of appraisees till the process is done.
- It fortifies quality human resource management due to provision of highly reliable information which can further yield administrative purposes within organisations.

However, the method is perceived as time consuming by the appraisers. Since the feedback has to be taken twice, monetary requirements are higher in case of 720 degree appraisal.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, 720 degree appraisal opens the threshold towards strategic human resource development by partnering with the stakeholders within and outside of the organisations. A unique feature that this type of performance appraisal source bestows is the fact that it allows

facilitation to the appraisees so that there is improvement with regard to deficiencies that have already been marked red during the 360 degree appraisal. Remarkably the process does not end here but puts the employee on an improvement plan for a particular period of time, after which again the performance will be assessed using the same criteria as had been laid down earlier. This kind of appraisal surely works for better coordination, cooperation, facilitation, employee motivation and target orientation within the organisations. Time is inevitably ripe to realise the importance of the dual performance appraisal in place.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

720 degree appraisal is yet another step farther towards performance effectiveness in organisations. There is a dearth of extensive empirical research studies based on the effectiveness of 720 degree appraisal; however the available research focuses on the conceptual framework of 720 degree appraisal. Comparative research studies may also be conducted measuring the effectiveness of 360 degree and 720 degree appraisals in organisations.

Further, appraisees' and appraiser's acceptance and level of satisfaction can also be analysed in order to assess the perception of employees towards 720 degree appraisal. Exclusive managerial studies could serve researchers in understanding the managers' perception and satisfaction level towards 720 degree appraisal in organisations. Similar studies could be undertaken in different industrial sectors so as to arrive at comparative empirical analysis.

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