Assignment 5

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**Module Five questions**

**1. Effective employee recruitment and selection is necessary for the competitiveness of Organizations. However, failure to prepare for smooth recruitment processes is the most common pitfall in public service in Africa and more so in developing countries. Discuss.**

The main objective of human resource planning (HRP) in organizations is to ensure that we have the right people doing the right jobs at the right time. HRP helps to develop plans for matching demand with supply. Such plans include recruitment and selection.

Although in principle, staff recruitment and selection is expected to be rational and systematic, in Africa, factors beyond the nature of the job and procedural requirements seem to matter in recruitment and selection criteria. Many studies including (Akinnusi 1991; Gardner 1996; Kamoche et al. 2005; Budhwar & Debrah 2004) have confirmed that many organizations have some kind of formal recruitment and selection procedures but positions that do not exist are filled through recruitment based on friendship and relations orchestrated through favouritism, bribery, and nepotism.

It is also common for vacancies to be created by targeting specific individuals and jobs end up being filled even without advertisement or they are advertised in a manner that many competitors fail to notice. However, these observations do not fail to recognise that African countries and organizations are not homogeneous and hence there are few exceptions to the rule, particularly the foreign based organizations which, by and large, use mother countries’ human resource management practices, as noted in some specific cases.

Specifically recruitment and selection practices associated with filling vacant posts in the public service reveal that some of Ministries, Departments and Agencies do not manage to fill some of the vacant posts approved due to reasons which include:

* Failure by some appointing authorities to advertise vacant posts in at least three newspapers as directed by the law because of high costs. This leads to few candidates applying for the posts. As a result, open competition to acquire the most highly qualified candidate is compromised.
* Filling jobs in peripheral areas where some candidates prefer not to work in the periphery workstations or regions, hence they do not apply for the job or some successful candidates do not report to the workstation.
* Rare professional cadres. Some technical professionals are hard to come by and hence creating strong competition between public and private sector is difficult. Since some jobs in the private sector are more rewarding than in the public sector it becomes difficult to get qualified candidates and even if selected, they do not take up the offer. Therefore, some job vacancies are very difficult to fill.
* Filling senior positions in the public service. The public service act was amended and, among other things, stipulates that all senior positions in the public service be filled through the internal source. However, the number of experienced senior officers in the public service is very low and it is becoming difficult to fill in senior vacant posts after natural attrition.
* Long and cumbersome procedure. Experience has shown that the open recruitment process is very long from the permit application to the filling of the post. The process is expensive, but on the other hand, it takes a lot for time of responsible officers and hence affects other duties and programmes.
* Lack of information technology skills in managing recruitment and selection. In most cases, many candidates apply for jobs while the system used for shortlisting is manual and time consuming. Therefore, it becomes a very difficult and lengthy process to assess each applicant fairly particularly when there is time pressure and at times when some members of the panel have special interest in some job applicants.
* Adherence to procedures and criteria. One of the primary roles of the PO – PSC is to monitor and ensure that every appointing authority fully adheres to the prescribed rules and procedures governing recruitment and selection. Normally, the public service commission, through human resource compliance inspection systems, conducts a routine inspection of appointing authorities however; it will also act when it receives complaints from individuals or a higher authority regarding malpractice.

Despite inspections, there are still cases of non-compliance to procedures, which include:

* The appointing authorities’ failure to define properly the required qualifications, experience, skills and personal attributes.
* Poor record keeping such as a list of applicants, record of shortlisted candidates, employment permit and interview score sheet/ results.
* In some of the posts the candidates shortlisted for interview do not meet the minimum qualifications for the post. This leads to the recruitment of the wrong candidates.
* Some of the appointing authorities are not able to inform all the interviewed candidates of interview’s outcome.

Although these limitations seem to amount to a lack of knowledge and skills to conduct effective recruitment and selection, or lack of accountability, given the common knowledge that staff recruitment in African countries is driven by corruption, favouritism and personal relationships, one cannot ignore the fact that most African countries face the same problem.

If managers are not careful in developing the best strategies for recruiting and selecting staff, it is likely that the organization will fail to perform because the available jobs are being carried out by the wrong people and whose removal would be costly.

**2. Interviews are commonly used in selecting the best suitable candidate for the job. However, the best job applicant is not necessarily offered the job. Comment.**

The various scenarios where the best job applicant is not necessarily offered are many and these could be for the following reasons

There are situation where nobody gets hired. Jobs disappear because budget gets allocated elsewhere or the headcount disappears so they combine the role with an existing one. Sometimes the content of the job changes so none of the original candidates fit anymore. An employer might be genuinely interested in you and think you’re great…for a job that no longer exists.

The great driver flunks the road test. Getting a job takes a different skill set than doing the job. So many jobseekers are focused on building the skills and credibility to do the job – getting certification, becoming active in a related professional association. This is all good, but getting the job requires that you know how to interview, network, and negotiate. These are likely skills you have not used in your previous job. Even Human Resources professionals are sometimes bad at job search because they are used to being on the other side of the hiring process, which requires a different mindset. What can you do? Recognize that you have to pass the road test before you can drive. You study the rules of the road and take driving lessons before your road test. Prepare accordingly for your job search by learning and practicing interviewing, networking and negotiation, not just skills specific to your job.

That great candidate didn’t want the job (or at least that’s how it seems). The hiring process involves human interaction so it’s subjective. If you ask 10 different recruiters the same question about something in the job search (Can a resume be more than 1 page? Do you read cover letters?), you will hear different responses. But there is one question where I also hear the same response: Would you hire the most qualified but lukewarm candidate or the lesser but still qualified and enthusiastic candidate? Hands down, employers pick the enthusiastic though less qualified candidate. Desire matters. We want to work with energetic, positive people who want to work with us. What can you do? Show genuine interest. Don’t assume that just because you’re applying it signals that you want the job. Don’t be afraid to ask to be hired and state explicitly how much you want to be there.

Lack of preparation if either party is unprepared then the interview is unlikely to be successful. If the interviewer is unprepared, then he or she cannot provide an environment that will enable the candidate to portray themselves in the best light. Judgement made too early. Too often the interviewer makes up his or her mind too early (often in the first few minutes). This is totally subjective and does not allow the candidate a fair chance. Unstructured interviews. If the interviewer has no set format to follow, then each interview will be conducted differently. This does not allow for a common assessment of candidates to take place. When this does happen the interviewer usually makes their judgement solely on what they liked or disliked about their candidate. In such circumstances, when asked why they rejected a candidate they often give vague reasons such as, “there was something about them I didn’t like’.

The Budget for the position wasn’t approved especially and yet a company went to the trouble of posting and interviewing for a position. Sometimes jobs are posted with confidence that the budget will go through in time to make a hire, but for one reason or another, internal forces change the winds and cancel the requisition. Even if the salary for a new hire was given the go-ahead prior to posting the position, that decision can be reversed.

Someone Else Was a Stronger Match. You could be an outstanding candidate, but another prospect was more closely in line with what the company’s looking for. “Sometimes the person who got the job simply dazzled everyone in her interview, or had amazing experience with widget making, which wasn’t mentioned in the job description but happens to be an area the company is expanding into next year. In the job market, employers generally get flooded with well-qualified candidates, which means that you might have been someone they would have been thrilled to hire, except that Candidate B just happened to be a better fit in some specific way. Or perhaps the hiring team changed its vision for the role since posting the job. “For instance, maybe another employee just resigned and so now they’re looking for someone with additional skills to cover that work too.

There could also just be a cultural clash. No matter how great you are, there’s bound to be some organization or supervisor you won’t click with. “The hiring manager might know something you don’t about the job that’s totally unrelated to your qualifications. Whether to hire you or not isn’t just a question of having the skills to do the job, it’s also a question of fitting in well with this particular position, with this particular boss, in this particular culture, and in this particular company. E.g. maybe you seem like you’re too fast-paced to thrive in their slow, bureaucratic environment. Maybe they need someone with an insanely thick skin because the boss is a jerk. Often, one personality type will simply fit better into a team than another.

**3. Recruitment and selection in public service in African countries depends more on who you know than what you know. Use cases to justify this statement.**

Although in principle, staff recruitment and selection is expected to be rational and systematic, in Africa, factors beyond the nature of the job and procedural requirements seem to matter in recruitment and selection criteria. Many studies including (Akinnusi 1991; Gardner 1996; Kamoche et al. 2005; Budhwar & Debrah 2004) have confirmed that many organizations have some kind of formal recruitment and selection procedures but positions that do not exist are filled through recruitment based on friendship and relations orchestrated through favouritism, bribery, and nepotism.

The Uganda Case, shows that there is abundant literature testifying the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s the Uganda Public Service was characterized by a strong and strict adherence to the code of conduct (standing orders) which had been inculcated by the colonial state (Langseth 1996). The Westminster model inherited by Uganda at independence in 1962 was based on the principle of meritocracy or career of the open talent. Civil servants were recruited by open competition regardless of class, ethnicity, race, sex or religion. Promotion was also based on merit and performance which was determined through confidential annual reports on all civil servants.

Honesty, integrity, patriotism, incorruptibility and dedication to duty were the underlying pillars of the Westminster civil service model (Mugaju, 1996). Ethics and morals of public officials were regularly monitored through surveillance reports, and since remuneration levels were largely satisfactory, public servants served the public meticulously (Uganda Inspectorate of Government, 2008).

The 1970s saw a military government in Uganda and subsequent expulsion of Asians who were the backbone of industrial and economic activity. The result was the ‘death” of economic infrastructure, dwindling production, scarcity of essential commodities and unprecedented inflation. This culminated into smuggling and emergence of black market marking the birth of the “magendo” (speculative) economy and collapse of the public service as an institution. Smuggling and black marketeering became lucrative while public service salaries were ridiculed. The result was degeneration of morals, loss of values, emergence of greed and loss of accountability in the public service. Deviant conduct including thefts and embezzlement became the order of the day and public servants strived to eke out a living. Such deviant behaviors were in form of embezzlement, diversion of resources, directly demanding for bribes and earning illegally that entrenched corruption in the public service system leading to non – observance of ethics and integrity (National Integrity Survey, 2008).

The current National Resistance Movement (NRM) government has attempted to put in place a number of institutions and measures to combat corruption. Prominent among these include: The Inspectorate of Government established by Article 223 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda; Directorate of Ethics and Integrity; The Auditor General (Article 163); Directorate of Public Prosecution; Public Accounts Committee. Even with a pool of these institutions still government faces challenge of degenerating morals and high prevalence of corruption in the public service. Recently, the Ministry of Public Service introduced a Code of Conduct for the Uganda Public Service which sets out the standards of behavior for Uganda’s public servants. It is also designed to ensure the impartiality, objectivity, transparency, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of public officers when performing their duties. This is a welcome development whose success will however largely depend on the serious implementation and enforcement measures which the government must put in place. Public servants must also realize that their ethical behaviors is a cornerstone to national development.

Corruption as a major unethical practice in Uganda has remained the major challenge in not only ensuring that public resources are utilized efficiently and prudently for the benefit of all Ugandans, but most importantly in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Global Integrity (March 2009) reported that Uganda loses US $ 259 million a year through corruption and procurement. Global Integrity further reports that in the assessment of the country’s Auditor General, procurement accounts for 70% of public spending, of which 20% is lost via dishonest practices of government officials responsible for public funds34. There has been tangible progress in establishing the required legal institutional framework to counter corruption. But as pointed out by Transparency International (2009), these efforts have yielded limited results. What is more worrying is the fact that in Uganda the demands for and payment of bribes are no longer secrets. People seem to glorify those who acquire wealth through graft while they ridicule those who uphold principles of integrity and moral values. This clearly shows that corruption is becoming an acceptable way of life (Uganda Inspectorate of Government Survey 2008).

In addition to corruption in human resource management, the Uganda Inspectorate of Government Survey (2008) investigated the different administrative injustices prevalent in public institutions. The most prevalent forms included unfair allocation of works, unfair disciplinary actions, inadequate staff resulting in failure to confirm staff; and victimization of junior staff by their seniors. Other vices were unfair transfers and polarization of staff by senior management through cliques. All these malpractices are indicators that ethics, integrity, transparency and professionalism still show some negative gaps in the Uganda Public Service.

It is rather disappointing that scandals involving public officials are common in most African governments. People are debating and complaining about outright corruption, lack of ethics, transparency, integrity and unprofessional behavior in government. In these discussions, the public does not distinguish among those in government, whether they are elected political leaders or career public servants. In public perception, all are tainted by the same brush of guilt or indolence. This has to change if the citizens and the general public have to regain confidence in the public service institution. It is also important to realize that the war against corruption, an evil that threatens and weakens public officials’ ethics and integrity, cannot succeed if the community has come to accept it as a way of life.

Therefore public awareness needs to be aroused about the evils of corruption and its implications to the economic and social structures of society.

In order to improve the ethics, integrity, transparency, accountability and professionalism in the public service, the following summarized recommendations, several of which have been suggested by UNDESA (2001) should be considered by the relevant governments of Africa:

* Uphold merit or professionalism
* Enforce public service regulations
* Improve remuneration
* Improve transparency in recruitment and other HR policies
* Strengthen ethics or anti-corruption legislations
* Implement Codes of Conduct
* Improve the induction programs
* Verify or make public disclosures of conflict of interest
* Give more resources and independence to investigating agencies
* Prosecute corrupt acts.

In conclusion, when the majority of the above recommendations are implemented and enforced, governments in Africa will once again regain glorified and well performing public administration systems which some people tend to believe that such systems were also “liberated” with the departure of colonialism.

**4. Discuss the components of an effective assessment with an aid of a diagram**

Human resource managers, professionals or staff working in assessment centres should be aware that the effectiveness of the selection method depends on the extent to which specific principles guiding the entire recruitment and selection process are applied. Figure below displays the main blocks underpinning the principles. From the figure we can conclude that if ten key areas of assessment centres are closely followed, the results of the selection process will be effective in terms of ensuring that the most talented and competent job applicant is considered for recruitment.

The starting point is job analysis, which establishes the nature of the job (tasks, activities, responsibilities, and accountabilities) which will also determine associated required talents and competencies defining behavioral attributes for best performance. Each job applicant participating in the assessment centres will be assessed. Some of the assessment techniques, which may be used, are simulation exercises, tests, interviews, questionnaires, games and case law.

One assessment technique may be more important than the other depending on the nature of the job and the position applied for. For example, case law is more important for the job of company secretary than a written test is because while a test will measure the understanding of legal concepts, principles and issues, a case will require the ability to use such knowledge in practice.

However, as noted earlier, multiple assessment techniques are important because each technique will compliment or validate the other and hence improve the reliability of the conclusions reached for each candidate. The assessment has to be done by more than one assessor in ordered to reduce personal bias. Usually, five assessors will be adequate. The importance of training assessors does not need to be emphasized again here.

**Component of effective assessment in assessment centres**

Use multiple assessments

Behavioural attributes

Train assessors

Report

Use job analysis

Assess each competencies

Use multiple assessors

Use assessment techniques

Systematic Recording

Validate decision

The task of assessing job applicants is technical and requires a thorough understanding of the job and the assessment techniques or tools. Therefore, the more assessors are familiar and experienced with assessment centres, the better the quality of the assessment. There is no firm rule on who should be part of the team of assessors. However, gender, race, seniority, experience are some of the criteria for appointing assessors. Recording the transactions made in the assessment centres is as important as the assessment itself. Each observation made regarding each competence demonstrated has to be systematically recorded on a well-designed form that will rate or rank the presence or non-presence of a certain competence in an individual in relation to a specific aspect of the job. Using tapes, that can be replayed later, can help to illustrate what areas may require more questioning or testing. Criteria for making a decision regarding each job application are made based on the aggregation of the results from each assessor. A decision based on these aggregates is sufficiently valid to recommend some individuals for employment. Where divergences on key areas of assessment are noted among assessors, a consensus has to be reached by using criteria that will be accepted by all. Where differences may still exist, recommendations will be submitted to the management for a final decision on who should be recruited based on the face value of the results as well as management wisdom.

Finally, the figure above suggests that the ten principles of effective assessment centres are interlinked and interconnected because of the symbiotic and synergetic influence of each principle in the entire assessment centre.

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