

VI. Final Report

PROBLEMS OF GOVERNMENTAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT : SOME POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THEM

1. Introduction

1-1 The problems facing governmental human resource management (HRM) have been a matter of constant concern of governments and taxpayers alike. Many attempts have been made to deal with them. Although a measure of success has been achieved, the problems persist with varying degrees of seriousness.

1-2 The reasons for this state of affairs are probably numerous and complex, not the least of which is the very likely probability that the problems are not very well understood. As such, there is a clear need to come to grips with them so that a more relevant set of solutions can be devised to deal with them.

1-3 To begin to fill this need, a group of senior officials from the central personnel agencies of Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Thailand (participants of the Second Seminar on Government Human Resource Management, Tokyo, November 25-December 9, 1992) sat down together to identify the problems of HRM and to search for solutions to deal with them. This report presents the results of their discussion.

2. The Problems

2-1 The basic problem faced is the existence of public servants who are unable or unwilling to carry out their tasks fully, effectively and efficiently. Their numbers may vary from time to time and from one public service to another, but the net result is the same, viz., the affected public service is unable to help other sectors of the economy to fasten the pace of national or economic development.

2-2 The basic problem, as stated above, is however, of little help in guiding efforts to deal with it. The efforts must be based on an understanding of the root causes of the basic problem and directed at them. In this regard, it is believed that there are five root causes, viz.,

- (a) Limited government resources
- (b) Poor enforcement of rules and regulations
- (c) Pressures of traditional values on public servants
- (d) The need to comply with the tenets of classical bureaucracy
- (e) Political pressures and considerations

(a) Limited government resources

Government funds for the remuneration and other benefits of public servants are limited. The funds are also required for physical and social development programs as well as the modernization of the ministry. As such, public service pay and benefits are generally pegged at a level that is "low". Often, the reality is that they are lower than those of the private sector.

In consequence, there is poor motivation among certain, if not all, public servants because they feel that they are inadequately compensated. The poor motivation is then manifested in work performance that is below par. Additionally, the low pay coupled with the more attractive pay offered by the private sector will result in a brain-drain of the more capable public servants to the private sector. Again this will cause the overall performance of the public service to fall. Finally, the poor pay may drive certain public servants to demand or accept bribes from the public, thereby undermining the integrity of the public service and more importantly making the delivery of public services contingent upon people's ability to pay bribes and not equality.

Limited resources also have an undesirable effect on another important area of public management viz. the purchase and utilization of modern office equipment. In consequence, work that could be automated or speeded up continue to be done manually. Thus they are performed slowly and as the work load increases, additional workers have to be recruited thereby increasing the size of the public service further, and with it, worsening the inherent problems associated with "bigness".

(b) Poor enforcement of rules and regulations

A feature of large bureaucracy such as the public service, is the existence of rules and regulations. They were promulgated to ensure that work processes and decisions are carried out in an orderly and standardized fashion and based on the principles of fairness and objectivity. However, and unfortunately, there have been frequent instances when they have not been fully enforced. One result of this has been the lack of discipline among public servants and consequently the poor performance of work. Lax enforcement has, in addition, led to disorganized placement of personnel creating a situation of square pegs in round holes. This, in turn, causes discontentment and an inability or unwillingness on the part of the square pegs to perform their work. Further, lax compliance with procedure in the areas of recruitment, performance evaluation and training has resulted in poorly qualified and trained officers being found in the public service in many cases. Again, in consequence work performance is negatively affected.

(c) Pressures of traditional values on public servants

Public servants, apart from being members of the public service, are at the same time, also members of other social groups, such as their families and kin, race and so on. These groups exert a pull on them. As such, public servants in some cases, feel compelled to bend the rules to help

members of such groups. At times, their actions even amount to corruption. When this nepotistic and corrupt behavior is widespread, the integrity of the public service is severely damaged and official government programs fail to achieve their desired objectives.

(d) The need to comply with the tenets of classical bureaucracy

Many, if not all, of the basic characteristics of public bureaucracies are derived from the tenets of the classical ideal bureaucracy of Max Weber. Its major feature can be said to be its insistence on the application of objective principles, rules and regulations as the basics of decision-making. There is, therefore, a desire to comply with it. However, this very principle has been misused by certain public servants for personal gain, in the following manner. Since rules and regulations generally slow down the decision-making process and exclude certain people from being considered (for a permit or license, for example), the corrupt public servant can demand illegal gratification from applicants who want their applications to be speeded up or from applicants who are actually not qualified to apply. Again, this state of affairs, if widespread, affects the proper implementation of government programs.

In addition to the above, the pull of traditional values makes the full compliance with the objective principle of Weberian bureaucracy very difficult, in reality. As a result there is a watering-down of that principle and once again, the avenues for corrupt behavior are opened.

(e) Political pressures and considerations

The public service is part of the society in which it is placed. Typically, that society is made up of groups with differing socio-economic characters. Often, in this situation, there is a political consensus that the groups in the lower strata should be given special considerations to enable them to achieve social mobility. One form of consideration that has been given to them takes the form of a quota system for recruitment into the public service and for promotion. However, while this is good for social justice and helps to cut down political agitation, it in effect means again that the principles of objectivity and merit are watered down. Moreover, it also creates dissatisfaction among members of other groups who do not benefit from it. When they include members of the public service (those who are superseded in promotion exercises), then the dissatisfaction will have detrimental effects on work performance.

2-3 The problems described above are believed to be only some of the varied gamut of problems that are found in governmental HRM. But even then they are enough to illustrate their depth. These root causes are not found in the public service only but also in the fabric of society. The implications of this are obvious: improving the quality of HRM requires not only changes in the public service but also in society.

3. Suggested Measures for Improving Human Resource Management in Public Service

3-1 Some problems in HRM in the public service are caused by factors which are beyond the control of management of civil servants. For example, the quota system for recruitment as practiced in some countries is best resolved by politicians. However, many of the problems are administrative in nature and it is not impossible for these problems to be dealt with if the government concerned is committed to administer an effective and efficient public service.

3-2 The measures for improving the public service which were discussed by the group fall broadly into 5 categories:

- (a) Improve the employment terms
- (b) Institutionalize career development programs
- (c) Implement an objective performance appraisal system
- (d) Establish disciplinary rules and procedures
- (e) Strengthen the authority of central personnel agency

The above measures could be implemented in varying degrees according to the needs and capacity of change of the respective public services. The measures are outlined below.

(a) Employment terms

Employment terms in the context of this report encompass salary as well as non-monetary benefits. Some people join the public service because of their desire to serve the people and their sense of commitment to the country. The majority, however, regard employment in the public service as another job which will give them a decent living. To attract and retain capable people in the service, the reward system of the service must therefore be comparable to that in the private sector. To achieve this objective, pay review should be conducted regularly and systematically. Where the review shows a substantial disparity in pay between the private and public sectors, a pay revision should be implemented. For a variety of reasons (e.g. lack of resources or comprehensive data on pay) it may not be possible for the public sector pay to be maintained at the same level as private sector at all times. To make up for disparity in pay, other working conditions of public servants could be improved upon. The improvement could include providing special leave (e.g. for childcare, prolonged illness and on compassionate grounds), recreational facilities and flexible working hours. To boost pride, commendation or awards could be given for exemplary performance.

(b) Career Development

Adequate pay level will go a long way in attracting school leavers and fresh graduates to join the public service. But to encourage them to stay, career plans should be institutionalized. Career

development entails training, job rotation and promotion.

(b)-(i) Training

The training of civil servants could be classified into 3 broad categories:

- * induction courses for new entrants to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes to work in the government,
- * on-the-job training to ensure competency in the assigned duties, and
- * off-the-job training in local and overseas institute to broaden their outlook and for them to gain new ideas.

(b)-(ii) Job rotation

Ideally, every civil servant should know not only the work of his own unit and section but also other units and sections within his ministry, or better still, of other ministries. In this way, he would appreciate better the impact of his work on the rest of the Government and conflicts and contradictions in government policies and regulations would be minimized. The frequency of job rotation should be worked out by individual organizations bearing in mind the need to avoid disruptions to day-to-day work.

(b)-(iii) Promotion

The advancement opportunities of every appointment must be clearly set out so that the career path is apparent.

Where proper promotion procedures and guidelines have been established, it may be more expedient to let individual ministries control their own promotion. This would give the employees a greater sense of identification with their organizations. Otherwise, promotion should be centralized to ensure impartiality. Generally, it may be better for promotion to senior positions to be endorsed or vetted by a central personnel agency to maintain consistency in standards.

(c) Performance Appraisal

The public service should have a good performance appraisal system so that the civil servants could be deployed or moved up according to their ability and aptitude. A good appraisal system will not only serve as a useful tool of management to plan career development, it could also help the civil servants to rectify his shortcomings and improve himself.

One issue related to this is whether performance appraisal should be confidential or open. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages. However, to minimize subjectivity in appraisal, an open system is preferred.

(d) Discipline

While good performances should be rewarded, those who under-perform or fail to comply with instructions and regulations should be punished. Disciplinary rules and procedures should therefore be clearly laid down and enforced where necessary.

(e) Central Personnel Agency

To ensure that the impartiality and integrity of the public service is maintained, the overall authority of personnel management in the service should be vested in an independent body.

With an independent central personnel agency, recruitment, deployment and promotion could be carried out on the basis of merit and seniority without fear of pressures from any other quarters.

An independent personnel agency could also help to keep the size of public service at a level relevant to functional needs and which the state could sustain.

4. Conclusion

It remains to be said that any attempt to improve governmental HRM in a systematic and relevant manners requires planned and proper research on the actual nature and nuances of the problems being faced in each public service as well as those that it will face in the coming years. In this regard, the attempt at problem identification and rectification reported above falls far short. Nevertheless, it represents an attempt to start the ball rolling or rolling again in what is believed to be the right direction.

Prepared by:

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Mr. Ho Chui Kee (Singapore)

December 9, 1992.

Tokyo, Japan

Discussants

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| 4. Mr. Manalu Sahat Hasudungan | Indonesia |
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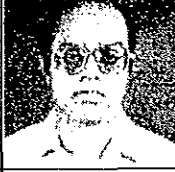
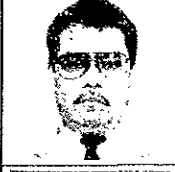

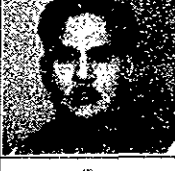


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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN "SEMINAR ON GOVERNMENT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT"

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Annex B

Date	Time	Contents
Mon. 23 Nov.		Arrival
Tue. 24 Nov.		JICA Briefing
Wed. 25 Nov.	10:00-10:30	Opening Ceremony
	10:30-12:00	Programme Orientation
	14:00-16:00	Lecture "Introduction to the Civil Service System in Japan" by Mr Matumoto, Director, Office of International Affairs, National Personnel Authority
	16:30-17:00	Courtesy Call on the President of National Personnel Authority
	18:00-	Reception hosted by the President of National Personnel Authority
Thur. 26 Nov.	10:00-13:00	Lecture "Role of Human Resource Management" by Mr Nakajima, Secretary General, NPA
Fri. 27 Nov.	10:00-12:30	Seminar "Career Development" by Mr Kurita, Deputy Director General, Bureau of Recruitment, NPA
	14:00-16:30	continued
Sat. 28 Nov.		
Sun. 29 Nov.		
Mon. 30 Nov.	10:00-12:30	Seminar "Remuneration System" by Mr Morizono, Director General, Bureau of Compensation, NPA
	14:00-16:30	continued
Tue. 1 Dec.	10:00-12:30	Seminar "Characteristics of Bureaucracy in Japan" by Mr Tsujinaka, Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba
	14:00-16:30	continued
Wed. 2 Dec.	10:00-12:30	Seminar "Human Resource Management in Private Companies" by Professor Sakuma, Kanagawa University
	14:00-16:30	continued
Thur. 3 Dec.		Visit to Toyota Motor Corporation
Fri. 4 Dec.		Visit to Kyoto City
Sat. 5 Dec.		Visit to Nara City
Sun. 6 Dec.		
Mon. 7 Dec.	10:00-12:30	Group Discussion with Mr Fujiwara, Director, Legal Affairs Division, NPA and Mr Yoshifuji, Director, Accident Compensation Division, NPA
	14:00-16:30	continued
Tue. 8 Dec.	10:00-12:30	Final Discussion with Mr Fujiwara and Mr Yoshifuji
	14:00-16:30	continued
	17:30-	Party hosted by Councillor of the Bureau of Administrative Services of the NPA
Wed. 9 Dec.	10:00-12:30	Report Writing
	14:00-16:00	Evaluation Meeting
	16:30-17:00	Closing Ceremony
	17:00-	Farewell Party
Thur. 10 Dec.		Preparation for Departure
Fri. 11 Dec.		Departure

Annex C

Lecturers' and Officers' Address

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