

Performance Appraisal for Career Development in A Semi-Political Institution

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Abstract: *Performance management has become a popular instrument of reform in many countries and effectively improves the quality of bureaucracy. Its use is not limited to the macro and meso-levels but extends to the micro level as a basis for individual career development. Objectivity and subjectivity are contradictory but appear simultaneously in performance appraisal practice. This paper focuses on performance appraisal practices for individual career development in a semi-political organization in terms of four aspects: education, training, promotion, and rotation. The study uses a qualitative method to gather primary data through interviews with source persons in the Secretariat General of the House of Representatives, Republic of Indonesia. The result shows that subjectivity and political factor dominate employees' performance appraisal as well as career development. It occurs predominantly in the process of rotation and promotion. Furthermore, performance appraisals have not been used in creating an individual development plan in terms of education and training.*

Keywords: *Bureaucracy Reform; Career Development; Performance Management*

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Introduction

Bureaucracy reform efforts in numerous countries have various features and strategies for achieving reform goals. Performance management is one of the core strategies that is considered effective in conducting reforms. As part of performance management, performance appraisal has become increasingly crucial for various reasons, including setting rational performance targets and their measurement methods, assessing employee performance objectively, and aligning organizational and individual performance. Nevertheless, despite its benefits, implementing performance appraisal in the public sector faces significant challenges and difficulties. Condrey (2012) explains some challenges with performance appraisal in the public sector, such as low levels of organizational trust, the idea that performance evaluation tools could be better, and large, complicated bureaucracies. Another problem is that performance appraisals are only sometimes accurate. For example, appraisers use appraisal practices to advance their interests by favoring some employees (Dhiman & Singh, 2007; Longenecker & Gioia, 2001). Furthermore, the appraisal system has flaws, such as a lack of time or information for evaluating employees' performance and a lack of performance standards.

Although performance appraisal has some challenges and difficulties, its implementation is still necessary because it benefits the organization. From an organizational perspective, performance appraisal helps track how well employees do their jobs and tie it to the organization's goals (Claus & Briscoe, 2009). From an individual perspective, it helps employees

understand and accept organizational norms. In addition, the result of a performance appraisal clarifies decisions on employees, such as promotion, demotion, or retention, and helps develop employees' capacity by providing feedback or training (Kim & Holzer, 2016). These benefits illustrate that performance appraisals can be used in decision-making regarding employee career development.

Prior studies focused more on the topic of performance appraisal without giving much attention to the organizational environment. In fact, public-sector organizations do not exist in a vacuum. It has various characteristics and is surrounded by numerous systems. One of them is the political system. Thus, the relationship between performance appraisal and career development needs thorough examination due to the dynamic environment of each organization. The concern becomes higher once a public organization must deal with high political circumstances in its daily activities. This paper addresses the following research question: how is performance appraisal used for career development in a semi-political organization? The scope includes four areas of career development, i.e., education, training, promotion, and rotation.

To answer the question, this paper takes the Secretariat General of the House of Representatives, Republic of Indonesia as the locus. It is a bureaucratic institution within the political sphere. This organization should address the two distinct characteristics of bureaucracy and political institutions. The bureaucratic professionalism standards are fundamentally distinct from the political principles that stress political

representation, political interests, and varied political mandates. It is also distinct from the bureaucratic ideals of qualifications, competence, performance, and open competition. Hence, the practice of performance appraisal becomes more difficult, particularly when the outcome is used for individual career development.

In Indonesian public organizations, the use of performance appraisal for career development is regulated by the Law Number 5 Year 2014 (The ASN Law). If employees receive a good result, they have an opportunity to advance to a better position. Thus, such appraisals serve as a reference for employee career decisions in public organizations. However, that is not always the case. There are several factors influencing the process and the use of appraisal results. Regarding the process, it is challenging for the public sector to apply several measurable performance standards (Liu & Dong, 2012). The measurement usually involves four raters: subordinates, coworkers, supervisors, and self-assessment by the employees themselves (Denisi et al., 2014; Daft, 2016; Ikramullah et al., 2012; Farazmand, 2007; Jackson & Schuler, 2003). In this case, performance appraisals by subordinates are uncommon in the public sector due to the chain of command (Cook, MacKenzie, and Forde, 2016).

In terms of the use of appraisal results, political circumstances within and among an organization impact the lack of objectivity in using the results. At the local and national levels in Indonesia, corruption in the form of "buying and selling" high-ranking posts is still widespread. According to recently released data from the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN), the

practice of "buying and selling positions" reached 95% at the municipal level, 89.5% at the provincial level, and 39.5% at the ministry level, compared to the overall number of promotion and rotation cases (Fathurrohman, 2021). These data show that most civil servant positions at the local level are not decided based on competence and past performance, contrary to what the ASN Law requires. Those corruption cases also show that performance does not necessarily impact an individual's career development.

Career development can be considered from two perspectives: the individual (career planning) and the institutional (career management). The former emphasizes individuals' awareness of: planning and realizing their career goals (Ismail, 2010); taking advantage of the opportunities available; the constraints of the opportunities available; the choices that need to be made; and the consequences that can be anticipated (Tampubolon et al., 2020). On the other hand, the institutional perspective refers to the efforts made by the organization in preparing, implementing, and controlling employees' career plans (Ismail, 2010). Both perspectives demonstrate that career development is the actual process of implementing career planning, supported by a collaborative process between individuals and organizations to improve the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes needed for current and future job duties (Tampubolon, 2020; Mcdonald & Hite, 2005). The forms of career development include (1) education, which refers to theoretical improvement; (2) training, which focuses on improving the technical skills of employees; (3) promotion, the movement of employees to

a higher position in an organization so that their authority, responsibility, and income increase; and (4) rotation, the process of moving employees from one job to another to broaden their understanding, which is performed systematically (Hasibuan, 2016).

In line with Hasibuan (2016), Werther and Davis (2006) state that one of the benefits of performance appraisal is career planning and development. In addition, performance appraisals can be used for rotation and promotion decisions, both of which are part of a person's career development. Specifically, the relationship between performance appraisal and career development has been investigated by Gilley and Maycunich (2000). They found that the main purpose of evaluating employees' development is to identify

their weaknesses and strengths, which leads to establishing ways to improve performance and development as part of a long-term strategy. Gilley & Maycunich (2000) also add that if the results of the identification show that employees have high work performance, they may have the opportunity for vertical mobility or promotion. This means that vertical career development requires high job performance. Conversely, employees with low performance can improve it by rotating to positions that are more in accordance with their abilities (rotation) or through education and training in the context of employee development (Hasibuan, 2016). The use of performance appraisal for four aspects of career development can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Career Development

| Dimension | Indicator | References |
|------------------|---|---|
| Education | 1) Performance assessment results are used to identify education program needs 2) Education to prepare for higher positions | Gilley & Maycunich (2000), Hasibuan (2016) |
| Training | 1) Performance appraisal results to determine employee training needs 2) Training is given to employees who have low work performance 3) Performance appraisal results for employee training program evaluation | Bohlander & Snell (2013), Dessler (2020), Hasibuan (2016) |
| Promotion | 1) Performance appraisal results are used for promotion 2) Promotion opportunities are fair for all employees 3) Performance appraisal results are combined with seniority to determine promotion | Hasibuan (2016), Werther & Davis (2006) |
| Rotation | 1) Implementation of rotation is based on performance appraisal | Bohlander & Snell (2013), Dessler |

2) Rotations are carried out to improve (2020), Hasibuan performance appraisal results (2016)

Source: Compiled by the researchers from various sources, 2022

Method

This research employs qualitative methods by gathering primary data through in-depth interviews with eight source persons from the Secretariat General of the House of Representatives (Sekretariat Jenderal DPR RI) and the National Civil Service Agency (BKN), Republic of Indonesia. The interviewees are selected purposively based on their expertise and comprehensive understanding of performance appraisal and career development issues. In addition, content analysis is conducted to support the analysis of the findings by referring to various relevant documents, such as the Secretariat General's strategic plan and annual report.

As shown in Table 1 in the previous section, the research instrument in the

form of an interview guideline is developed by referring to previous theoretical development stated by various scholars such as Werther and Davis (2006), Gilley and Maycunich (2000), Bohlander and Snell (2013), Dessler (2020), and Hasibuan (2016).The guideline covers four dimensions of the use of performance appraisal for career development, i.e., education, training, promotion, and rotation.

By referring to the interview transcripts as the primary findings, qualitative data analysis is conducted by creating codes in three steps, namely open, axial, and selective coding. Each finding is coded thoroughly based on the indicators mentioned in the theoretical framework. The codes used in this study are as follows:

Table 2. Qualitative Data Codes

| Parent codes | Child codes |
|--------------|--|
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance results and education needs • Education and higher positions |
| Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance results and training needs • Training and low work performance • Performance results and training program evaluation |
| Promotion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance results and promotion • Promotion opportunities are fair • Performance results and seniority |
| Rotation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation and performance appraisal • Rotations and performance improvement |

Result and Discussion

Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Education

Education correlates with increasing employees' knowledge and abilities, with the aim of improving employee satisfaction and helping them succeed in their duties (Hasibuan, 2016). This first dimension of performance appraisal consists of (1) the results of performance appraisals being used to identify the needs of educational programs and (2) education to prepare employees to occupy higher positions. In addition to degree-level education, the Secretariat General also provides education in the form of skills training, such as public speaking, leadership, digital skills, and presentation skills.

The research findings show that the preparation of education plans for civil servants at the Secretariat General has not involved the results of performance appraisals. Education needs are based on proposals and requests from each work unit and superiors' recommendations, as stated by an interviewee from the Secretariat General as follows:

"In fact, the staff who received training and education opportunities were chosen based on proposals from each unit."So, the basis is proposals and requests (not the results of a performance appraisal)."

The procedures for proposing education plans for civil servants are set out in the Regulation of the General Secretariat of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 8 of 2016, and the Regulation of the General Secretariat of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 7 of 2016. Related to

these procedures, there are gaps in practice in the field, especially related to the recommendation of superiors that employees pursue further studies, which has not been implemented. This can be seen from the fact that there are no recommendations for study assignments in the performance appraisal form used by superiors, so the Human Resources Bureau needs to interpret the utilization of performance appraisal results in relation to civil servant education.

In addition to the above issues, the plan for the education needs of civil servants also tends to be based on the results of competency tests. These are conducted to determine employees' competency deficiencies that mean they work below the desired standard, thus indicating the need for education. Therefore, it can be concluded that the education provided to civil servants is not directly aimed at achieving improved individual performance but rather at improving certain competencies. The needs plan is therefore not based on the performance assessment results. The same system is also applied in other institutions, for example, the State Civil Service Agency. Research conducted by Widiyanto (2017) shows that performance appraisal results within the Civil Service Bureau of the State Civil Service Agency have been used as a basis for consideration of employee career development. However, performance appraisal results have not been used as the main indicator in career development as other elements are still considered, such as the results of selection tests and assessments.

Theoretically, providing employees with education aims to prepare them to occupy higher positions. However, the

phenomenon at the Secretariat General is not the case. Some employees had to pass the selection first, so they could not improve their position directly. This is because the promotion of civil servants is not only based on educational background, but also pays attention to other aspects, including rank, performance appraisal, competency, and track record. Therefore, education is only provided to civil servants to meet the competency standards of their positions.

In addition to being based on competency tests, problems that arise in performance appraisals should make the Secretariat General consider not using their results as a plan for the educational needs of civil servants. The problem is the subjectivity in a performance appraisal that arises due to the position of the Secretariat General, a bureaucratic institution located in a political institution. In evaluating employee performance, there is still a strong element of "like-dislike." Therefore, education plans for civil servants are not based on the results of performance appraisals but rather on the subjectivity of leaders in deciding which employees should be permitted to qualify for education.

Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Training

The results of performance appraisals can be used as a basis for providing training because through the appraisals, organizations will establish whether there is a gap between work standards and employees' abilities and whether training is therefore needed to cover the gap. However, findings from the field show that the provision of training at the Secretariat General has not been based

on the results of performance appraisals. Instead, it tends to be based on the obligation of the organization to provide training, whether to low or high performers. This is not in line with theories proposed by Werther and Davis (2006), Bohlander and Snell (2013), and Dessler (2020) that employee performance appraisals should be used to clarify various aspects of employee decisions through training.

The delay in collecting performance appraisal results is also a consideration for the Secretariat General. This results in the Education and Training Center, responsible for providing training to civil servants, lacking data to map their training needs. However, the Secretariat General is currently developing a policy that will take performance appraisal results into account when providing training. This is because performance appraisals can show whether there is a gap between performance targets and civil servants' achievements.

In terms of training for low performers, they should not be given training. However, training is provided for all employees, regardless of their level of performance. This is because training has become an obligation for all civil servants. Such provision needs to be approved by superiors; it is not proposed individually but on behalf of the work unit. Therefore, the utilization of performance appraisal results for training plans ultimately depends on the commitment of superiors.

The purpose of the performance evaluation is to determine the impact of such programs on employee performance. If the performance assessment results show improved performance, then the training program is clearly beneficial

because it has addressed employees' shortcomings. However, if employees do not demonstrate an increase in performance after attending the training, then the program is not aligned with their needs, as stated by a source from the National Civil Service Agency (BKN) as follows:

"We are concerned about the commitment by the head of the agency, by the Supervisory Officer, to really make use of the performance evaluation. It is actually expensive data, but it is sometimes regarded as a formality."

The implementation of civil servant training does not run well because there may be problems from the employee's side regarding the training target. Those who participate in the training may not be serious about it, which may have implications for their performance assessment results. The organization has mapped out a training plan based on employee needs and environmental demands. Despite this, it was found that the evaluation of civil servant training programs was not based on the results of performance appraisals.

Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Promotion

Performance appraisal results are used for promotion at the Secretariat General if the civil servant has a minimum performance appraisal predicate of 'good,' as stated in Government Regulation No. 46 of 2011. This regulation has been replaced by Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 concerning the Performance Management of Civil Servants (PNS). According to that regulation, a good assessment can at least be maintained for two years in a row; the employee should have knowledge and

experience relevant to the field; knowledge of competency assessment; not hold a position as a political member; and not have the potential to cause a conflict of interest.

Performance appraisal is not the main reference in determining promotions at the Secretariat General. A close relationship between a leader and staff in the Secretariat General is often used to influence promotions. This finding is based on the in-depth interviews regarding the non-use of performance appraisal as the main reference for promotions, as follows:

"The House of Representatives is a political institution, so in our culture, there is still a patron-client relationship, a family relationship, and so on. As a result of the closeness of employees, one or two cases exist..."

The reason may be because the Secretariat General of the House of Representatives, as a bureaucratic institution within a political institution, has the responsibility to support members of the House of Representatives leadership. As a result, employee placement is inextricably linked to the interference of House of Representatives leadership members. This situation also illustrates that there is no equal opportunity for all employees to be promoted. Those who do not have close ties with the board leaders will find it difficult to be promoted. This shows that there are irregularities in the promotion process, which should be based on the performance of civil servants, as part of the merit system.

A similar situation was observed in the filling of several Senior Executive Service (SES) positions at the provincial

level. Maulana (2021) found that the selection of SES in the provincial government was not fully based on the merit system, which emphasizes qualifications, competencies, and performance. The system of referral to qualifications has not been well implemented, and training certificates, which are a qualification requirement, are neglected. Regarding competency, there are no such standards for SES positions in the provincial government. This is a concern, as competency standards are the minimum requirements for employees to perform certain jobs and undertake their work appropriately. Furthermore, there are no formal job competency standards in the form of regional or governor regulations.

Moreover, in terms of performance, employees must achieve certain performance appraisal results to determine the extent to which they meet the competency requirements for the SES position. The selection committee will later use the results to ensure that the official's performance complies with the position to be occupied. However, performance assessment remains weak; it is less objective because performance assessment benchmarks are not available. Therefore, the filling of positions has not been fully based on the results of the performance assessment.

The various examples above show that the situation is not aligned with the mandate set out in the ASN Law, which states that ASN management should be free from political intervention. In addition, there is no article that explicitly states that the leadership of the council has the authority to make appointments to employee positions. Regarding Article 20A

paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, the House of Representatives has legislative, budgetary, and supervisory functions. Therefore, the process of filling positions undertaken by the House of Representatives does not correspond to the implementation of the three functions of the institution. In addition to the proximity factor, promotions combine performance appraisal with seniority, which requires high compliance from superiors. Although seniority is still a consideration, it is combined with employees' performance to ensure a match between the position and their abilities. This is expected to avoid the placement of employees with poor performance in positions that do not match their abilities.

Furthermore, subjectivity and delays in performance appraisal are reasons for not making performance appraisal the main reference in promotions. Subjectivity arises because there is still a sense of reluctance by superiors to conduct performance appraisals with employees who have disciplinary penalties, which could lead to unobjective assessments. In addition, delays occur because many civil servants still do not understand the procedures for inputting performance appraisals.

The far from ideal utilization of performance appraisals in the promotion process is not only found in the public sector but also the private sector. John, Omolayo, and Imodu (2017) examined the use of such appraisals and employees' perceptions of them at the Coca-Cola beverage company in Lagos, Nigeria. Their results show that 97.3% of respondents stated that performance appraisals were used for promotion. However, the study found that some managers used

performance appraisal results to prevent promotions. This could happen if managers' assessments are not objective, despite the fact that 69.3% of respondents agreed with managers' subjectivity. This implies that the assessment conducted by some managers is based on prejudice and bias, which means the assessment tool is not used correctly. If this process continues, it will create a lack of cooperation between employees and managers to effectively commit to organizational goals. The data showed that 86.0% of the respondents agreed that performance appraisals determined work commitment and performance. From this case, it can be concluded that although performance appraisals have been mostly used for job promotions, completing the assessment remains less objective, which is a concern for employees as it can hinder the promotion process.

Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Rotation

Rotation indicates the movement of employees from one job to another to help the organization place them in a more appropriate position. The basis for the rotation is employee performance, as assessed through performance appraisal (Hasibuan, 2016). To determine the process, there are two indicators: the implementation of rotation based on performance appraisals and rotation

carried out to improve performance appraisal results.

In relation to the first indicator, the Secretariat General has utilized the results of performance appraisals for employee rotations managed by the Performance Appraisal Team and Selection Committee. However, the process is fairly similar to the determination of promotions, as the performance appraisal for rotation still contains subjective elements or is based on the experience of the appraisal official, which can lead to an unfair system. Concerning this finding, Nitisemito (2001) observes that if a rotation cannot improve efficiency and effectiveness, then it has no meaning and could even harm the organization. Such situations clearly need to be overcome because they are the basis for poor rotations, founded on considerations such as likes and dislikes.

Regarding the second indicator, the findings show that a rotation is a form of refreshment for civil servants in performing their work, which can lead to improved performance results for those concerned. Through such rotation, it is hoped that employee performance will be improved together with their competence, and it could even be used as a form of preparation for promotion to higher civil servant positions. Rotation should be considered a process with long-term goals for preparation for promotion so that employees who are rotated will be candidates for promotion.

Table 3. Matrix of the Utilization of Performance Appraisal Results for Career Development

| Dimension | Indicator | Analysis |
|------------------|--|--|
| Education | Performance assessment results are used to | Performance appraisal results are not used to identify education needs |

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| | identify education program needs. | because education tends to improve competencies, and there is still subjectivity in performance appraisal. |
| | Education prepares for a higher position. | It does not immediately lead to a higher position because other requirements must be met. |
| Training | Performance appraisal determines employees' training needs. | The results of performance appraisals have not been used as the basis for providing training due to subjectivity and delays in conducting the appraisals. |
| | Training is given to employees who have low work performance. | Training is provided to all employees, both ones with low and high performance. |
| | Performance appraisal helps evaluate employee training programs. | Performance assessment results are not used to evaluate training programs. |
| Promotion | Performance appraisal results are used for promotion. | Performance appraisal results have been used for promotion but only as a supplement. |
| | Promotion opportunities are equal for all employees. | There are still political factors in determining promotion. |
| | Performance appraisal results are combined with seniority to determine promotion. | They are used for positions requiring high compliance. |
| Rotation | The implementation of rotation is based on performance assessment. | Performance appraisal results have been used for rotation. |
| | Rotations are made to improve performance appraisal results. | Civil servants with low performance can be rotated to other positions so that their performance will improve. |

Conclusion

In conclusion, performance appraisal is not the key factor in the career development of employees in a semi-political organization. Subjectivity and political concerns continue to dominate the rotations and promotion processes. The only requirements for promoting and rotating employees in certain roles are the leader's approval and a close relationship with the employee. This occurrence shows that the promotion and rotation do not fulfill the predetermined requirements. There are still subjective factors that result in a deterioration in employee performance and productivity. Moreover, performance evaluation results have not been utilized in the development of education and training programs. Individual performance results are less important in determining education and training programs than proposals and supervisor recommendations.

As corruption in employee rotation and promotion is widespread, future research should concentrate on the relationship between performance and career development at the local level. This study suggests that the National Civil Service Agency conduct a thorough examination of the practice of career development in each public institution in Indonesia. A more systematic framework for performance measurement and civil service career development should be developed after the evaluation process.

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