POLI 457 Human Resource Development and Management

Session 5 – Performance Enhancement

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Session Overview

This session looks at performance enhancement in organizations and the measures or strategies organizations use to enhance the performance of their workers. Performance enhancement primarily implies organizations putting measures in place to increase the capacity of their workforce.

Session Outline

- Topic One: Performance Enhancement
- Topic Two: Strategies for Enhancing Performance

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
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Topic One: Performance Enhancement

- Performance enhancement is the practice and process of improving the performance of workers on the job. This means you want workers to be more productive, increase quality and quantity of products, pay more attention to details, adopt best practices in customer service, and others. Enhancing performance of workers does not necessarily mean there is a problem in the organization. Ultimately, with performance enhancement organizations are more concerned about what they can do to be recognized as the leader or among the leaders in the provision of certain commodities or services. Note that in unit 1 we indicated that human resources are the most important resource of organizations, be it public or private (Pfeffer 1995; Cappelli and Crocker-Hefter 1996). As a result of this, most organizations consider enhancing the performance of their human resources a very central aspect of their activities.

- There are many reasons why organizations engage in performance enhancement. We will discuss four of the reasons and you will be required to think critically and come up with other reasons why organizations in Ghana and elsewhere undertake performance enhancement. The first reason is that organizations want to be more competitive. In a previous discussion we said to be competitive as an organization simply means you can rub shoulders with other organizations that are doing the same or similar things like you. The GES, for instance, is into the provision of primary and secondary levels of education (and several others). For the GES to be competitive or considered the leader in these levels of education people should say that GES schools are better than or equal to the best private schools in terms of the passing rate of their students, disciplinary records, dedication of teachers, and other measures. When even an organization or government department is not facing any competition from others, or has monopoly in the provision of certain services, it still will like to be seen by the public as an organization that does not take for granted the services it provides to the people. Because of these reasons organizations adopt programs to enhance the performance of their workers.

- As mentioned earlier, increasing the quality of products or services make it necessary for organizations to enhance the performance of their workers. Any organization that is not concerned about increasing the quality of the services or goods provided to the public is perhaps without a mission or vision. According to DeNisi and Griffin (2008:16) "quality is the total set of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs." In the current, competitive global economy quality has become the hallmark of all organizations that want to be able to compete with organizations abroad. Goods are moving from one country to another and this is an indication that organizations that want to export to other countries must be ready to meet certain standards. In the same way, producers in the domestic environment must meet the challenge of quality so that they can compete with the goods coming from abroad.

- Related to the above is increasing the quantity of products.   We have already said that performance enhancement does not necessarily mean workers are not living up to expectation. At times workers will be doing alright in terms of the quantity of production, but human resource managers and employers in general will maintain that the workers can do better than they are doing now. It is also likely that workers are not meeting the quantity levels set by their departments. Both instances will eventually lead to the adoption of training and development programs to help workers meet the expectations of management.

- Another reason why organizations engage in performance enhancement has to do with best practices. Best practices are basically evidence of successful programs, policies or ways of doing things that have proven effective elsewhere and organizations and countries believe that they can use that in their organizations and countries (Asare and Studlar 2009). In relation to enhancing the performance of workers, organizations at times send people to other organizations abroad or in their countries so that these people can bring information about new ways of producing goods and services, dealing with customers, assigning work schedules, and etc. Once the representatives of the organization bring these reports, organizations make the effort to develop, train, and educate their workers on how to apply these best practices in their daily activities. For example, there have been instances where representatives of other countries have come to Ghana to learn how our government successfully initiated programs like the National Health Insurance and the National Reconciliation Commission.

Sample Questions

1. Describe any two reasons (not discussed in the topic) why organizations engage in performance enhancement.

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2. How do best practices arguments help organizations/departments to enhance the performance of their workers?

Topic two: Strategies for Enhancing Performance

- There are many techniques and strategies used by organizations to enhance the performance of their workers.

- The most popular one is **Training and development .** Training is a deliberate or well-planned attempt by organizations to help employees/workers of the organizations learn job-related knowledge, skills and behaviors. Training is mostly organized for individuals or employees who perform specific tasks in the organizations. These tasks are usually technical in nature. For instance, those people who use certain equipment or machines to perform their tasks, such as machine operators and engineers in general. Training is aimed at ensuring that employees do their jobs more effectively and efficiently with the limited resources they have.

- Development is when organizations teach managers and professionals the skills needed for both present and future jobs. Generally, development is more concerned about those in management and top-level positions in organizations. Frequently, organizations try to help managers and professionals to do more complex activities, such as solving complex problems, motivating workers, settling disputes between and among workers, time management, decision making, and other related organizational activities.

- DeNisi and Griffin (2008) have noted that organizations design training and development programs according to the following criteria. First, organizations engage in need analysis of their organizations. This is where they identify the areas and the type of workers in the organizations that need to be trained or developed to meet certain challenges or performance benchmarks.

- Second, organizations will set goals for the training and development of workers. These goals are very important because you want to ensure that after the training workers can do something they could not do in the past. Some organizations may set goals like 'by the end of this program all workers/managers should be able to solve conflicts between employees in the organizations by following the laid down procedures of the organizations.'

- Finally, organizations must also think about the approach to use in training and developing their employees. There are two main approaches and these are in-house and outsourcing. In-house is where organizations use a current employee for the training and development programs. The main advantage with this is that it is less expensive because the persons conducting the training and development programs are part of the organizations; indicating their fee will be less.

- With outsourcing, organizations employ the services of an outsider to do the training and development programs. Although the outsider will charge higher fees, the main advantage with this approach is that workers who are going through the training and development programs are more likely to see the exercise as very important for the organizations that is why they have employed the services of an outsider. In this way it is very likely workers will show more commitment to the training and development programs.

- Another technique for enhancing performance is job redesign. Job redesign is when employers change the jobs performed by their workers so that workers will be motivated to work because of the changes in the job assignment (DeNisi and Griffin 2008). There are several types of job redesign and one of them is job rotation. This is when employers rotate or systematically move workers from one job to another within the organization. Thus an employee whose job is receiving customers will be moved to filing or recording documents and then to preparing reports. The goal here is that some workers will find doing other things aside what they do every day encouraging and will do their best for their organizations.

- Another version of job redesign is job enlargement. And job enlargement is when employers increase the total number of activities or tasks workers perform in the organization. Doing the same thing all the time can be boring, so some workers prefer that they are assigned additional responsibilities to get them motivated. For example, an employee who regularly does cleaning in the organization will be given an additional responsibility of arranging desks and tables.

- Job enrichment is another type of job redesign and this involves increasing the number of tasks (job enlargement) and giving employees control over the activities they perform. What this means is that, after you have enlarged their responsibilities, you also give them some control over those responsibilities. For employees control over the job, employers can delegate some authority so that workers would know that they are completely responsible for the jobs they are performing.

- Another important technique for enhancing the performance of workers is work teams. This is where workers work in groups instead of as single individuals. The group is then given the authority by the organization to assign specific tasks to members of the group, monitor their performance and exercise autonomy over work scheduling and other related matters of the group/work teams.

- Alternative work schedules are also used by organizations to enhance the performance of their workers. With this technique, employers try to give their workers flexible working schedules in order to motivate them to work harder. We all know the normal working hours for a week is 40 hours. An organization may tell workers that they can make the 40 hours of work in four days instead of five days.

- Thus, workers will just have to work 10 hours per day for four days and that will still be 40 hours. Alternatively, a worker who has a baby to take care of can be asked to come to work at 6 am and live early as long she can work for 40 hours in the week. Some workers can even be given the opportunity to make up some of their hours on weekends. The goal here is to give the workers flexible working plans in an effort to motivate them to work harder.

- The use of alternate work sites has also become popular in enhancing the performance of workers by employers.   This is where if it is possible workers are allowed by their employers to work from a location outside the workplace. For instance, if the nature of the work performed by the worker is such that the worker can do it from her/his home, the employer will give that permission as long as the job will be done. Those whose job is to record some items on the computer can ask their employers to allow them do it from their homes. The reason why organizations allow workers in instances like these is that workers will be inspired to do their best for their organizations.

- The final technique we want to talk about is the giving of incentives to workers to motivate them to work harder. These incentives can be in several forms. When workers meet the targets and the goals set for them organizations can decide to give them some amount of money or provide them some benefits like life or/and health insurance. At times workers are rewarded for reporting to work on time or minimizing mistakes. There are many workers out there who are motivated by money, and some organizations use incentives as a means to get workers to increase production or work harder.

Conclusion

- We have discussed the meaning of performance enhancement and the reasons why organizations engage in performance enhancement. The session concluded with the discussion on the strategies organizations use to enhance the performance of their workers.

Sample questions

- In your own words explain any three techniques that can be used by the University of Ghana to enhance the performance of its staff.

- Why should public organizations be concerned about performance enhancement?

- What is the difference between in-house training and development and outsourced training and development?

- What criteria would you use in designing training and development programs for civil servants in Ghana?

Additional Readings

- DeNisi, A. S. & Griffin, R. W., 2008. *Human Resource Management* (3rd Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company: USA:

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