

Teacher appraisal in Botswana secondary schools: a critical analysis

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Recent policy on teacher appraisal in Botswana emphasises that the process should be professional, non-threatening and constructive. The extent to which the teachers themselves experience their appraisal as meaningful was investigated. The findings indicated that teachers had varying experiences and mixed feelings about the appraisal process. It emerged that many teachers viewed the current teacher appraisal system in Botswana as demoralising, even threatening. Our study confirmed the thesis that all parties involved in the teacher appraisal process should know its purposes, and should interpret and apply these in a uniform, professional way. The empirical and theoretical findings of our study showed that the current teacher appraisal system as practised in Botswana secondary schools requires further improvement to ensure general professional acceptance and implementation. The interpretation of the research findings cannot be confined to the Botswana borders. There is hardly a country in the world where teacher appraisal is not a contentious issue.

Introduction

The first Commission on Education of 1975 and the subsequent White Paper No. 1 of 1977, Education for Kagisano (social harmony) proposed educational reforms aimed at improving the quality of the education system of Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 1977). The Commission realised that the education system could be improved by assisting schools to enhance the quality of teaching and that this called for more effective supervision (Hopkin, 1997:69). Thereafter, the first National Commission on Education of 1976 recommended the strengthening of supervisory roles by maintaining a closer link between teachers and the Ministry of Education (Republic of Botswana, 1977:9). It also recommended more regular assistance and professional stimulation of teachers in the classroom (*cf.* Republic of Botswana, 1994:47). The Commission recognised the need to improve teachers' conditions of service in order to improve morale. As a result, a system of confidential reporting was introduced in 1983, which formed the basis for promotion of teachers, annual increments and other related benefits. Furthermore, a Government White Paper on Job Evaluation for Teachers was implemented in 1988. This stressed the need to subject teachers to some form of continuous assessment to determine their eligibility for salary increments and promotions across performance bars (Habangaan, 1998:8). This link between appraisal and pay was vehemently opposed by teacher organisations and unions, which resulted in industrial action (Motswakae, 1990:11).

In 1992, as a result of the Job Evaluation exercise and the resultant problems, a new instrument entitled "Teacher Performance Appraisal: Form TMS 3/4" was introduced (Republic of Botswana, 1994). The instrument aimed to portray a non-threatening, valid and comprehensive system, which would offer teachers the opportunity to increase professional development. Since the introduction of this new system of teacher appraisal, relatively little research has been carried out to determine whether it effectively serves its purposes. The latter emerges from the following points of departure (Republic of Botswana, 1994:47):

- The appraisal scheme may not be used to discipline teachers.

- The process must be accurate, frank, and above all, open to the appraised.
- All appraisers and appraisees are to receive training prior to the appraisal process.
- The appraisal scheme should function as a continuous support and staff development process.

In terms of these purposes, the key question for our research was: To what extent do teachers regard the current system of teacher appraisal in Botswana secondary schools as professionally constructive? To address this question, we present a brief literature review on the purposes of teacher appraisal, followed by a discussion of key findings of an empirical study.

Teacher appraisal: purposes and approach

The importance of staff appraisal in an organisation cannot be overemphasised. A large body of literature on staff appraisal, covering a wide spectrum of fields such as commerce and industry, private and public sectors, including education, is available. Mullins (1996:639) succinctly declares that a comprehensive appraisal system can provide the basis for key managerial decisions such as those related to the allocation of duties and responsibilities, pay, delegation, levels of supervision, promotions, training and development needs and even re-trenchment.

Staff performance appraisal programmes can be made considerably more effective if their purposes are clear. Mo, Corners and McComick (1998:23) quote Stronge who states that "... if an appraisal system does not have a clear purpose, it will just be a meaningless exercise". Studies on performance appraisal show that various authors have highlighted several purposes of appraisal (Wilson & Western, 2001:2; Wilson, 2002:3; Analoui & Fell, 2002:2.) Taylor (1998:10) notes that "... appraisal involves letting people know what is required and expected of them, assessing how they are doing, reviewing this with them regularly and agreeing with them what happens next." Mullins (1996:639) and Kermally (1997:89) contend that appraisal is one way in which to review the performance and potential of staff. An effective appraisal scheme therefore offers a number of potential benefits to both the individual and the organisation (Mullins, 1996:639; Vanci-Osam & Askit, 2000:2; Lam, 2001:2). These benefits are:

- identification of an individual's strengths and weaknesses;
- identification of problems which may be restricting progress and causing inefficient work practices;
- development of a greater degree of consistency through regular feedback on performance and discussion about potential which encourages better performance from staff;
- provision of information for human resource planning to assist succession planning and determine suitability for promotion and for particular types of employment and training;
- improvement of communication by giving staff the opportunity to talk about their ideas and expectations and how well they are progressing; and
- improvement of the quality of working life by increasing mutual understanding between managers and their staff.

Performance appraisal should therefore be viewed as one of those processes in organisations that aims at enhancing productivity through mutual interaction between the supervisor and the subordinate. The feedback provided during the appraisal process is vital in informing all those involved in the organisation about what ought to be done in order to map the way forward.

Although there are similarities in the purposes of appraisal across all organisations, the nature of the organisation dictates the nature of the system of appraisal to be followed. Wil-

liams (1995:74) argues that borrowing slavishly from the private-sector models of appraisal can be disastrous as educational organisations are never simple closed systems. We summarise some key aspects of staff performance appraisal in the context of educational institutions with reference to the notions relevance, accountability, quality, and approach.

Education is undergoing major changes and development worldwide. Stoll and Fink (1996:xi) emphasise this point and note that school systems throughout the world have to deal with political pressure, decentralisation, market-based reforms and rigorous testing. Motswakae (1990:6) contends that governments worldwide are becoming aware of the need to examine educational provision carefully and critically to ensure relevance and appropriateness to the needs of youth. Therefore, teacher appraisal is important as it leads to improvements of teacher performance and motivation in the interest of enhanced and relevant learning opportunities for all learners.

Schools, like all public organisations, are being called upon to be accountable. In this regard, Whitaker (1998:106) maintains that "... issues of accountability are never far from our minds these days and it is vital to be clear about our responsibilities to share information and explanations with those who are concerned with the school". Darling-Hammond and Ascher (1992:2) emphasise this by pointing out that

... performance indicators... are information for the accountability systems; they are not the system itself. Accountability (that is, responsible practice and responsiveness to clients) occurs only when a useful set of processes exists for interpreting and acting on the information.

Bell (1992:126-7) argues further that appraisal has a part to play in making educators accountable to parents for the education of their children.

Furthermore, teacher appraisal is an intervention aimed at benefiting both the individual and the school in pursuit of quality education. According to Poster and Poster (1992:2), "... appraisal is one of a number of techniques for integrating the individual into the organisation". In other words, it helps harness the unique talents of individuals and co-ordinates their activities toward the achievement of the organisation's objectives by efficient and effective means. Teacher appraisal should therefore be viewed as one of those interventions, including professional development, in-service training and career planning, which aims at developing the teacher's knowledge, skills and confidence. This will improve the effectiveness of teaching and students' learning and ultimately, the quality of education (Goddard & Emerson, 1995:11; Lam, 2001:2).

Studies on the appraisal process predominantly identify two approaches to (or models of) appraisal, namely, the professional and accountability models (Monyatsi, 2003:62). Appraisal for professional development is becoming more popular among teachers and school managers for various reasons (Duke & Stiggins, 1990:116).

The professional (or staff development) model has, as point of departure, the belief that teachers wish to improve their performance to enhance the learning of students. The model is viewed as a genuine two-way process between appraiser and appraisee, which takes place in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality. A key characteristic of the model is negotiation to support teaching and managerial development in the interests of optimal career development. Teachers are always involved as full participants. Murdock (2000:55) states emphatically that participation by staff in initiating and contributing to the instruments and procedures that are used to evaluate their performance leads to teacher motivation and empowerment. The implied

consequence is the professional model's heavy reliance on reflective practice. Reflection is indeed the buzzword amongst professionals (*cf.* Cosh, 1999:260). This model of appraisal encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners, i.e. continuously applying self-assessment to their professional dispositions and actions (*cf.* Murdock 2000:55).

The accountability model, on the other hand, has been unpopular with teachers and teacher unions for the following reasons (Duke, 1995:5):

- Its key characteristic has been seen as imposition and checking of competence.
- It is primarily designed to bring about a better relationship between pay, responsibilities, and performance.
- It tends to be judgmental, and teachers have questioned the capabilities of those making judgments and the validity and reliability of the instruments used.
- The model fosters defensiveness as teachers fight to serve their interests and not those of the clients, the students.
- Finally, it provides evidence for disciplinary procedures.

The accountability model reflects the traditional approach to staff appraisal, with emphasis on inspection and control. As indicated above, the professional model is *inter alia* concerned with accountability, and arguably it serves the purposes of accountability even better, because it relies on professional development of dispositions and skills. Be that as it may, the traditional accountability (or inspection) model is still influential in education (as we indicate later on), much to the peril of professionalism in teaching.

In summary, staff performance appraisal is as important in education as in business (Sarros & Sarros 1991:5). However, the purposes of staff appraisal should be contextually focused. As indicated, the notions of relevance, accountability, quality, and professional staff development represent the parameters of appraisal in educational institutions. Most importantly, the effectiveness of the appraisal system depends on the extent to which it empowers the appraisee towards professional reflection, self-assessment and growth.

Research design

The focus of this study, namely, to investigate the extent to which teachers regard the current system of teacher appraisal in Botswana secondary schools as professionally constructive, necessitated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The former was employed in the interest of representivity of the views expressed, and the latter for the purposes of more in-depth probing and the verification of the quantitative data. We opted for the use of multi-methods in this study to secure optimal understanding of the phenomenon in question — involving the research dimensions of both breadth and depth (Cresswell, 1994:174; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:163; Salomon, 1991:10).

The quantitative approach involved a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed questions and three open-ended questions. For the closed questions the Likert scale was used. The open-ended questions were included to provide the opportunity for additional personal views and suggestions. A pilot study was done in a few selected secondary schools in Gaborone City.

The qualitative approach involved 12 individual semi-structured interviews with participants representing various levels of experience and managerial involvement in the process of teacher appraisal.

Sample

The sample for the questionnaire survey consisted of all the 607 secondary school teachers in two clusters in southern Botswana. In terms of varying sizes and overall performance, the secondary schools in these clusters were regarded as sufficiently representative of secondary schools in Botswana. A response rate of 68% was achieved through the return of 413 questionnaires.

Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich participants for the semi-structured individual interviews. The selected participants were two school principals, two deputy principals, two heads of departments, two senior teachers, two teachers, and two assistant teachers.

Data analysis

The capture and analysis of the questionnaire data were computerised. For the analysis of the responses on the open questions a coding frame was drawn up, also providing for verbatim reporting of responses where applicable (Bell, 1993:107; Oppenheim, 1992:266).

For the analysis of the interview data, the tape-recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The typed transcript data were then coded. From the codes (or categories), patterns and themes were identified and described in an attempt to understand the meanings of these categories from the perspectives of the respondents, with verbatim texts included where appropriate.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured by cross-verifying 1) questionnaire data with interview data, and 2) data provided by respondents from different post levels. The field notes made after each interview were checked to verify the interview data.

Ethical measures

Questionnaire respondents and interviewees were fully informed about the research aims and the voluntary nature of their participation, and assured of the confidentiality of their own and their schools' identities and data provided. In analysing and interpreting the data, every effort was made to heed the assurances given.

Findings

On the basis of the survey findings, the respondents' and interviewees' views and experiences of the purposes and practice of the teacher appraisal process were categorised with the key words performance; motivation; relationships; control; and no purpose.

In the following sections we discuss the categories identified and link them to the literature review.

Performance

The questionnaire respondents had to indicate the degree of their agreement with a statement that appraisal improves teacher performance. As illustrated in Table 1, 155 respondents (37.6%) disagreed with the statement. Seventy-one (17.2%) had no opinion. One hundred and eighty-four (44.5%) agreed with the statement. Thus, opinion on this issue was divided, with less than half of the respondents actually believing that appraisal is beneficial in increasing teacher performance.

Table 1 Appraisal improves teachers' performance

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	80	19.4
Disagree	75	18.2
No opinion	71	17.2
Agree	153	37.0
Strongly agree	31	7.5
Missing	3	0.7
Total	413	100

In the open-ended section of the questionnaire 165 respondents (39.9%) mentioned that the appraisal process in Botswana secondary schools was intended to monitor teacher performance for improvement purposes. For instance, one principal believed that

... it monitors the processes of teaching and learning; it determines the teacher's strengths and weaknesses; and it also serves purposes of accountability, that is, is the teacher accountable?

As one head of department put it:

... it makes teachers to know their professional progress; whether they are doing well or not so that if they have any weaknesses they may improve for the better.

In the interviews a senior teacher contended that the appraisal process helps the teachers improve their teaching skills and attitudes towards teaching. This was echoed by an assistant teacher who strongly believed that appraisal reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher, and allows individuals to improve weak aspects. It also acts as a motivating factor when the management expresses appreciation for work. Another assistant teacher observed that appraisal provides basic knowledge about the teacher to the appraisers in order to make informed decisions. Another senior teacher concurred that

... it equips teachers with skills and knowledge in order to cope with instructional issues in their schools. It further instils desired attitudes in teachers.

It is clear that the responses reflect noticeable support (40–45%) for the appraisal process as a means of improving teacher performance of daily duties of teaching and facilitating students' learning. This view is strongly supported in related literature. Hodgetts and Kuratko (1991: 602); Kermally (1997:90) and Mullins (1996:640) identify one of the purposes of appraisal as "... to serve as a basis for modifying or changing behaviour towards more effective working habits". Goddard and Emerson (1996:87) declare that "... the cornerstone of appraisal is the belief that teachers wish to improve their performance in order to enhance the education of the students". This is also supported by the assertion of Glover and Law (1996:31) that appraisal involves the teacher's professional knowledge, understanding, and skills to improve the quality of teaching and students learning in the classroom. The essence of improvement of one's performance is summed up by Hodgetts and Kuratko (1991:602) who declare that an effective appraisal scheme should measure the individual's ability to meet the requirements of the position successfully. It is designed to pinpoint strong points and shortcomings of personnel and to provide a basis for explaining why shortcomings exist and what can be done about them. The latter was also reflected in the empirical findings.

Motivation

An item in the questionnaire sought to capture teachers' views on the extent to which the appraisal process demotivated teachers (Table 2). The results showed that 184 (44.7%) of respondents did not agree with the statement that the appraisal process in Botswana secondary schools demotivates teachers; whilst 115 (27.9%) believed it does. This finding suggests that the motivational value of teacher appraisal outweighs the contrary, albeit relatively.

Table 2 Appraisal demotivates teachers

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	68	16.5
Disagree	116	28.2
No opinion	109	26.5
Agree	65	15.8
Strongly agree	50	12.1
Missing	4	1.0
Total	412	100

Responses to an open item in the questionnaire also indicated the motivational value of the appraisal process. A senior teacher declared that

I got motivated when I was told my strengths which I was not aware of.

This view is supported by a teacher who contended that

... if you are told positive things about yourself, you gain morale, you get motivated.

Yet, some respondents expressed their concern that the current system of teacher appraisal demoralises teachers because it is not carried out properly.

In the interviews, one teacher painted a bleak picture about the appraisal process when she declared that

... it has no effect as I am still a teacher after nine years, yet from the appraisal process I am doing a very good job. Nothing is done after the appraisal despite the recommendations made.

Another interviewee echoed this view by declaring that

... to me it is not effective, I am so demoralized. I am not as good as I used to be.

These assertions might possibly be based on misconceptions about own performance, but they certainly represent instances of dysfunctional appraisal.

Teacher appraisal can indeed be beneficial in motivating teachers towards improved performance. The value of teacher appraisal in motivating teachers is emphasised by West and Ainscow (1991:33) when they claim that appraisal "... gives teachers a clearer view of the job, their aims and what is expected of them, and of the aims of the school". Poster and Poster (1992:1) and Everard and Morris (1996:79) concur with this by claiming that the main objective of teacher appraisal is to improve individual performance and motivation in order to enhance the "... learning opportunities for all students". Mullins (1996:640) claims pointedly that "... one of the purposes of an appraisal system is to motivate employees so that they learn and achieve more" in their duties of teaching and facilitating students' learning. Murdock

(2000:55) concurs with the above view and explains that because the process involves the teacher through activities such as pre- and post-conferencing, it empowers and motivates him/her.

Relationships

As illustrated in Table 3, 47.2% of the questionnaire respondents agreed that the appraisal process could serve the purpose of enhanced working relations with colleagues, compared to 31.7% who disagreed, and 20.6 % who refrained from giving their opinion. As with other items, divergent views were evident.

Table 3 Enhanced working relations with colleagues

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	45	10.9
Disagree	86	20.8
No opinion	85	20.6
Agree	153	37.0
Strongly agree	42	10.2
Missing	2	0.5
Total	413	100

Responses to an open item in the questionnaire indicated that the appraisal process can enhance the teachers' working relations with their superiors. For example, an assistant teacher contended that the current system of appraisal is effective

... in that it opens up both the appraiser and appraisee to talk about the strong and weak points and see a way forward, and this is healthy in the teaching profession.

Some respondents argued that when the weaknesses were identified, they were addressed with the help of immediate supervisors.

A principal interviewed posited that

... at departmental level, the senior teachers have a responsibility of discussing certain aspects of the appraisal, which are related to the teaching profession as this approach helps when one is new in the profession.

Literature findings indicate conclusively that the appraisal process can lead to constructive mutual interaction between the supervisor and the subordinate in order to enhance productivity. As Mullins (1996:639) claims, on top of identifying the individual's strengths and weaknesses and how such strengths may best be utilised and weaknesses overcome, appraisal also helps by "... improving the quality of working life by increasing mutual understanding between managers and their staff". This is endorsed by Trethowan (1991:181) when he declares that "... appraisal is a relationship". An appraisal scenario which reflects collaboration and collegiality is succinctly explained by Murdock (2000:15) when she argues that "... it is vital for a progressive system of evaluation to build on collaborative relations whereby the supervisor actively makes efforts to understand the teacher's frame of reference on classroom events and engages in continuing dialogue with teachers".

Control

The questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with a statement that the current teacher appraisal process in Botswana is abused by School Management Teams (SMTs) with the purpose of controlling teachers. Table 4 indicates that whilst 31% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 44.1% were in agreement; whilst 24% had no opinion. This last finding is rather intriguing: It could reflect ignorance about the possible misuse of teacher appraisal; or respondent reservation (for whatever reasons) to express themselves on this issue. Fact of the matter is that 68% of the respondents did not disagree with the statement that the appraisal process is abused to control teachers — a most disturbing finding.

Table 4 Abuse of appraisal by SMT

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	50	12.1
Disagree	78	18.9
No opinion	99	24.0
Agree	63	15.3
Strongly agree	119	28.8
Missing	4	1.0
Total	413	100

Abuse of the appraisal system was also alluded to in an open item in the questionnaire. Painting a bleak picture concerning the appraisal process, a head of department claimed that:

... it is used by school heads as an axe ready to chop teachers.

This perception was endorsed by another head of department who declared that

it is used to maintain law and order in the schools.

The open-ended item showed that many teachers were not happy with the current appraisal process. This was illustrated by some of the responses quoted here:

- *One of the purposes of teacher appraisal is favouritism. Instead of progression of the teachers' teaching techniques, tactics, etc., the "Yes Sirs" see the brighter side. The hard-workers do not progress* (Senior teacher).
- *It is a tool used to oppress and suppress teachers. It promotes tendencies of bootlicking and 'Yes, Baas', which frustrates teachers* (Assistant teacher).
- *It serves as an intimidation tool to boss around teachers with the threat of not qualifying for that funny 5% increment* (Assistant teacher).
- *It is used to oppress teachers, reprimand teachers and punish teachers.* (Assistant teacher).

Another teacher claimed that as a result, appraisal is a source of quarrels, punishment, ridicule and victimisation rather than self-development. Yet another teacher was of the opinion that it

... it acts as a blockage for teachers' progress. Instead of developing teachers by showing them their weaknesses and strengths, it destroys them as the SMT will always give false information about someone who is not their favourite.

The abuse of the appraisal process by those in authority was also mentioned during the

interviews. For example, a teacher claimed that

... it is a witch-hunting exercise because the appraiser concentrates much in the areas where one is weak rather than comparing one's weaknesses to the strengths.

A senior teacher who was interviewed contended that the process is there to *downgrade teachers* as some supervisors used it for different purposes. Moreover, according to other teachers interviewed, teacher appraisal as practised by those in authority is oppressive and threatening. For instance, a teacher pointed out that it is a tool used by

... the Senior Management Team to oppress and intimidate the juniors.

A senior Grade 2 teacher viewed the appraisal process as

... threatening to teachers in order to make them loyal subordinates of the management system, that is, TSM, SMT, and a fault-finding mission on teachers' performance.

To summarise, the empirical findings revealed diverse opinions among teachers about inappropriate use of their appraisal. Some compared the appraisal process with an 'axe', ready to chop down those who are not favoured. The mere existence of negative staff appraisal perceptions is unacceptable in any profession, and clearly reflects the need for urgent measures to counter misinformation and prevent incidences of inappropriate (detrimental) use of the teacher appraisal process in Botswana.

No purpose

A number of questionnaire respondents expressed the view that teacher appraisal as currently practised in Botswana secondary schools serves no purpose at all. This was also stated in the course of the interviews. A senior teacher claimed that

... it is a routine which seeks information that is never used thereafter for any purpose whatsoever.

This view was echoed by an assistant teacher who contended that

... it is not serving any purpose at all. If it was properly used, SMT would be using it as an equipment that could tell them to recommend people for promotion, further studies, et cetera. But it is not the case. It is just one for formality.

These assertions were supported by a principal who declared that

... the system is there just to may be for SMT to say we have something in place.

These perceptions are disconcerting in view of strong evidence in the literature that it is important to understand and accept the purposes of an appraisal scheme if the process is to be effective (Stronge, 1991 in Mo *et al.*, 1998:23). If teachers are not aware or convinced of the purpose of teacher appraisal, they become anxious and suspicious of the whole process. Goddard and Emerson (1995:94) suggest that it is important for both the appraisee and appraiser to be clear about the purpose of the process, including the role of the appraiser and the criteria that will be used. Horne and Pierce (1996:3) emphasise that the purpose and nature of the observation and the focus should have been decided and agreed by both parties, i.e. appraisee and appraiser.

In conclusion, the empirical findings clearly showed that the secondary school teachers in the survey did not uniformly understand or accept the purposes of the current teacher appraisal system as practised in Botswana secondary schools, leading to a lack of general teacher commitment to the process, and even strong negative attitudes.

Discussion

The introduction of teacher appraisal in Botswana was initially aimed at strengthening supervisory powers so that young inexperienced teachers would fulfil their duties effectively. Habangaan (1998:8) mentions that the headteachers' association wanted appraisal because they were concerned about the "... new recruits and their negative attitude to work". It was assumed that the appraisal process may help to change teachers' attitudes towards teaching; and could provide improved knowledge and skills through collaboration and sharing of experiences and ideas. Clearly the process was intended as a means of achieving accountability, although it had developmental tenets as well.

Both the literature review and the empirical findings of our survey indicated that teacher appraisal should be part of a human relations approach to management that emphasises the professional empowerment and well-being of employees. Staff appraisal's effectiveness is therefore dependent on how it addresses the aspirations and attitudes of the teachers in the schools. A cursory look at the definitions of teacher appraisal given by Everard and Morris (1996:79); Goddard and Emerson (1995:11); Poster and Poster (1992:2); and Trethowan (1991:181) supports the human relations approach, according to which the major purpose of appraisal is to help the teachers improve their day-to-day duties of teaching and facilitation of students' learning, thus empowering them towards professional competence and confidence. Perhaps significantly, a relatively high "agree" percentage in our survey (45%) had to do with the improvement of teaching performance as a purpose of the current teacher appraisal system in Botswana secondary schools.

A second essential purpose of teacher appraisal concerns accountability. Teachers are being called upon to be accountable for their job, most importantly because governments spend considerable public funds in providing education. The notion of value for money applies. Furthermore, teaching concerns the obligation to mould responsible future citizens and this implies the necessity of measures to ensure that they are competent to do this effectively (Monyatsi, 2003:277). Importantly, as has been pointed out in the previous section on the purposes of teacher appraisal, the notion of accountability should not imply a particular (traditional, control) approach to teacher assessment — it is part and parcel of appraisal for professional development.

The empirical findings of this study clearly indicated that the questionnaire respondents and interview participants had varying experiences and indeed mixed feelings about the teacher appraisal process in Botswana. It emerged that many teachers viewed the current teacher appraisal system as demoralising, even threatening. Evidently, Botswana teacher appraisal policy ideals (non-disciplinary, accurate, open, based on proper training, part of continuous support and staff development — see introduction) are not sufficiently met in practice, thereby endangering the relevance, accountability, and quality of educational provision (see purposes and approach of teacher appraisal). This situation calls for rectifying measures.

Firstly, teachers and school managers should fully understand and accept the purposes of the appraisal process. This implies the need for thorough appraisal training (Monyatsi 2003: 240). The importance of training of stakeholders in the appraisal process is supported by Latham and Wexley (1994:169) and Goddard and Emerson (1995:126). Horne and Pierce (1996:101) are of the opinion that the benefits of appraisal can be reaped if "... schools develop an effective training strategy and mount professional programmes" where purposes and procedures are fully shared and explained to all participants. The clarity of purpose plays a crucial

role in making the process more effective, especially if it is carried out formally.

Secondly, the backbone of effective teacher appraisal (regarding both purposes and process) is transparency, trust, and honesty (Monyatsi, 2003:276). There should be professional collaboration between the appraisee and appraiser, with regular meetings between the parties concerned to negotiate appraisal purposes and outcomes. From these meetings, realistic targets that are within the job description of the teacher should be discussed and agreed upon at each stage of the appraisal process. It is crucially important that the teacher appraisal process should recognise teachers as full partners in the process, and not as raw objects to be developed by senior staff and experts. In sum: The professional purposes of teacher appraisal can only be achieved through partnership and transparency.

Conclusions

Our study confirmed the thesis that all parties involved in the teacher appraisal process should know and understand its purposes, and should interpret and apply these in a uniform, professional way, if the whole process is to be effective and beneficial for whole-school development. The empirical and theoretical findings of our study showed that the current teacher appraisal system as practised in Botswana secondary schools requires further improvement to ensure general professional acceptance and implementation. Self-evidently, the interpretation of the research findings cannot be confined to the Botswana borders. There is hardly a country in the world where teacher appraisal is not a contentious issue.

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