



HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY/TRAINING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE UGANDA PUBLIC SERVICE.

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Abstract:

Human resource development has become an essential component the development process. This is due to the fact that any development process is driven by the human factor. It is in this spirit that the Uganda Public Service Training Policy was designed. In this paper, it is argued that human resource development /training policy, like any other policy, must be supported by appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools if it is to achieve its intended objectives.

It is further urge, that policy formulation is a journey with challenges. The strength of the policy implementation lies in identifying such challenges, and finding ways of overcoming them. Lastly, the discussion reveals that human resource development is closely linked to other human resource factors that pertain at a given period, such as recruitment policies, labour market patterns, the age and experience of staff etc. Human resource development policies therefore must be reviewed from time to time to keep in step with the changing environment. This paper presents the key components of the human resource development / training policy in the Uganda Public Service and the assumptions made. It also highlights the key challenges faced, the lessons Learnt and the way forward in enhancing sustainable human resource Development in the Uganda Public Service.

KEYWORDS – Human resource development , Uganda Public Service Training Policy , policy formulation .

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Development policy in the Uganda Public Service has evolved from the early stages of organization of colonial administration in the early 1920s. During that period, vocational training was regarded as the most appropriate for the Ugandan Public Officers, since these only provided support services to the Europeans who occupied strategic positions in the administrative system. For a long time, education and training for Ugandan Public Servants remained undeveloped until the time when Ugandans started to demand for higher positions in the bureaucracy. The quest for higher education then became an issue that was later strongly pursued

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towards independence and after. From 1990 when the Public Service Reforms were introduced, there was a rush by Public Officers and Political leaders for further education and training as a way of surviving the employment competition. A study on training needs assessment conducted by Crown Agents in 1998 revealed that the Uganda Public Service is generally staffed with highly educated Officers. The existing challenge is the mismatch between the acquired qualifications and performance! The need to regulate training became a necessity as various weaknesses leading to waste of resources were identified as highlighted in the sections to follow.

Human Resource Development policy in Uganda Public service: A historical perspective

A review of the public Service before and after colonialism and the period that followed up to date reveals that Human Resource Development policy is influenced by human resource factors that pertain in the country especially the recruitment policies and practices in place, as well as the attitude of the leaders.

Human Resource Development during the colonial regime

Education and training of Public Officers during the colonial period was greatly underdeveloped. At that time, Ugandans were excluded from high positions in the bureaucracy and were confined to vocational education to respond to the manpower needs for junior positions.

Post colonial era

The few Ugandan graduates from Makerere College took over the positions of the colonial masters in the management of the Public Service following independence. Most of them, if not all, were still very young without working experience. The attainment of independence (1962) created a heavy demand for the kind of manpower possessing higher education. As the colonialists left the country, vacancies were created. Recruitment standards were lowered in order to realize the numbers required to fill the manpower shortages.

Public Service Reform era

From the aforementioned, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) which took over power in 1986 inherited an inefficient, ineffective, unresponsive, demoralized Public Service which was generally not delivering public services of the required standard. Government therefore set up the Public Service Review and Reorganisation Commission (PSRRC) to undertake an analysis of the Public service and propose ways of improving the performance of the Public Service. This was against the background of launching the rehabilitation and development Plan

Key features of the Human Resource Development/ Training Policy, Progress and challenges in implementation

In view of the above weaknesses, and the obtaining craze and rush for training by Public Officers and Political Leaders, a training policy for the Public Service was designed and approved by Government in 2006. The policy is based on the principles of professionalism, transparency, equal opportunity, affirmative action (where necessary), demand drive approach, and value for money. The aim of the policy is to build and maintain a Public Service as an efficient, effective and professionally competent administrative machinery of government capable of originating and implementing government programmes.

Application to both Civil Servants and Politicians

The General policies apply to both civil servants and the political leaders. However there are some specific areas where different conditions apply. For example, professional development and preretirement training may not apply to political leaders while these are a must for the civil servants. The duration of training for Political leaders is limited to a short duration while the civil servants may undertake long term training on full pay. The understanding is that the politicians have a tight political agenda on policy direction and their absence for a long duration would seriously affect the government operations; and that by the time they are appointed to these top positions they have the training and experience that is required.

Clear institutional framework for managing the training function

The policy identifies key institutions and lists their respective tasks. Ideally every Ministry, Department and Local Government has a role to play in the management of the training function. However the following Ministries/Departments have cross-cutting roles in addition: - Ministry of Public Service has overall responsibility over the training function. Therefore it is the Ministry which formulates and reviews training policies, sets the training standards and builds the capacity of other Public service entities to manage the training function.

Emphasis on effective Coordination

In order to avoid wastage of resources and duplication of effort, the policy emphasizes coordination both at the level of the Public Service and at the levels of the Ministry, Department and Local Government. At the level of the Public Service, the Ministry of Public Service, being overall in charge of human resource management function in the Public Service is the Coordinator. A Training Liaison Officer position is also established to coordinate training issues within an entity. The Training Liaison Officer function however is an assigned duty as there is no such designation in the Public Service.

Emphasis on the role of the managers

The role of supervisors in training their staff is emphasized in the policy. The finding was that supervisors were only interested in the output of their staff and not the training of their staff. Through an interactive performance appraisal process, the supervisor and the supervisee discuss training needs and sign up to them. Besides the supervisors are reminded of their role to coach staff at work and to provide the necessary support that the officers will require in order either undertake the training or to put into practice what they have learnt. Training needs are identified regularly through the performance appraisal process. However there are complaints to the effect that no follow up is made by the supervisors. Sometimes officers end up undertaking training programmes

Increasing and protecting the training budget

The policy recommends a budget for staff training within the range of 2-4 percent of the wage bill. Since training and staff development are geared towards increasing performance it should be pegged to wage, which is compensation for performance. At the time of developing the policy, the training budget under the Government was approximately 1 per cent. However, this is heavily supplemented by scholarships, fellowships and grants and project budgets.

Emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of training

The policy recognizes the fact that the training function has failed to attract its due attention especially as it relates to budget allocation because there has been no proof of the

benefits. The policy therefore asserts that training must be evaluated before, during and after. This has been a challenging area which the Ministry needs to enforce. Training is usually evaluated immediately after the training programme by filling the “happiness sheets” which is only useful to help the organization of future similar training programmes. Impact assessment remains undone.

Increased use of non conventional methods of training and development

The policy encourages the use of coaching, mentoring, attachments, study visits, taskforces, twinning programmes and other work based methods of learning and development. These are known to be cheaper in most cases and more valuable in improving performance of individuals by the fact that they are work based and therefore expose the officers to real life situations that can be applied to own work environment.

Increase monitoring implementation of the policy

Government will increase monitoring the implementation of the training and development policies so that they can achieve their intended objectives. It is not enough to assume that the policy will be correctly interpreted once the policy document is availed. There is need to provide

support supervision to the various Public Service entities to ensure correct implementation. The Public Service Inspection manual has therefore been reviewed to take into account Human Resource Development policy issues, among others.

Development of Schemes of Service and Competence profiles for jobs in the public service

As part of its strategy to strengthen the Human Resource Management and Development function in the Public Service, the Ministry of Public Service has embarked on a comprehensive review of schemes of service all Job cadres in the Public Service to take into account new developments in the job market and expectations of the Public Service. Each job category will have training milestones that are mandatory at each promotional level within the career as well as the key competencies required. The revised Schemes of Service will be used by all line managers, especially HR Managers, as a basis for HR Planning and succession management; Staff acquisition, establishment of performance gaps and advancement within the career structure on the basis of qualifications, knowledge of the job, and competence as reflected in work performance and results. They will also ensure proper deployment and utilization of personnel in the Public Service whereby the individual competencies are matched with competencies determined for a given job. In preparation for a competence based Human Resource Development in the Public Service, competency dictionaries are being developed to highlight and describe the technical and behavioral competencies that are required for each job and at what level. The generic competence dictionary was developed and disseminated. Currently the Ministry of Public Service is helping the sectors to develop sector specific competence dictionaries, beginning with the agricultural sector.

CONCLUSION

The Public Service continues to undertake the needed changes to propel the nation towards achieving a developed status. These changes show a paradigm shift that encompasses not only the structure and systems but also the values, attitudes and mindset of Public Service employees. The catalyst to these changes is the rising expectations of the public and stakeholders that the Public Service will make a meaningful contribution towards the socio-economic development of the country. This therefore compels the public service to be open- minded and ‘think out of the box’ so as to produce a workforce that is knowledgeable and highly productive at

levels. Thus, the need to fortify efforts at formulating and implementing sound policies and procedures on Human Resource Development. Although Human Resource Development is generally accepted and supported as a means of national development, it should be properly planned and coordinated. Short of this, training and development resources can easily be channeled to wants rather than needs.

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