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Increasing Productivity in the Public Sector

Abstract

Employee productivity has been identified as a key success factor in an organization. However, there is limited research linking human resource management practices to employee productivity in the public sector. This study aims to identify how four human resources management practices – compensation, stress management, training and development, and performance appraisal – correlate to increasing employee productivity in the public sector. This is a qualitative study that makes use of a survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument.

Keywords: productivity, human resource management, HRM, public sector, government

Background

The public sector workforce has long been documented as having lower productivity when compared against private sector employees. Unlike corporations, the public sector is not motivated by maximizing profit, hence the lack of optimization in its work processes (Isaak, 2010). Citizens have long been blaming the infamous “ red tape” as the cause of the government’s inefficiency and decrease in productivity.

However, this is no longer the case. Responsible government and anti-red tape policies dictate the increase of productivity in the delivery of government services. The public sector has even embraced ISO 9001 with many cases successfully documenting the benefits of the certification process in improving quality (Singh, et. al, 2006). While beneficial, this intervention addresses the systemic flaws of public sector management. There is also a need to address the human side of the productivity equation. Human resources management has been identified as a source of value in the organization. Organizational performance is highly dependent on its workforce. In particular, the task of strategic human resources management (SHRM) is to align HRM practices to organizational goals and objectives. Thus, this project is initiated because there is a need to explore which HRM practices have a relationship with the increase in productivity, the end goal for a government agency.

Review of Related Literature

Analyzing the enablers and barriers to productivity is significant because it is a critical strategy for social-economic development. Government employees are considered human capital, and these are considered to be the most

important resources that ensures organizational survival and success (Farhadi, et. al, 2013).

The impact of financial compensation on government employees' productivity has been largely ignored by public sector scholars who posit that public sector employees' primary motivation has been to serve. However, these employees also have financial needs that they need to consider, which can contradict the service motivation (Tongo, 2011).

Individual stress needs to be avoided within an organization because it has the potential to damage productivity. Research has linked stress with the causes of lowered productivity such as absenteeism, staff turnover, and safety problems. Not only do these issues decrease productivity, they also add hidden costs to the organization's overhead. In an effort to prevent this from happening, organization now have stress management interventions that aim to reduce the existence of job stressors and help employees minimize the negative effects of these stressors (Matin, et. al, 2014).

Performance appraisal systems are an integral part of performance management is an integral part of the organizational strategic plan. The premise is that performance of employees are consistently reviewed to identify areas for improvement. There is a close relationship between organization strategy and performance measurement tools. Therefore, appraisal system need to be consistently monitored for opportunities to gain productivity (Ndambakuwa & Mufunda, 2006).

Training and development is critical to safeguarding an adequate supply of staff that have the necessary skills and competencies required by the organization (Parker, et. al, 2013). Thus, there is a need for human resources

management to be proactive in the area of staff development. Training should be viewed as fundamental fragment of total quality management. Training can create a significant impact on employee productivity, leading to enhanced organizational performance (Sabir et. al, 2014).

Research on human resources management practices in the public sector is limited. Most of the existing literature deals with corporations and non-profit organizations. To date, there has been inadequate attention given to identifying the tasks and functions of the human resources management that affect the productivity of government employees. This research will add on the body of knowledge about management in the public sector.

Research Question and Objectives

Productivity has now become measure of performance in public organizations. This research is attempting to answer the question of how HRM practices drive or prevent an increase in the productivity of public sector employees.

Specifically, this paper aims to: (1) identify human resources management practices that affect productivity; (2) administer a survey questionnaire to the different ranks of public sector employees; (3) determine the level of the relationship between productivity and each of the identified human resource practices, and (4) make recommendations based on the findings.

Methods

This proposal follows a quantitative research design. The dependent variable would be the productivity of a public sector employee. The independent variables would be performance appraisal, training and development,

compensation and stress management. A survey questionnaire will be developed as the research instrument. The four variables will have five indicator questions each. Choices of responses will be based on a five point Likert Scale anchored on agreement. (E. g. The skills I acquired from training programs allows me to get more work done. Strongly agree. Moderately agree. Agree. Disagree. Strongly disagree).

Respondents would be government employees from a single government agencies. Qualifying criteria would be at least three years in government service to ensure that respondent has enough experience. Proportional stratified sampling will be used so that there will be respondents from rank and file, supervisory and managerial positions. Sample frame will be the employee directory. Sample size calculations will follow Slovin's formula because it would be a known population.

Statistical analysis will be used to process the responses. Pearson R correlation will be used to figure out the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable that is productivity.

Multiple regression analysis will be used to determine the simultaneous effect of the four dependent variables on employee productivity.

One ethical consideration is self-interest. The researcher must not belong to or have family members that work for the government agency chosen in this paper. A second consideration would be the confidentiality of the respondents. Before answering the survey questionnaire, the respondents will be briefed so that they will give informed consent and assurance of confidentiality. The questionnaire will not have identifying elements such as name and job title. These will just have a control number. Finally, researcher

ethics will maintain the integrity of the data. The data will be analyzed without bias and will not be manipulated to arrive at a desired conclusion.

Timetable

Expected Results

It is expected that the independent variables will significantly affect employee productivity. Each one of the independent variables will either be an enabler of or a barrier to employee productivity as shown in the positive or negative coefficient. Finally, the results will indicate which variable affects employee productivity the most, making it the priority in any interventions for the chosen government agency.

Resources

Journals and other scholarly work for the review of related literature will be obtained through the university library databases. Contact persons for the chosen agency will be needed to gain approval. The funding for the questionnaires and other related costs will be coming from the researchers own pocket.

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