

# Performance appraisal of University People

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## Introduction

The subject of this article is problems of performance appraisal within Masaryk University Brno (hereafter as 'MU'). The objective of the issue is to carry out an analysis of current policy and practice within MU, and to propose measures to improve the actual situation.

MU is a Czech standard university offering university education in law, economics, philosophy, philology, sociology, medicine, sciences, and education. It is the second oldest university in the Czech Republic, comprising 7 faculties as well as 2 all-university departments, a special institute, and the rector's office. There are about 10 000 students and 2 000 teachers and other employees at MU. MU top management consists of the rector, 4 vice-rectors, the chief clerk, the rector's board, the academic council, and the university senate.

## Analysis of performance appraisal actual situation

There is not any complex system of performance appraisal within MU nor any intention to build up professionally such a system. Thus, performance appraisal is left, largely, to the willingness of the managers and of senior teachers, and, above all, to the self-appraisal approach of the staff. This is, unfortunately, in accordance with the material stimulation system which, being based on nivelization, is not motivating. Implicitly, it seems to be supposed that the 'mission' of the teacher's job is predominant; inadequately, this approach is used even with administrative and other supporting staff. At the rector's office and at the faculties, there are personnel departments but they focus on common operations only. Briefly speaking, one can make the statement that from the objective point of view, the current performance appraisal system is totally inappropriate but from the subjective point of view, many people are satisfied with it.

It will certainly be useful to try and investigate the reasons for this false situation. The first reason is certain uniqueness of the academic environment that

has always generally been connected with ideas of individualism, liberty, etc. The second reason is the natural human reaction to the fall of totalitarianism, which is reflected in exorbitant repugnance for any outer regulations. The third reason, in my opinion, is the over-concentration of above-average qualification employees in one particular organization, which always leads to difficulties in co-ordinating group efforts. The fourth reason is, I suppose, underestimation of the importance of managing universities in order to provide successfully educational and research services. Even if I do not consider this list to be complete, the last point here is the supreme position of state universities, supported by the University Act.

As synergetic consequences of these reasons, we have to deal with underestimation of prevention and of purposeful preparations towards future MU operation. Also, people are not willing to make changes, the management is not professional, strategic management is completely absent, there is rampant operating and pseudohumanity at MU, etc. It is therefore not surprising that also the standards of managing people and the related performance appraisal are not sufficient. Labour force as a production factor is, though, essential to the existence and development of the university.

## Basic ways out and preconditions to a performance appraisal change

Before I propose measures to improve the actual situation at MU, it is necessary to point out that no success can be achieved without profound changes of both inner and outer circumstances. First of all, legislative changes have to make competition possible throughout university education, possibly by means of legalization of non-state universities. Further on, university education has to become one of the political priorities of the government. It is, this is to say, a decisive source factor of pushing the social transformation through. On the level of MU, then, it seems to be essential to give up production and product philosophy and to step over to marketing philosophy of business strategy. Output, i.e. quality and quantity of university education of the graduates, corresponding to labour market demands, have to be MU's priority. Personally, however, I do not think that this internal change is possible without strong pressure from outside. It will require much effort and time. Under interaction of these circumstances, and under support from enlightened individuals of MU staff, the present conservative approach to performance appraisal, as significant instrument to enhance MU efficiency, can gradually be changed.

## Performance appraisal system principles project

Creation of an efficient performance appraisal system should be carried out by the personnel department of the rector's office in co-operation with such departments

at the faculties. These problems are so serious and consensual that it seems to be necessary to elaborate a performance appraisal system conception, consistent to people managing system within MU, and to submit it to broad examination proceedings. At this occasion, one has to take a view to various questions:

1. „Who shall be appraised?“

The objective of an effective system of performance appraisal is to comprise all the human resources of MU available:

- managers
- teachers
- scientific and research workers
- clerical staff of the rector's office, deans offices, departments, and institutes
- other staff
- students.

Since the performance appraisal of students is traditionally viewed as the concern of paedagogy, I will not deal with it here. However, I am convinced that the current system of performance appraisal is not satisfactory and that many suggestions towards its fundamental improvement could be drawn from the information gained within the framework of the „Managing people“ module.

2. „What kind of performance appraisal is the most appropriate?“

In general, a combination of external appraisal and self-appraisal is to be recommended. The value of self-appraisal depends on qualification, category, and age. An employee's higher qualification and age and the categories of manager, teacher, and scientist are the factors that will create a vast scope for self-appraisal.

3. „Who should appraise?“

As a general rule, the subordinate is appraised by his or her direct superior. A problem occurs when the top management (especially the rector and the deans) are being appraised. In the process also the relevant advisory boards, academic boards, and perhaps even the senates should submit their valuations. Opinion polls among students concerning the quality of teaching should be organised in order to provide supporting data for the appraisal of teachers.

4. „How often should appraisals be carried out?“

I would recommend one-year periodicity of performance appraisals with the exception of teachers and scientific and research workers, whose results in research and publishing ought to be assessed only after two to three years.

5. „Should it be linked to pay?“

To overcome the equalization tendencies in remuneration of all categories of the MU employees, I consider it very beneficial to link the system of performance appraisal to the system of material incentives. It is of course necessary

to differentiate this link on the basis of the categories of employees. However, I would consider it very effective to apply the following principle especially to managers, teachers, and scientific and research workers: „On the basis of the performance appraisal, the appraiser will, in co-operation with the appraisee, set a package of feasible tasks for the appraisee. At the next performance appraisal, the fulfilment of the tasks is reviewed with regard to its impact on the appraisee's point on the pay-scale or recompense or both, as the case may be“.

6. „What sort of appeal system is needed?“

As a rule, the appraisee should appeal against the result of the performance appraisal to his direct superior's superior, against whose decision there would exist no right of appeal. In cases in which this principle cannot be fulfilled (e.g. top management members) my recommendation as to the method of solution of the appraisee's possible removal is to constitute an experts committee chaired by the head of the personnel department of the rector's office or dean's office. There would be no right of appeal against the decisions of these committees either.

7. „What shall be appraised?“

The answer to this question has intentionally been placed at the end of the syllabus as it requires the most attention. The future complex performance appraisal system of MU should review performance (without requiring completeness) for these reasons:

- to review past performance
- to review the level of achieving tasks set at last appraisal
- to help improve current performance
- to solve employees' professional and personal problems that stop them from better performance
- to make objective the setting of tasks for next period
- to evaluate efficiency of applied training methods and ways of reassuring better performance
- to make research of economic interest in performance applied system efficiency and to make its rationalization possible
- to make possible the self-reflection of appraisees
- to make possible the convergence of appraisees' and organization's interests
- to assist career planning decisions.

It is clear that the stress on each of the above stated reasons why to review performance will not be equal and will differ according to qualification, category, rank, age, respectively on the time spent in a job at MU, and to the employee's personality. It is required that the difference in the stress were in accord with the aims of MU.

It is to be presumed that the stress on performance appraisal of office and service staff will be put with regard to the work in the past, search for ways of performance improvement, including rewarding system efficiency. With teachers and scientific staff, the priority will be in assessment of their scientific and personal development and its correct aiming on the basis of self-reflection. Especially, as far as the teachers are concerned, I would suggest to augment the evaluation of pedagogical work and its development, which in practice is often undervalued.

In the following text I want to go more in detail into the specifics of evaluation by the employees' „age“ and further to the evaluation of managers. These problems are not given sufficient attention at MU.

### Junior and Senior Employees

The terms junior and senior employee should not refer only to the physical age of the employees but also to the time spent in their job at MU. The junior employees should, in first place, complete the tasks set by their direct superiors. The senior employees should be evaluated by the level of completing their tasks. The criteria of evaluation for all employees must be directed towards their work-performance, their approach to work, and towards their abilities. I suggest to evaluate quality of the presented work, originality, and creativity in the scope of work-performance. In the case of the senior employees also their results in guiding other people should be added. It is important that within the criterion „approach to work“ discipline, involvement in the process and reliability were evaluated. In the case of the seniors it should be also the ability to organize their work and to create the appropriate motivation. As far as the criterion „Abilities of the appraisee“ is concerned, it would be useful to judge the basic abilities (general and specialized knowledge, persistence in work, rationality and correctness of communication, etc.) as well as the conceptual ones (capability of innovation and rationalization of work, capability of enforcing novelties, etc.). The senior employees should be also evaluated from the point of level of their co-operation with the environment of the MU and with the superiors, and from the point of their ability to carry out instructive and directing functions. I consider it very important that all employees before they reach the directing post in their career should complete the task of practising the art of objective self-evaluation and of evaluation of their environment.

### Managers

In managers' work, these following kinds of knowledge, skills, and abilities should

be required and evaluated:

- to set the right aims
- to lead the subordinate teams towards reaching those aims
- to present a positive effect upon MU employees' development
- to make decisions and to organize
- carry out a wide range of co-operation with their environment I consider the following process of evaluation rational.

A manager should answer three essential questions:

- How would you characterize and evaluate your work in the last year?
- Which outside factors influenced your work?
- How would you evaluate your own ability to identify and to solve problems, and which are your personal aims?

The manager's answers should be reflected upon by his direct superior or a collective body or board (in the case of top management).

### Conclusion

The carrying out of the above mentioned rules must be in interaction with culture in the scope of the organization. As the state of culture at MU is considerably deformed, I should suggest the per partes procedure, with the aim to improve the state of culture also by the influence of successive steps of creation and implementation of performance appraisal system. Consequently, it be possible to create conditions for converging towards the aimed state. I would like to stress that the first step is to convince the top management of MU of the inevitable necessity to incorporate the performance appraisal into the development conception of MU, and that the second step is the projection of this system.

### References

Crow, M., Tansley, C.: *Managing People* (MBA) Nottingham Business School 1994.

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## S U M M A R Y

*Resumé*

*Hodnocení výkonnosti představuje závažný problém ve všech typech organizací a o to komplikovanější je tato otázka v rámci nonprofitní sféry. Tento příspěvek se pokouší dát základní odpovědi při řešení problematiky hodnocení výkonnosti v rámci univerzit. Zaměřuje se na hodnocení managerů, pedagogických a vědeckých pracovníků, administrativních a ostatních zaměstnanců. Jednotlivé odpovědi jsou v tomto smyslu reakcí na sedm základních otázek:*

- kdo má být hodnocen,*
- jaký způsob hodnocení je nejvhodnější,*
- kdo má hodnotit,*
- jaká má být četnost hodnocení,*
- má být hodnocení propojeno s odměnou,*
- jaký systém nehmotné stimulace má být uplatněn,*
- co má být hodnoceno.*

*Systém hodnocení výkonnosti na českých univerzitách je zatím podceňován, avšak v podmínkách rostoucí konkurence bude jeho kvalitní aplikace nezbytností.*