

POLI 457 Human Resource Development and Management

Session 4 – Recruiting and selection 2

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Session Overview

This session discusses selection and the basic selection criteria used by organizations. Recruiting ends at selection so all those in the recruiting class expect that they will be selected for the job opportunities available in organizations.

Session Outline

- Topic 1: Selection
- Topic 2: Basic selection criteria

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:
 - **John Schermerhorn, James Hunt, and Richard Osborn** (2005), *Organizational Behavior* (9th Edition), Wiley.
 - **David Whetten and Kim Cameron** (2005), *Developing Management Skills* (Sixth Edition) Pearson Prentice Hall
- Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki** (1998), *Organizational Behavior* (fourth Edition), Irwin-McGraw-Hill

Topic 1: Selection

- Selection is primarily the identification of the best or most qualified candidate or candidates for the job. The following are the steps in selection of applicants for employment; first organizations represented by their human resource departments gather information about the pool of qualified applicants. More often than not, many people apply for few vacancies in organizations. And most of the people who apply for jobs may be qualified for employment. For instance, an organization will run various adverts calling for people with bachelors' degree as well as five years experience to apply for project management positions within the organization or government department.
- Since the job description specifies the number of years of experience and level of education, you will get many applicants who meet these requirements. To ensure that they employ the most qualified people, organizations will gather information such as their work ethic and attitude, likelihood that these applicants will succeed on the job, and any other factor that will be relevant to the organization.

- Secondly, organizations also evaluate the qualifications of the applicants in the pool to ensure the right persons are employed. Here, human resource departments verify the qualifications and experience of the applicants to be certain that some are not telling lies on their applications. Some can go to the extent of verifying from your school whether you actually got your degree from there. The point is that there have been instances where people who said they got degrees from certain schools never attended those schools or those schools were not accredited to offer such programs. Moreover, by evaluation, organizations will like to compare these qualifications to certain standards or benchmarks of the type of candidate they are looking for and this will help in the selection of the best candidates. Usually, those who meet the standards are selected for employment.

- The final step in selection is the actual job offer or offers. At times some organizations may be interested in employing many applicants as opposed to just one applicant. In this scenario, many people will be selected and consequently given letters of employment offers. Before organizations would get to this point, they had examined the qualifications of the selected candidates to make sure they can help accomplish the goals of the organizations or departments.
- If you are hiring only one person, it is possible the person might not accept the offer because that person might have accepted another offer elsewhere. In this case you will give the job to the next person on the list who distinguished her/himself during interviews and employment tests. Those selected can be informed through several sources about the employment offers. Some of the sources are emails, telephones, and letters. Generally, individuals who apply for jobs see it as great honor to be selected for the job.

- The next part will look at some of the basic and popular selection strategies used by organizations. This will further enhance your understanding of the steps in the selection process. The final section will also look at the types of interviews potential employees go through before they are employed or rejected by organizations. What we have done in this section is just show the steps organizations go through before workers are selected for employment. The next two sections will help us know in detail the actual factors organizations take into consideration before they select workers

Topic 2: Basic selection criteria

- There are many factors considered by organizations and government departments before they offer employment to job seekers. DeNisi and Griffin (2008) and Denhardt and Denhardt (2009) have discussed a number of factors used by both public and private organizations in selecting individuals for employment. The first and perhaps basic technique used by organizations is the educational and experience of job applicants. Education denotes the formal academic or class room training one has had in secondary school, vocational school, post-secondary (tertiary), graduate school, and etc. Depending on the job advertised, organizations will be looking for specific educational qualifications. Experience is concerned with how many years you have worked in a particular area or in broad capacity. This is not confined to only a specific area. Some people have their experience in broad areas because the nature of their work is such that they have to do several things on the job. A typical example is a classroom teacher who teaches all subjects and a subject teacher who teaches mathematics.

- Another technique is skills, which is how talented an applicant is in a particular area. Skills become very important especially when organizations specify that they need somebody who can do something at a certain speed. For example, they will look for somebody who can scan through a 50-page document in about 10 minutes. Similarly, they may also look for somebody who can work in teams because in recent times many organizations and departments are more concerned about employing people who can work in teams (Stevens and Campion 1994).

- Organizations also use the employment application in the selection process. The employment application asks prospective employees various questions about their background, especially what they did in the past, the various organizations they have worked for, why did they quit some jobs, why they want to be employed by the current organization, and others. Based on this employment application, some organizations are able to determine the kind of persons who will likely live up to expectation when given the opportunity to work. It is not uncommon for people to get their jobs as a result of what they have written on the employment application.

- Moreover, employment tests are also used in the selection process. In this instance potential employees go through a number of tests so that those who will excel in the tests will be selected for the job. These tests can be in several forms and they are expected to measure the characteristics of individuals, such as intelligence. Some of the popular tests are cognitive tests, which test how one is mentally fit for the job he/she has applied, and psychomotor ability tests, which is concerned with physical strength, such as how many pounds or kilograms you can lift. Depending on the type of job or position one has applied for, there will be specific tests for the applicant.

- Work simulations have also become popular means for selecting workers. This is where potential employees simulate/replicate/imitate actual work for which they are applying. For instance, if an applicant applies for a teaching position, the applicant will be taken to the classroom to teach students for the employer to decide whether the applicant can really be a good teacher or not. In the same manner, an applicant who applies for a nursing position will be given patients to attend to them. With work simulation the employer just wants to find out how a potential worker will perform in the organization.

- Besides, there are certain personal characteristics that have become popular in employee selection. DeNisi and Griffin (2008:222) have noted that a number of organizations use the five personal characteristics explained below; the first is neuroticism, which indicates employers look for applicants who experience guilt and anxiety; extraversion are applicants who are outgoing and sociable; openness to experience are job-seekers who are imaginative and intellectually curious; agreeableness are those applicants who are altruistic/selfless and cooperative; conscientiousness are applicants who pay attention to details and are also dependable; emotional intelligence implies people who are able to address the emotional challenges they go through and also help others to address their emotional challenges; and emotional stability applies to applicants or individuals who are well adjusted in spite of the challenges they face.
- Finally, personal interviews are used in given employment to people who apply for jobs. These are frequently, but not exclusively, face-to-face interactions between applicants and a panel. The next section will look at interviews in detail.

- There are many types of employment interviews used by both private organizations and government departments. These employment interviews are usually face-to-face interactions between applicants/interviewees and interviewers/employers. The interview can also be in the form of telephone. This is where the applicant may be located in a city or country that is far away from the interviewer and this allows both parties to agree on a telephone interview. It is also possible that the employer wants to have a telephone interview rather than a face-to-face one. At times, too, organizations/departments may have the telephone interview first so that should they develop interest in the applicants they invite them for face-to-face interviews. We can now discuss the main types of interviews.

- The widely used employment interviews are structured, unstructured, semi-structured, and situational. Structured employment interviews are the types of interviews where all the applicants who have applied for jobs are given the same set of interview questions to ensure consistency among all the applicants (DeNisi and Griffin 2008; Denhardt and Denhardt 2009). For example, if applicant A is asked what he/she can do to enhance the image of the organization, all the other applicants will be asked this same question. In this way interviewers/employers can compare the answers and responses by all the applicants to determine those who deserve to be employed and those who should be rejected. Moreover, with this type of interview, interviewers are required to use standard lists of questions that have been given to them for the interview. This means interviewers cannot use their own questions.

- Unstructured employment interviews are the type of interviews where all the applicants are asked different set of questions. Put differently, applicants are not given the same questions. One applicant will be asked why is she/he applying for the job, but other applicants may not be asked this same question (DeNisi and Griffin 2008; Denhardt and Denhardt 2009). Interviewers in this type of interview usually ask any questions they think are relevant to the job and general questions which may not even be relevant to the job. They are not given any standard set of questions to follow in the interview process.

- Also, semi-structured employment interview is the combination of structured and unstructured employment interviews. Here, interviewers have some standard set of questions prepared for them for all the applicants and interviewers also ask different questions to the various applicants. This means all applicants will have half of their questions being the same and the other half will not be the same. Some organizations prefer this type of interview because, apart from getting consistency with the same types of interview questions, interviewers can also ask general questions that they think can help them know who are the best applicants.
- The final employment interview we want to talk about is situational interviews. In situational interviews, applicants are asked questions about what they will do in certain situations or circumstances. This is meant to help employers know how applicants will respond or do in specific situations. For instance, there can be a question like what would you tell a worker who is efficient and effective on the job but does not regularly come to work on time.

Conclusion

- The session has laid emphasis on selection and the factors organizations take into consideration before they select people for the jobs available. In practice, most if not all organizations use a combination of the factors discussed to select individuals for the employment opportunities.

Sample Questions

- Describe any of the three variables that are used by organizations in employee selection.
- In your own words explain with examples the difference between neuroticism and extraversion as personal characteristics in employee selection
- Explain the meaning of unstructured employment interviews.
- What are the advantages of structured employment interviews?

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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