



HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Human resource management (HRM) is an integral part of any organization. It basically involves the management of the workforce or the members of the organization. It involves the process of selecting, weeding out, training, assessing, and rewarding members or workers. HRM also seeks to evaluate leadership in the organization, as well as the corporate culture, ensuring that these comply with labor laws. HRM works to manage human corporate and organizational activities in the hope of improving the general standing and performance of the organization. This paper now seeks to establish a general overview of human resources management, including its functions and its relation to public administration. This paper is being carried out in order to establish a general understanding of HRM functions, including their general applicability to corporations and to the public sector.

The 20th century ushered in a period where researchers started to consider ways of establishing value through the efficient management of the workforce (Merkle, p. 3). This function started first as a transactional activity to manage payroll as well as to administer of benefits. In the current globalized setting however, where technological advancements as well as company mergers abound, HR is concerned with strategies on mergers, acquisitions, talent management, skill training, labor relations, industrial relations, diversity, as well as transition planning (Ulrich, p. 37). For new companies, the responsibilities of the HR are often carried out by trained professionals, and in some instances, even non-HR employees. The development of capacity of human capital however cannot be established overnight or within an isolated world (UN Security Council, p. 17). It calls for effective implementation of a holistic and well-rounded strategy, supported by long-term political processes.

For new companies, the responsibilities of the HR are often carried out by trained professionals, and in some instances, even non-HR employees. For the larger companies however, an entire unit or group of professionals is devoted to the management of human resources; these groups of professionals are involved in various HR duties, and they are engaged in strategic decision-making in the business (Ulrich, p. 23). In order to manage practitioners, academic institutions, professional associations, and corporations have established study programs in order to specifically meet the functions of corporations. Practitioners and academicians have also sought

to engage deeper into the field of human resources based on various specific publications and research studies (Ulrich, p. 12).

In businesses, the goals of human resources has been specifically described by Dave Ulrich as four-fold – first, to align HR and the organizational goals or to be a strategic partner; second, to re-engineer organizational processes or to be an administration expert; third, to listen and respond to the employees and their needs or to be an employee champion; and lastly to implement transformational change or to be a change agent (Ulrich, p. 8). In the practical setting, the HR's activities are focused on employee experience during the course of their employment. The HR is also initially tasked with drawing in the right employees into the organization for their thorough consideration. The HR then chooses the right and appropriate employees through the process of recruitment (Rynes, et.al., p. 41). The HR would therefore have to review the employee qualifications and decide which applicant would fit the organization goals. After the recruitment process, the HR then orients the new employees and supervises their training and development (Stevens and Campion, p. 207). While in the employ of the organization, the HR also assesses the skills and talents of the employees via personnel appraisal activities and for those who perform well, appropriate rewards are often allocated. In giving rewards, the HR may give salary or other employee benefits, based on what is approved by management (Stevens and Campion, p. 208).

On a larger scale, the HR is involved in supervising leadership and culture; they also ensure that labor and employment laws are being complied with (Evans and Rauch, p. 10). These laws may differ based on location or geography and it is the function of the HR to implement such specific applicable laws where necessary. It is also their duty to oversee employee's safety, as well as their health and security (Armstrong, p. 57). Where employees seek a collective bargaining agreement, the HR shall be the company liaison between the labor union and the management. The HR also carries out lobbying activities with government authorities in order to protect its priorities (Cable and Turban, p. 2244). The HR can also be involved in ensuring mobility, most especially in relation to expatriates; and it can also be involved in the merger and acquisition processes (Armstrong, p. 57). Generally, the HR is often viewed as a support system for the business, helping to reduce

risks and minimize costs.

The functions of the HR are therefore very much focused on the management and the development of people in organizations (Armstrong, p. 57). These HR develop and implement strategies which help manage people and their activities, including their talents, their knowledge, and their employment issues. The individuals managed by the HR are the clients and the employees, however, it also includes the front-line managers who are very much involved in implementing HR policies (Armstrong, p. 58).

HRM overall function is to allow organizations to meet their goals by allowing initiatives and by ensuring guidance and support on matters which relate to employees (Carlson, et al., p. 461). The basic goal of HRM is to ensure that organizations develop various HR strategies, policies, as well as practices which ensure employment and the development of individuals and relationships which exist between the managers and the employees (Carlson, et al., p. 461). The function of the HRM is on the establishment of an environment which allows people to apply best practices within their capacities and to ensure their potential in benefitting the organization and themselves (Collins and Han, p. 685). Primarily, the HR functions in order to ensure adequate advice and services for organizations. Ulrich (p. 6) specifies that the actions of the HR seem to be disconnected from the actual work of organizations. He also discusses that the HR must not be defined by what he does or what he delivers (Ulrich, p. 8). The more complicated functions of the HR relate to the achievement of strategic integration and coherence in the implementation of policies and employment activities. Strategic integration also involves vertical integration or the process of ensuring that HR strategies are framed within the business strategies (Fulmer, et al., p. 965). The idea of coherence in HR may therefore, be considered in terms of horizontal integration of the development of mutually beneficial and interrelated employment and HR policies and practices.

Public administration

In relation to public administration, HRM plays a crucial role (UN Security Council, p. 17). The development of human resources capacity is an important element in the establishment of quality public administration in the country. The development of capacity of human capital however cannot be established overnight or within an isolated world (UN Security Council, p. 17). It calls for effective implementation of a holistic and well-rounded strategy, supported by long-term political processes. Leadership is important because the transformation processes in many countries is based on the reformation of values and attitudes, not so much on the development of new knowledge and skills of the staff and the managers (Amado, p. 569). Making changes in the administrative processes in the public sector will likely need well-sustained actions implemented over a period of time.

Managing the erosion of human resources in the public sector in various countries will likely call for comprehensive planning and the establishment of dedicated and highly qualified HRM capacities in agencies (UN Security Council, p. 17). It also calls for the act of implementing an effective and supportive environment which is being aimed at ensuring pride in the

establishment of public service, in ensuring respect for professional elements requirements, and also in improving the service administered for the staff (Bouckaert and Victor, p. 65). In effect, if governments cannot improve their competitiveness in securing their manpower in relation to the private and non-governmental sectors, then they would likely find it hard to recruit and maintain highly competent staff members (UN Security Council, p. 16). Even as salaries or remuneration is not the only element in the recruitment and retention of senior staff members, it is very much important in attracting new employees into the public service, especially those with highly specialized skills (UN Security Council, p. 16). Nevertheless, competition pressures in the labor market have made the role of nonmonetary rewards including career advancement and greater empowerment as significant as the monetary rewards.

In order to ensure pride in public service, a meritocratic method of recruitment and promotion of civil servants is needed, especially with the use of high entry standards and opportunities for career advancement founded on performance (UN Security Council, p. 17). Meritocracy ensures prestige in employment in the civil service; it also encourages high-quality staff to opt to stay in government service. Merit-based recruitment, remuneration as well as promotion systems along with basic reforms in human resources management processes and practices would likely ensure a culture of performance-orientation in the civil service (Bourgault, and Gusella, p. 29). Ensuring highly qualified staff in public service would also call for the development of means and methods which includes the establishment of a plan to secure the image of the public sector. These staff members provide reasonable representation of various groups in the civil service for the establishment of strong career opportunities as well as for sufficient job security and adequate remuneration; for education and training opportunities; for the recognition of good performances; and for the establishment of a strong working environment (UN Security Council, p. 17).

The application of job-oriented public management models is dependent on the specific local context. In instances where well-qualified human resources are in abundant supply and where effective institutional assessments and compliance resources are in place, the establishment of other open recruitment systems may in fact secure the overall efficacy of the government (Elliott and Tevavichulada, p. 259). In various developing nations however, the supply of highly skilled staff is lower, and the weak institutional systems of checks and balances makes the establishment of strong career systems difficult (UN Security Council, p. 17).

The improvement of public administration is highly based on the commitment and determination of the political leaders (Green, p. 23). Commitment of leaders is therefore needed in establishing strategies in strengthening the capacity of human resources in order to support public administration at the national level (Green, p. 23). As previously mentioned, general findings support the idea that the quality of leadership is a main element in explaining successful public sector reforms. By supporting leadership development in most government ranks, the authorities can ensure and incorporate problem-solving and the establishment of initiatives in the public service (Hays and Sowa, p. 43). Exercising leadership

is complicated and it involves the development of capacity which leaders have to take into account. For instance, senior executives often do not have the necessary skills in establishing strong relations with staff and stakeholders (UN Security Council, p. 16). As such, they would likely trample on the rights of these stakeholders without the efficient intervention of HR managers. Another weakness in the public sector is the fact that senior officials may not have the capacity to establish a strong vision for the government and for their people (Hays and Sowa, p. 34). In effect, for HRM, their role is to improve such capacities and to push the leaders towards the fulfillment of organizational and governmental goals (Hendrickson, p. 381).

Public administration cannot be changed and improved without implementing capacity development of its staff. Capacity development involves the process of developing knowledge, skills, and values, as well as the attitudes of the staff at all levels of public service (Hopkins, p. 697). There is no particular model which would fit the delivery of training and the development of capacities in the public sector. The selection of specific arrangements is therefore dependent on particular capacities, including the national and regional context. Most national training strategies include various institutions which would develop capacities and train staff (UN Security Council, p. 16). The first step in these instances involves the process of defining the goals of the training effort and then establishing the institutional methods which would fit in the realization of goals (Kearney and Hays, p. 38). The question on the objectives, including the transmission of values, skills, and knowledge is often considered. Such an analysis would likely establish the specification of particular institutional models. Particular training institutions are often assessed as befitting common values and standards in the public sector, whereas other tools may be more effective in ensuring the transmission of knowledge and specific skills (Sezi, p. 377). In effect, the main issues which are often resolved by the HRM in the training of personnel for public sector involves the following: the goals of the training; the target group; the specific goals and content; the training methods; and the available resources (UN Security Council, p. 18).

Human resources development is focused on providing learning, development and training for the manpower in order to improve the individual, team, and organizational performance (United Nations, p. 25). HRD functions in the public sector are therefore important in establishing policy capacity. In improving policy capacity, individuals with adequate policy competencies are often available at the time and place. In policy setting within the public sector, most of the time, individuals with various competencies are very much needed and they may be needed at any time and any place based on government crisis or disasters which need to be immediately resolved (United Nations, p. 26). HRM helps ensure that there are individuals with such capacities who are available at any time. HRM implements changes in their functions in order to meet the public sector, and these may include changes in attracting, rewarding, recruiting, and developing manpower (United Nations, p. 26). Internal factors like change resistance and self-complacency may also have to be managed by the HRM; however, external factors like brain-drain to the private sector, gender education inequality, and gaps in the educational system are also part of their concerns within the public sector

(United Nations, p. 26). A strong human resources management and development involves aligning personnel policies with the core strategies of the public organizations. In aligning personnel policies, the correct fit for the manpower can be ensured and efficient functioning within the public sector can be guaranteed.

Strategic HR management policies calls for the assessment of internal and external conditions which impact on the goals of the public sector (United Nations, p. 26). The HR's task is to ensure flexibility and support systems in order to contrast the bureaucratic rigidity and isolation of the public sector. The HR seeks to provide a balance in the public sector, establishing greater freedom in the management of human resources in order to provide a strong support system for the general governmental processes (United Nations, p. 26). Consequently, a strong HR is also able to build on a strong public sector.

Human resources management deals with the management of people within organizations or corporations. The function of the HR is to gather a pool of employees with the right competencies for the efficient and competent functioning of the organization. The HRM carries out recruitment, selection, training, and development of manpower. In the public sector, they establish a strong workforce, one which is capable of meeting any challenges in running a country. In other words, the HRM helps make the right people available to meet the major challenges of governance at any time and at any place.

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