

## Assessing the Constructs' Validity and Reliability of Students' Participation in Academics' Performance Appraisals

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### **Abstract**

*Despite the benefits derivable from integrating students in assessing the performances of academics in especially, higher education institutions (HEIs), studies on students' participation in academics' performance appraisal have been very limited, especially in the non-Western context.. Previous studies conducted have either primarily concentrated on certain aspects of the academics' job performance appraisal or fail to examine the capacity of these academics. For this reason, further contributions to the body of knowledge in this area by attempting investigate the relevance of students in assessing academics' performance especially professional competences become imperative. To achieve the objective of this study therefore, a pilot study was conducted which this paper reports the results. The essence of conducting the pilot study was to determine the validity and reliability of study constructs. The study was carried out at a Public HEI in Bauchi, Nigeria. 50 students were recruited through convenience sampling and were administered questionnaires. Among others, the results of the pilot study confirmed the validity and reliability of the instruments adapted and can be used in an empirical study.*

**Keywords:** Academics, Job Performance, Effective Performance Appraisal, Professional Competences, Students participation,

### **Introduction**

Academics' performance appraisal refers to a seasonal evaluation of academics' performance which involves regular collection and analysis of information towards making decisions concerning the effectiveness, efficiency as well as competence of accomplishing set professional goals and an institution's aspiration to support effective learning (Iyamu & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005). This is very important towards academics' productivity (Yusuf, Abdulkareem & Ogbudinkpa, 2017). The essence of determining an academic's competence in the appraisal process is to get considerable amount of information on his/her competence (Zhao & Zhou, 2018). This is important because academics are the key elements towards attaining the objectives for which higher education institutions (HEIs) are established (Mustapha & Daud, 2012). Moreover, Babagana (2014) argued that, academics' performance is related to their proficiency, especially towards imparting knowledge to students. Therefore, it is argued that students are in the best position to assess the proficiency of these academics since they are in constant contact with them especially in the classrooms (Ahmed, 2016). Besides, apart from

their involvement in the appraisal process supporting teaching quality, it will further enhance academics' performance as well (Liaw & Goh, 2003).

However, academics are not disposed to students' involvement in the appraisal process (Rasheed, Aslam & Sarwar, 2010; Reckers, 1995), notwithstanding its benefits of such students' participation (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015; Benton & Cashin, 2014)). It is in light of this that this paper's aim is to highlight on the key themes, as well as present the results of a pilot study conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the research instrument for a further broad empirical study towards better understanding the relationship between assessing academics' competences and EPA as well as the role of students' participation in this relationship

### **An Overview**

HEIs put in a lot of resources to engage and maintain high calibre and proficient academic staff so as to accomplish the objectives for which they are established. For that reason, appraising academics performance is very imperative as their performances are expected to be high (Molefe, 2010). One way of

achieving this is through assessing academics' job performance. It is argued that assessing job performance exploiting an effective of performance appraisal (EPA) system will impact on both the institutions and academics (Spitzer, 2007). This is because, it tends to spot out goals achievement and alert management in advance on performance gaps (Williams, 2002). Moreover, performance appraisal (PA) checks and accounts for how effective an academic's performance is (Molefe, 2010). Job performance refers to the outcome of an employee's effort in carrying out an activity over a specified period of time (Shahzad, Sarmad, Abbas & Khan, 2011).

However, because of the peculiar nature of the roles associated with academics' jobs, their performances are best understood in terms of professional competencies (Arreola, 2000; Frazen, 2003; Spitzer, 2007; White, 2008). Professional competence review is commonly established as an efficient assessment technique in obtaining substantial amount of detailed and valid information on an academic's competence (Zhao & Zhou, 2018). Competencies can be defined as the open, noticeable and observed behaviour that an individual exhibits which enables that individual perform a given task or role confidently with little or no hitch (Molefe, 2010). In other words, professional competence is the ability associated with the capacity to master knowledge (Rahman, 2014).

In examining academics' professional competences, Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2007) as well as Molefe (2010) relied on the "universal dimensions of professional competencies" which this study adopts. In this context therefore, "dimensions are associated with the collection of behaviours which are precise, noticeable and provable. These dimensions which are also the key lecturer competencies are: subject mastery, testing (assessment procedures), student-lecturer relations, organisational skills, communication skills, subject relevance and utility of assignments. Prior studies on the influence of academics' competence on their performance are seen as distinct matter as it concerns exclusively examining pedagogical or professional competences (Rahman, 2014). Academics' competence is fundamental for teaching quality and student success (Bouley, Wuttke, Schnick-Vollmer, Schmitz, Berger, Fritsch & Seifried, 2015). Assessing academics'

performances is meant to apart from ascertaining the extent to which they are proficient, but also inspire self-sustained career development (Wilkerson & Lang, 2007). Therefore, the need to manage the performance of academics towards attaining institutional objectives is vital to HR managers. One way of realizing this is by pursuing the practice of an EPA. Therefore, Nigeria's HEIs must pursue an EPA in order to support success and optimum performance of their academics (Akinsolu, 2010).

In the South African context for example, reforms were introduced in the HEIs by reviewing HR strategies and practices to be able to develop and maintain competent, motivated and proficient academics (Molefe, 2010; McCloy, Campel & Cudeck, 1994) and these changes have academics' jobs to performance management and quality assessment (Mapesela & Strýdom, 2004).

### **Background to the Study**

Academics are the major element of every HEI that supports immensely not only national and universal education quality, but also, institutional status (Mustapha & Daud, 2012; Rowley, 1996). However, it is difficult managing them because of their relative freedom due the peculiarity of their job (Decramer, Smolders, Vanderstraeten, Christiaens and Desmidt, 2012). Besides, their performance is recognized to be a major factor that determines students' and institutions' performances as well as successes (Kingdon & Teal, 2007). For this reason, appraising academics' staff performance is very important in order to not only attain and sustain quality, but also, the requisite bench mark (Addy & Dzisi, 2014; Rusli & Sopian, 2013).

It is disturbing to note that the ineffectiveness of PA for academics in Nigeria's HEIs (Ojokuku, 2013; Yusuf, et al., 2017), has affected the country's HEIs (Babagana, Mat & Ibrahim, 2019; Moja, 2010). Prior studies reported defective and ineffective appraisals for academic staffs as one of the major factors affecting the country's HEIs in Nigeria (Akinyele, 2010; Igbojekwe, Ugo-Okoro & Agbonye, 2015). It is argued that teaching proficiency is related to academics performances (Babagana, 2014), and such can be determined through PA (Agyen-Gyasi & Boateng, 2015). Hence, pursuing PA that is all

encompassing especially appraising their competence is very imperative. Similarly, students participation in appraising academics' teaching performance and quality has been stressed (Liaw & Goh, 2003). However, academics are critical about students' participation in appraising their performance because their participation is seen as undependable and inaccurate (Reckers, 1995). This is notwithstanding the fact that students' evaluation is encompassed in the key performance index for academics in PA for academics (Liaw & Goh, 2003). Refusing students' participation in the PA process for academics may bring to fore the actual competence and quality of these academics. Though studies have been conducted to better understand PA for academics, there is paucity of empirical research on how students' participation could support professional competences and EPA especially in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

This pilot study adapted survey technique in collecting data among academics of a Public HEI in Bauchi, Nigeria. The essence is to eliminate any doubts concerning the reliability and validity of the instrument in order to incorporate recommendations gotten from the respondents in the final study. A small sample of 50 academics whom are permanent

employees of the institution were used for this study through convenience sampling and were administered questionnaires. This is because pilot tests are usually not large (Fink, 2003). Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Both content validity as well as reliability test was conducted to confirm the validity of the instrument. The dependent variable which is EPA has 3 items, while the independent and moderating variables which are professional competences and students' participation has 23 and 5 items respectively. All the questionnaires administered were retrieved and found to be correctly filled and hence were coded for analysis. Descriptive and reliability analyses are done exploiting SPSS for this pilot study.

**Findings and Discussion**

Table 1 presents the demographic disposition of the respondents in this study. Results show that there are more male than female academics for the survey. Also, as can be seen in the table, the respondents that possess postgraduate degrees are in the majority, and similarly, almost all of the respondents (96%) have been in the service of the institution for over two years and thus, competent and in a position to respond to all the questions in the questionnaire.

**Table 1:**  
*Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

Item	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	34	68	68
Female	16	32	100
<b>Highest Educ. Qualification</b>			
Bachelors	10	20	20
Masters	39	78	98
PhD	1	2	100
<b>Years of Working Experience</b>			
0-1	2	4	4
2-5	12	24	28
6-10	11	22	50
11-15	20	40	90
16 & Above	5	10	100

At the first instance, the instrument was validated and this established the items actually measured what they are intended to assess (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). This was achieved by sending

the instrument to experts in the field of HRM for facial validation and authentication. Again, content validity and construct validity were established. However, the validated instrument was administered to participants to ascertain the

reliability of the constructs. Hence, the two major ways of assessing validity; content validity and construct validity have been established (Huck, 2004). Table 2 presents results of validity and reliability analysis of the

constructs. The results indicated that all the items have attained the minimum threshold and more importantly with higher values which indicate higher levels of internal consistency.

**Table 2:***Reliability and Validity of Constructs (n=50)*

Latent Constructs	No. of Indicators	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted (AVE)	Variance
EPA	3	0.800	0.860	0.607	
Professional competences	23	0.837	0.907	0.767	
Students' participation	5	0.868	0.905	0.657	

**Conclusion**

Generally, the pilot survey results established the validity of the research instrument. The instrument can be further used for an empirical study on the issues earlier discussed. Since all the items in the instrument have met the minimum threshold, this indicates that all the items are good for use.

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