

POLI 457 Human Resource Development and Management

Session 1 – Introduction to Human Resource
Development and Management

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Session Overview

The session introduces students to human resource development and management. It is important for students to understand that human resource development focuses on measures aimed at enhancing or improving the capacity of the workforce, while human resource management is very comprehensive since it takes into consideration everything that concerns workers including human resource development, promotion, dismissal, etc.

Session Outline

- Topic One: Human resource development and management
- Topic Two: Spoils and merit systems in human resource management

Reading materials

- Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J.V., 2009. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* (6th Edition). Thomson Wadsworth: USA.
- DeNisi, A. S. & Griffin, R. W., 2008. *Human Resource Management* (3rd Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company: USA:
- Greer, C., 1995. *Strategy and human resources*. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
- Mosher, F., 1982. *The GAO: The Quest for Accountability in American Government*. Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado

Topic One: Human resource development and management

- There are a lot of activities that are important to organizations, both public and private. However, human resource development and management appear to be top on the agenda of any organization that wants to be a leader in its area of operation. The importance of human resources to organizations can be seen against the backdrop that, without people working in the organizations, these organizations cannot meet their goals. In other words, you need people to be able to do what you want to do. Experts in the field of human resources have noted that no set of resources are more important than the human resources of organizations (Pfeffer 1995; Cappelli and Crocker-Hefter 1996).

- Human resources are the people who work for organizations in exchange for salaries, wages and other benefits. These organizations can be either public (these are organizations owned by governments) or private. Private organizations can be business-oriented in that their central objective is to make profit. They can also be nonprofit organizations in the sense that they want to promote an agenda that will benefit a section or the whole of society. This explanation suggests that all those who are working as teachers, nurses, medical doctors, lecturers, pharmacists, bankers, cleaners, watchmen/women, security officers, and several others are human resources for their organizations. Let's be very clear here, without these people organizations will encounter a lot of challenges. Many organizations may not even be in existence at all. How can we have a Ghana Education Service (GES) without teachers, or University of Ghana without lecturers?

- Because of the importance of human resources to organizations, organizations put measures in place to ensure that they engage in best recruiting and selection practices, they keep human resources abreast with new ways of performing jobs, and they also engage in training and development programs for their workers. This is where you see human resource development and management at work. According to DeNisi and Griffin (2008:5), human resource management “is the comprehensive set of managerial activities and tasks concerned with developing and maintaining a qualified workforce-human resources-in ways that contribute to organizational effectiveness.” Human resource development is primarily about teaching and training workers to be able to solve problems, meet new challenges, and apply best practices in their work environment. Based on the above explanations, you would realize that human resource development is an aspect of human resource management. Put differently, human resource management is the universal set, and human resource development is a subset of human resource management (a set within human resource management).

- As a result of the importance of human resource management to organizations, most, if not all, organizations have specialized departments that are solely concerned about human resource management (Schuler 1990). These specialized departments are known by different names in different organizations. The following are some of the names given to these specialized departments- human resource unit, personnel department, human resource section, human resource department, human resource and organizational development directorate (as in the University of Ghana), and among others. The most important thing is that these units or departments have responsibility for hiring of workers and performing the human resource functions of their organizations. The individuals who lead human resource departments in their organizations are known as human resource managers/directors/coordinators or personnel managers (some organizations have different names). Generally, effective human resource management has become essential for most organizations (Greer 1995). This is even seen in the training of professionals responsible for human resources.

Sample Question

- In your own words explain the difference between human resource management and human resource development.

- Describe three importance of human resource management in Ghana.

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Topic Two: Spoils and merit systems in human resource management

- In the public sector, spoils system in human resource management means the giving of government jobs to people who are not qualified for the job but they have been employed because they support the government in power. Primarily, when a party wins elections, the leadership of the party believes that all government employees must be supporters of the party that has won the elections. This system is couched in the following way-“to the victor belong the spoils” (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009:286). Spoils imply the rewards or the booty. Thus, once you win elections, you must enjoy all the rewards or the booty that come with the victory.

- This system dates back to the 18th century, but it became popular in the 19th century when Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States of America in the 1830s. President Andrew Jackson strongly believed that all appointments to the government bureaucracy should be based on political connections rather than on impersonal measures of merit (Mosher 1982). Mosher (1982) further argues that Jackson's conception of governance was that popular election gave the victorious party a mandate to select officials from its own ranks. In the end you would have people who were not really qualified for the job and they would be those making policies on behalf of the country. The idea and policy that government jobs should be given to those who support winning parties in elections was later rejected in the United States after politicians from the two major political parties in the country, Democrats and Republicans, argued that such a system would affect the efficiency and effectiveness of government workers.

- Spoils system is different from patronage in government employment. With patronage those who get the job are usually qualified for the job but they get it because they know the president or are supporters of the party in power. In Ghana, for instance, some of the Chief Executive Officers and Board Members of certain government corporations got their job through patronage. This is why after elections, especially when a new party wins the presidency, you here some people have been asked to proceed on leave. Here the argument is that, patronage may not necessarily be bad, but you can also have people in top executive or ministerial positions that cannot do the job well. Patronage is still practiced in many countries and is very much active in Ghana.

- Because of the criticisms leveled against the spoils system, another system known as the merit system became the dominant approach for employing people into the public sector. Now almost all countries have some form of merit system employment into their public sectors. Merit system indicates employing someone based on competence, not political connections. Usually, with the merit system or principle, those selected must have passed written examinations as well as interviews in many instances. The civil service in Ghana uses the merit principle, indicating that in most cases, those who want to work in the ministries, departments, and agencies must take some forms of examinations. It is even likely some of you have taken some of these examinations before. The security agencies also have their own merit principle in recruiting. The main advantage with this system is that you are likely going to get the most competent worker for the job. In essence, political favoritism, which is one of the banes of corruption in the developing world, can be minimized with the merit system. In unit two we will look at selection and recruiting and this will throw more light on the various examples of the merit principle.

Conclusion

- This introductory session has explained the meaning of human resources to you. It has also discussed the spoils, the merit and the patronage systems of employment in the public sector.

Sample questions

- How can the merit system enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy in Ghana?

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- How is patronage political appointment different from the spoils system?

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Further Readings

- Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J.V., 2009. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* (6th Edition). Thomson Wadsworth: USA.
- DeNisi, A. S. & Griffin, R. W., 2008. *Human Resource Management* (3rd Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company: USA:
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