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It is easy to understand as to how the list of formidable obstacles could engender a sense of hopelessness in any manager or organisation thinking about appraisal. But to attempt to avoid these problems by doing away with appraisal is no solution either, for, whenever people interact in organised settings, appraisals will be made - formally or informally.

--- WF Casio (1984)

Performance appraisal is an important managerial activity. It has been expected to achieve various objectives in an organisational setting. Appraisals serve to monitor the efforts of individuals; to integrate and coordinate individual’s efforts into a cooperative endeavour; to provide protection and feedback to the individual, to provide a means of correcting or commending the efforts of individuals, and to provide an equitable and consistent basis of distributing rewards and penalties.

However performance appraisal has proved to be a bone of contention in many organisations as these have the ability to generate strained relationships at work places. The reasons behind such a contribution of appraisal system are manifold. Currently used format based systems are a relic of the feudal society and many organisations still have these in operation. These can be characterised by their being confidential in nature emphasising personality pruning and mechanically operated. Their main focus is on the statistical evaluation of
certain stereotyped abstract individual traits year after year where the numbers can play tyranny with the individuals, if desired by evaluators.

In most organisations, it is not uncommon to find that there are no formal mechanism of appraising the performance of top level managerial positions. In this background, the researcher undertook the study to look into the appraisal practices in general and for senior level managers in particular in Coimbatore based industries during the period 1993 to 1998 with a view to ascertain their design, credibility and efficacy. After selecting the designated industries as the sample units, the researcher adopted a variety of techniques to collect the data. After analysis, the researcher finds that:

(a) Formal appraisal systems have not been introduced in many industries in Coimbatore area despite the awareness of HRD and the importance of performance appraisal system as an essential component.

(b) In many organisations where appraisal systems are in operation, the systems are deficient or found not meeting the objectives fully.

(c) A system for assessing top / senior level managerial positions is mostly non-existent.

On the whole the impression gained by the researcher is the lack of knowledge on the entire gamut of performance appraisal, as well as, the lack of urgency to have a credible and efficient system meeting the objectives. This has been the case with most industries barring a few, which have gone ahead and are
operating with fairly satisfactory appraisal systems. But there are avenues for improvement in them too.

It is seen that the management of Coimbatore based industries are now in the hands of younger generations. With the change of management, these younger generations, some of whom are highly educated in India and abroad, are slowly taking the organisations to new horizons. However, the traditional management culture embedded in these organisations are taking time to change. Prevalence of some of the conservative and feudalistic touch is still visible in many of the coimbatore based industries.

It is argued that appraisals should be designed to suit the culture. The researcher has taken a different point of view. He feels that the appraisals can be used as instruments of change towards a desired culture rather than waiting for the culture to change and changing appraisals to suit change.

Changing organisational culture through appraisal systems along may be too high an objective to achieve. The researcher thinks that it is not impossible. First of all we must be clear about the culture we want to develop. Today there is a need for definite and positive culture to be developed starting from our educational institutions, in every organisation, work place and the society itself. A culture that values human beings and their capabilities, that enables them to be proactive and develop and apply their capabilities; a culture that encourages collaboration and team work; a culture that encourages openness and trust and makes the place of work a happy place; and most importantly, a culture that promotes work ethics through all these.
There is already a great degree of awakening taking place in the managerial world about the potential uses of performance appraisals. Unlike in western countries, where training is perceived as the most important mechanism of developing employees, in India appraisal systems are being recognised as an equally potential tool for development and to bring in a change in organisational culture. The researcher believes that the performance planning and review system developed by him for senior level managers could be one of the instruments to move in that direction. The researcher strongly recommends the same for consideration and adoption by Coimbatore based industries. He also feels that there is ample scope in most Coimbatore based industries for further study on the subject and for installation of developmental oriented appraisal systems in other managerial levels and non-managerial levels.