

THE PARADOX OF THE NEXUS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SCORES AND PRODUCTIVITY IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

Employee appraisal has been a challenge in many Tanzanian organizations. While productivity is very low in many organizations, hardly does any employee score the lower grades in assessment forms. This scenario is the result of the fissures in the Performance Improvement Model that is inherent in the weak Performance Management System in Tanzania. Consequently, the tool for performance appraisal; OPRAS fails to indicate organizations' productivity. In order to remedy the systemic contradiction, there should be political commitment and seriousness in employee performance appraisal, among other key factors at all levels of Tanzanian Organizations. This will enable organisations to directly link employees' performance to their productivity.

Key Words: *Productivity, Performance Appraisal, Tanzania, and OPRAs*

Introduction

The emergence of New Public Management in the 1980s was due to inter alia the relative poor productivity of the public sector as compared to the private sector worldwide (Heinrich 2007; Kalimullah et al. 2012). Tanzania like other developing countries devised ways of improving and enhancing productivity by establishing reform programs. The administration systems were redesigned so that they could be efficient and efficient in the supplying of commodities and services to the citizens. In Tanzania, a new tool/instrument for measuring performance was built; the Open Performance and Review Appraisal System (OPRAS) in July 2004, according to the establishment Circular No.2 of 2004 (Issa 2010). The OPRAS is embedded in the performance management system (PMS) through the performance improvement model (PIM) (Issa 2010; Mutahaba, 2011). As the tool, OPRAS ought to evaluate the real functioning of employees, which would reflect the real organizational productivity.

Despite the introduction and institutionalization of OPRAS in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), an anecdotal evidence demonstrates that there are allegations that

productivity has remained low (Mbelle 2005) while the scores on OPRA forms have been above average. This is contrary to the goals of the PMS in Tanzania. The main gist of this paper is to: explain the discrepancy between employees' appraisal scores and organizational productivity; and then offer suggestions on how PMS can effectively adjust the employee appraisal scores with productivity in the public sector. Its focus is principally on public systems because this challenge is more outstanding in public organizations (MDAs) than in private establishments. This paper employs mainly the desk research methodology. It relies on reviewing written documents; books, journals, and from the library and websites. The following sections present the meaning of terms and the conceptual framework of performance appraisal and productivity; the management performance of Tanzania; the discrepancies between OPRA's scores and productivity; and the remedy for this problem.

Conceptual Framework

Any organization has objectives to accomplish, which highly depends on the performance of individual employees. In order to realize the contributions of the employees towards achieving the goals, their performance should be appraised. Employee performance appraisal refers to the process of identifying, evaluating, and developing the work performance of employees so that the organizational goals and targets are effectively achieved while at the same time benefiting employees in return of appreciation, receiving feedback, and offering career guidance (Islam 2005). It is a systematic, periodic, and impartial rating of employee in relation to employee job and his potentialities for excellence. Employee performance appraisal is the basis of salary increment, promotion, and other rewards; it shows the weaknesses and strengths of the employees and so highlights areas for improvements; and management can make many other decisions like an employee layoff, penalties, and employee development (Amstrong 2006).

Productivity refers to a ratio between the output and the volume of inputs. It measures how efficiently production inputs and capital are being utilized in an economy to produce a given output; turning labour and capital into outputs in the form of goods and services (New Zealand Government 2008). Productivity is the key sources of economic growth and competitiveness and at the national level, it is the basic statistical information for many international comparisons and country performances. Productivity can be defined in relation to the input(s). One or several inputs can be considered like labour, capital, and technology.

Productivity means how much and how well we produce from the resources used. If we produce more or better goods and services from the same resources, we increase productivity. Or if we produce the same goods and services from lesser resources, we also increase productivity (Tangen 2005). Here, resources refer to all human and physical resources, i.e. the people who produce the goods or provide the services, and the assets with which the people can produce the goods and, or provide the services. The resources that people use include the land and buildings, fixed and moving machines and equipment, tools, raw materials, inventories, and other current asset.

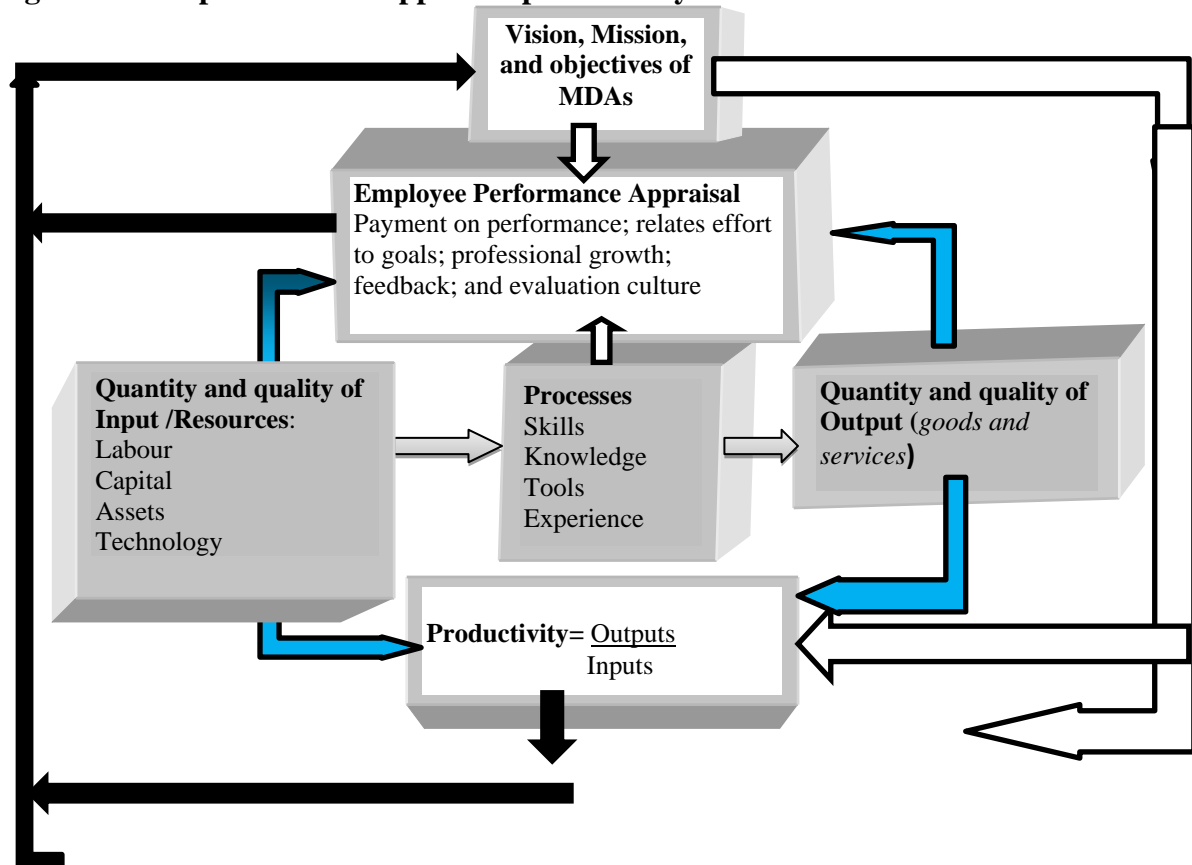
Productivity depends on the use of the resources exposed to the organization and improper/proper use and change in volume. Higher productivity depends on the production process where value is added to the goods and services (Ibid). Using outcome in productivity measurement should be used cautiously in service related sectors, for instance, what is needed is not just changes in health rather the patients treated; changes in educational status rather than the amount of lessons taught, and outcome which the government has no control (Linna 2010). Therefore, productivity should not just emphasize on efficiency, but effectiveness that implies value creation output (Tangen 2005; Heinrich 2007).

The effective performance management system is one of the tools for measuring and improving productivity (Vallance 1999). Organizations are more concerned with improvement in productivity. Heads of departments and agencies of the government, like in the private sector try to ensure that they do more with less inputs; same input with more outputs; and increase output faster than input proportionally (Tangen 2005). This suggests that employee appraisal system is one of the tools that can measure and provide evidence related to the organizational performance and productivity, if it is effectively used.

The process of employee performance appraisal emphasizes the significance of employee participation (Cawley et al. 1998). Employee participation includes mutually identifying and agreeing on target criteria for evaluation, the resources required to achieve the agreed targets; and midyear and annual review (Issa, 2010). The agreed targets emanate from the organization vision, mission, and objectives, which set in motion other components such as the needed resource (time, labour and finance), and criteria and their indicators for judging the extent the employees achieve the objectives. The process of employee appraisal is interconnected with other components such as the entire process of production in which productivity is assessed.

The employee appraisal system provides the feedback on the resources exposed to the employee, the capacity of the employee to achieve the challenging targets under the current production system, and the quality of the output. When all these are reviewed properly become a potential feedback and the reflection on the mission and objectives of the organization; the quality and quantity of inputs; the effectiveness and efficiency of the process; and the quality and quantity of goods/services produced as per predetermined standards (Baochi-Mensah and Side 2012). Productivity picks from the two components of employee performance; the resources (input) and the products (output). Productivity should be aligned with the organization mission and objectives. Productivity also provides feedback to the performance appraisal and may become a reason for revising organization targets. The performance appraisal ought to reflect the productivity and vice versa. In summary, the diagram (figure 1) below shows the linkages of key factors involved in performance and productivity.

Figure 1: The performance appraisal-productivity nexus



Performance Management System and Performance Improvement Model

Employee performance appraisal in Tanzania is imbedded in the Performance Management System (PMS). The system is designed to support the introduction of the public service reform program, which aims at improving quality of service delivery. It tries to ensure that the government accrues the intended benefits from the inputs by making congruent individual, teams, and public service objectives and results (Issa 2011).

In order the government of Tanzania to successfully implement the PMS designed a model- the Performance Improvement Model (PIM). Ministries, Departments, agencies and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are required to implement PMS in order to improve performance in their workplaces. The model has four interconnected tools or component used: planning; implementation; monitoring and evaluation; and annual review. As the tool PMS builds mutual understanding and agreement on predetermined results and the way to achieve them.

This paper pays more attention on the implementation part of the PIM, the OPRAS, in particular, because it is the kingpin of PSM (Mutahaba 2011), but its measures and recorded scores allegedly are not reflecting the productivity of many MDAs. The OPRAS starts by planning what the employee should do in the next financial year by incorporating observations made in the previous year. The main targets are obtained from the corporate strategic plan. The heads of all sections make their own plan from the heads of the MDAs.

For instance, in the Universities the OPRAS starts with the vice chancellors who use the corporate strategic plan, then deputy vice chancellors, then heads of colleges, schools and the process goes on in a cascading way to an individual employee in every section. Then every individual employee and his/her immediate supervisor identify and agree on objectives; the resources to use in order to realize the identified targets; and criteria/indicators to inform them whether they have achieved the targets or not.

The process involves a key step, the monitoring and evaluation, which should check the progress towards achieving the targets and if there is anything that hinders attaining objectives, the employee and his supervisor work out the problem or if it is a serious factor they can revise their targets during the mid year review. The final review (annual year review); entails weighing the agreed objectives and the progress made; and attributes of good performance. Usually OPRAS uses a rating scale based on: 1 = Outstanding performance; 2= Performance above average; 3 =Average performance; 4=Poor performance; and 5=Very poor performance. The OPRAS bears transparency and openness (Cawley et al.1998). The employee (appraisee) rate himself and comment on his/her performance. Then the head of section/supervisor (appraiser) also rates the employee and provide comments, then the supervisor convenes the empraisee and an observer (witness) for the final step of the appraisal. The final score is computed by averaging the final score of employee and his supervisor. The last section of the form requires the supervisor to recommend the appropriate rewards, developmental measures, or sanctions against the appraisee in accordance with the agreed performance targets (URT 2013).

From this brief explanation about OPRAS in Tanzania, it shows that performance appraisal scores are mainly about the individual employee and not the teams, groupd, department or section. Also, the performance appraisal scores do not directly reflect the MDAs productivity. This process if it does, remotely measure productivity. It has inherent weaknesses that rarely can improve productivity directly.

The Reasons for Discrepancies between Employees' Appraisal Scores and Productivity

The discrepancies between the employees' high performance scores and stagnant productivity of their units within MDAs can be traced right from the practice of the Tanzanian performance management framework. In particular, the Performance Improvement Model (PIM) which requires individuals to duly fill in the OPRA forms and rate performance at the end of the year; and from literature surveys on employee performance appraisal and organization productivity.

The assessment of the first four-year implementation of OPRA in Tanzania since 2004 encountered challenges. The acceptance and institutionalization of OPRAS in the MDAs has been sparse with about 51 percent compliance rate due to several reasons; claims were registered regarding OPRA forms that they were/are overly complicated to complete, and in some instances, they were/are not context-sensitive to different professional cadres in the public service (World Bank 2008). For instance, at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, and the University of Dar es Salaam did not adopt the government OPRA forms, but

continues with their own forms of employee performance appraisal suitable for higher learning institutions.

In Tanzania and Uganda, the situation reveals that the employees see unfair performance management approach possibly the mechanisms employed to distribute rewards were characterized by favouritism, a perspective that was rife in organizations that performed below average (Therkildsen et al. 2010). This presents the possibility of having employees with high performance scores irrespective of lower organization productivity. The evaluation probably is done for the sake of filling out and putting forward the forms and employees and their immediate supervisors feel safe to submit forms with high scores to the top management. Thus, OPRAs is not taken in earnest by the supervisors, so the objectives cannot be reached. The OPRA forms in this case contain false information upon which any determination made is likely to render zero in relation to organizational productivity.

The Performance Improvement Model (PIM) shows that all parts are interconnected and require a sequence in fulfilment. The example for operation management is not meaningful if some or even one element is not fulfilled (Therkildsen et al. 2010). For instance, lack of resource inputs and other requirements make the individuals fail to conform to his objectives. It is also discovered that the quarries are non specific, achievable, measurable, realistic, and time framed (SMART), so employees are likely to deviate from the real goals of the organisations. It is potential that high scores in this event are unlikely related to productivity. Both the executive program and the subordinate have failed to distinguish targets and so are their indicators and resources required to achieve them within the specified time frame. In this scenario, OPRAs as the puppet does not measure anything related to the genuine product (Gabriels and Michel 1985).

An anecdotal evidence shows that Tanzanian public servants, especially the lower cadres were not coached properly. The chiefs of their sections attended the preparation simply did not convey the knowledge to their underlings. As the final result, the introduction of OPRAS in some public departments and agencies never received serious attention. The employees do not fully understand the importance of carrying out performance appraisal for their units, departments, and organization at large. They perceive performance appraisal as the source of punishment, promotion, demotion, dismissal, and rewards, but cannot connect it to productivity. Their perception on OPRAS makes employees rate themselves higher scores which remain a factor in the final averaged scores even when the supervisor's rating is average. In this case there is no nexus between their score and their unit productivity. This concurs with the view of Islams (2005) that,

“If the performance appraisal system is not properly conducted can cause many problems such as low morale, decreased employee productivity, and less employee enthusiasm and support for the organization”.

Factors beyond the employee and his immediate rating supervisor may lead to higher scores in an organization with lower productivity. The individual agreed targets emanate from the head of the unit or department. The resources required to reach the targets depend on the

power of the organization to provide them. Resources may be inadequate to an extent that an employee fails to make her or his objectives. During annual performance review employees tend to value themselves highly because they trust the lower rating is not reasonable for the root cause that is not their own demerit. This trend is coupled with mistrust between employee and the top management on the determinations made based on the OPRA forms otherwise the employee and his immediate supervisors ought to be truthful. This will always provide higher scores than the actual organizational productivity because the immediate supervisors conceal fraud made on allocated resources. It was also discovered that the process of appraisal by using the OPRA form was perceived as inaccurate; overlooked, and undervalued individual's key work performance, and workgroups (Daley 1992; Roberts 2003).

Studying the employee performance appraisal in relation to productivity and job satisfaction, Khan (2005) sheds light on rating scale tendencies that are likely to mislead employee's performance appraisal. The process should, to a great extent avoid human subjectivity. The supervisors should be reasonably objective and accurate in assessing his subordinates' performance. The appraisers should not depend on their memories that are fallible and sometimes make their own standards that may or may not be realistic. The appraisal error may occur, for instance, due to central tendency in which the bulk of employees are near the heart of the performance scale (Roberts 2003). This is induced by the unclear standards-different appraisers derive different meaning from phrases: outstanding performance, sound performance, performance above average; and halo effects. From this study, it is clear that the biases breed rating errors or deviate from the true/actual rating an employee deserves. Therefore, there is a high possibility of the employees' performance scores to be higher than the organizational productivity.

While some authors know the ardent intention of performance assessment, such as increasing productivity and profitability, providing feedback to employee, and increasing individual performance; others regard it as unitary of the seven deadly diseases destructive to organizations (Law 2007). Performance appraisals inhibit quality and productivity in the western world. Employee appraisals instigate hatred and distrust among employee and only 5 percent of human resource managers are satisfied with the designed performance appraisal systems (Lee 2006). In addition, performance appraisals were introduced to motivate employees but the fact is that appraisals were never designed to improve performance, only to measure and rate it. Furthermore, findings based on application of statistical methods in industry and interrelated systems in medium and large scale organizations revealed that as much as 94 percent of the variance in performance in an establishment is due to the system in space rather than the individual employees (Demming 2000). And statistically half of the remaining percentage over performed, and half underperformed. Agreeing to this finding, it is unjust and unproductive to put credit to or blame to individual employees, unless the management could decide whether an employee's variance were due to personal or systemic causes. And so it follows that the organization system is the determinant of the performance of individuals and consequently their contributions towards organizational productivity. The

primary contention here is that performance appraisal, in particular by using OPRAS in Tanzania cannot properly show the productivity of organisations.

From the above discussion, there are mixed views on the reasons for lower organizational productivity and high scores on the OPRA farms in Tanzania. Some sources mention that employee performance appraisals were/are never introduced to better functioning, but they only measure and rate it (Law 2007); and organizational performance and productivity are poor because of the (PMS) of the organizations and not individual employees (Dimming 2005). Therefore, employees' performance appraisal scores are not likely to reflect the organizational performance and productivity. However, some authors converge in the sense that performance appraisal is not properly conducted in many organizations due to, among other reasons, poor training of employees and supervisors; failure to use the performance improvement model; distorting ratings; lack of resources; and weak systems to implement performance appraisal effectively and efficiently (Gabriels and Michel 1985; Roberts 2003; Islam 2005; Bana 2009; Thardilksen et al. 2010). The following part provides some remedies to these quandaries.

Remedy to Fraud Employees' Performance Appraisal

The use of employee performance appraisal in organizations include improvement of productivity and profitability, measure individual performance, provide motivation and recognition, determine pay raises and promotions, coaching, mentoring and counselling, and determine training and development needs (Heinrich 2007; Law 2007; Songstad et al. 2012). While it is challenging to attain successfully all these benefits and advantages of employee performance appraisal system, some measures if in place and effectively implemented can support MDAs to accrue most of these benefits and advantages as it is talked about infra.

The performance improvement model of Tanzania provides what is ought to be done, but some elements are partially or not enforced. For example, in that respect is no practical monitoring and evaluation according to the Performance Improvement Model in public sector in Tanzania. The kingpin of the model, OPRAS (Mutahaba 2011) is haphazardly conducted. This should be evened out by training individual employees about the importance of performance management of their own advantages and their establishment as well. The employers and employees should understand the importance of improved productivity before they are introduced to OPRAS. Trainings given earlier were just about OPRAS and did not link it to productivity, as the result OPRA forms are simply filled in with high scores contrary to the level of productivity. The government of Tanzania has a will to implement PMS and PIM, but it must demonstrate political commitment in order to make a real performance appraisal happen which in turn reflect the productivity of MDAs.

There is the need of employing new ways of operations: personnel management; reorganization of work (resourcing); motivation; and reward practice. Employees are likely to do better when they perform tasks that match their competencies, and stay motivated. It is best to employ a qualified personnel instead of passing on the task to unqualified employees. Rewarding (monetary and non monetary) is essential for employees who give their efforts

exceedingly beyond others in accomplishing challenging projects and contributing significantly to the establishment. Monetary measures may include financial benefits; and non monetary measures such as: respect of colleagues; trophies, certificates or praise; promotion; training, study tours or seminars (Therkildsen 2007). Therefore, motivation should be an OPRAS inherent practical feature in order to align the OPRAS scores with productivity. However, rewarding systems should be very well projected to avoid preconceptions, and demoralizing employees (Daley 1992; Songstad et al., 2012). Also personnel management should see to it that employees perceive that there are job security, career expectations, and good working conditions in order to improve productivity. Hence, the scores on the OPRA forms of the motivated employees from different sectors should largely reflect their dedicated efforts, which amount into the productivity of their organizations.

The OPRAS in Tanzania should go hand in hand with the performance culture. Public organizations, which traditionally are not judged on the foundation of productivity and competition are reluctant to modify behaviours and embrace efficiency and strength. Advance in individual employees needs a performance culture that should reside first in every supervisor who should assist his subordinates to change behaviour towards efficiency and strength. This should be communicated well to employees in order to see overall organization productivity in relation to their efforts. The top management should regularly inform the course of employee performance and the realised targets. It is too significant to link employee performance to the payments, fringe benefits, and other rewards to the employees (Songstad et al., 2012). Building performance culture in the public sector would support fair utilization of the OPRA forms and avoid inflation and deflation of ratings of employee appraisal scores (Daley 1992).

The current OPRAS should be redesigned to integrate key features for measuring productivity precisely. The OPRA forms should be context sensitive and not just a template for all public institutions because it cannot capture productivity in different MDAs. The standards/indicators of productivity in manufacturing tend to use financial indicators while service oriented sector bears more on effectiveness and long lasting impact such as educated society; promoting consciousness on several subjects and delivering a sound companionship. Instead, let the MDAs customise the OPRA form and, where possible, make/design their own employee appraisal forms that capture all indicators that relate to the productivity. For instance, at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, and the University of Dar es Salaam academic staff had forms designed by the institution for evaluation, which were more effective than the government OPRA forms in reflecting real organization productivity. Even within the same organization, different categories of professions and sections require different OPRA forms. For example, in the universities a professor, an accountant, a driver, and a messenger requires different approaches in filling the forms that would show their performance in relation to the university productivity.

There is the need of having OPRAS coordinators in every department or section who facilitate the process of filling in the forms and solving OPRAS related issues. These coordinators should be under the oversight of the Human Resources Office so that they can

identify obstacles, according to their divisions and provide the required assistance. Such coordinators should be conversant with OPRAS, address it properly within their section/department, and align departmental objective with the organizational mission and goals. The confluence of the OPRAS coordinators could provide valuable inputs in the entire process and get a feedback for improvement in targets, resources, and standards/indicators before the mid year and annual inspection. It is also a valuable mechanism to reduce high appraisal grades that can be made by both the empraisee and appraiser.

There should be effective and efficient communication within the organization from which all issues related to employee performance become clear (Roberts 2003). Some employees do not recognize their performance in relation to the productivity of their department because the chief of the section does not offer data bearing on the character and quantity of goods and services they offer to their clients/citizens. Communication is also poor on issue related to available resources to facilitate an individual employee to reach his aims. It is important to provide all necessary information that assures employees to identify achievable objectives and provide the feedback about individual employee and the organization performance (Songstad et al. 2012).

The highest grading scores of the employee that is not equivalent to his performance is committed by both the appraisee and the appraiser without seriously thinking the shock on the organization productivity. There should be a disciplinary action taken against cheating in filling the forms. The supervisors should face the consequences when he/she gives way to manage his/her subordinates properly to fit the agreed objectives, and fill the OPRA forms properly. There should be enforceable regulations in all MDAs to hold such supervisors accountable.

The performance management system was introduced in Tanzania with other reforms in the public sector. It depends on other organisations to function properly, if other schemes are not running efficiently and effectively PMS is doomed to break as well. The public administration in Tanzania has not yet changed so much despite the reforms in the public sector. Productivity in the public sector is the product of the entire system of public administration in Tanzania. For example, delays in financial disbursement to local government authorities, government departments, and agencies affect timely delivery of service to the citizens. It also disrupts individual employee performance. In this situation, OPRAS is redundant.

All managers in MDAs should not just document the recorded performance from the midyear and annual reviews but they should analyse the reports. The purpose of OPRAS may end up with rating the employees' performance, but there should be a systematic analysis of the predetermined indicators. The supervisors should seek to resolve questions related to why the targets and goals are not achieved and try to monitor the total process of production of goods and services (Heinrich 2007). Rigorous analysis would try to evaluate the inputs, the procedure, and the output and relate them to their MDAs vision, mission, and objectives (see figure 1 above). The managers should analyse every component and relate it to the outcome; the performance appraisal-productivity nexus. The process could bring out the need for

training some staff; recruiting employees; and reorganizing, and redesigning of duties and undertakings. Further decisions related to rewarding, promotion and pay could justly emanate from OPRAS (Bana 2009).

The above measures suggest that there is no single step that can amend the entire performance management in Tanzania. All measures should be incorporated in a comprehensive way in all MDAs and LGAs to improve the performance of every individual and in turn their MDAs LGAs. Nevertheless, the government commitment in funding of performance management in Tanzania is the key element in linking employee performance appraisal to productivity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The performance management system is crucial for measuring and evaluating, and reviewing the objectives of the organization. Nevertheless, in Tanzania the Performance Management System and Performance Improvement Model are not carried out effectively and efficiently. The experience shows that employees' predetermined objectives are not realistic; no proper monitoring and evaluation; and reviewing process is in mess in many Tanzanian organizations. The cure to the problem includes conducting performance appraisal fairly and effectively. There should be proper training and coaching to all employees so that they can understand the linkages between performance appraisal and organizational productivity in one hand, and on the other hand know how individual employees benefit from the performance appraisal system. In addition, employee performance assessment should be context sensitive in order to get the actual employee performance, which reflects actual MDAs' productivity. The government commitment remains a major element in creating the performance appraisal system effective. Investing in the PMS, and making proper monitoring and evaluation of the process at all times and organizational levels are the steps towards aligning performance appraisal of individual employees with the productivity of MDAs.

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