Performance Management in the Education Sector

How Does the Quality of a Performance Management System Relate to Perceptions of Organisational Politics in Dutch Schools for Secondary Education?

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Abstract

Performance management is being used increasingly in the Dutch education sector, but there is no agreement in the scientific literature on whether it is suitable in this context. Several publications call for more research on this subject. The goal of this research was to partly reduce the uncertainty regarding the suitability of performance management in the education sector. The focus lay on teachers in Dutch schools for secondary education and the quality of performance management systems (PMS-quality) was related to one of the pitfalls of performance management, namely the perceptions of organisational politics (POP). Organisational politics are activities that are not required as part of a person’s formal role in the organisation, with the goal of serving one’s self-interest by using power and influence. Examples are nepotism, gossiping and manipulation. The following problem statement was formulated:

What is the influence of the quality of performance management systems on perceptions of organisational politics in Dutch schools for secondary education?

To address this problem statement, five research questions were answered:

1. What are perceptions of organisational politics?
   POP are the subjective evaluations by an individual of the degree by which the work environment is characterised by co-workers and supervisors who behave in a self-serving manner. POP have an adverse effect on the performance of both employees and the organisation as a whole.

2. What is performance management and on which aspects can the quality of performance management systems be judged?
   Performance management is a set of cyclical and continuous activities in which the goals and strategy of the organisation are determined, translated in key performance indicators and measurable targets, performance is measured, evaluated and rewarded, with the goal of developing employees and steering the organisation towards achieving the strategic goals. The PMS-quality increases when an organisation commits itself to implementing the aspects that are associated with performance management.

3. What does the scientific literature say about the relationship between performance management and the perceptions of organisational politics in secondary education?
   The scientific literature mentions a connection between performance management and POP, yet it doesn’t go into much detail. There are reasons to assume that this connection is
stronger in the education sector than in many other sectors. Teachers are autonomous professionals and performance management can conflict with this autonomy. Research shows that less professional autonomy leads to more POP.

4. **How are the quality of performance management systems and perceptions of organisational politics by Dutch teachers in secondary education related?**

The results of a survey (n = 118) showed that PMS-quality has a moderate to large effect on POP. There are significantly less POP when the PMS-quality is good and vice versa.

5. **Which distinguishing features of teachers moderate this relationship and how?**

Gender, age, type of course, tenure and experience have no moderating influence on the relationship between PMS-quality and POP. The type of secondary education does moderate this relationship. The negative relationship holds for all types, but the relationship is significantly stronger for teachers in a higher level of secondary education, compared to teachers in a lower level.

Despite some methodological flaws (particularly a small sample size), it is possible to conclude that performance management – if executed properly – is suitable for the Dutch secondary education sector, with regard to controlling POP. The goal of this research was met, but to fully answer the question whether performance management is suitable for the education sector, more research is necessary. Other parts of the education sector need to be researched. It is also essential to research the relationship between PMS-quality and other effects of performance management, particularly its main (intended) effect: improved performance.

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