

Valuable Human Resources Lessons that can be Drawn from Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Maria Matshidiso Kanjere¹ and Kgomotlokoa Linda Thaba²

University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa, 0700

E-mail: ¹<maria.kanjere@ul.ac.za>, ²<lindathaba@yahoo.com>

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. K. L. Thaba

University of Limpopo, Mankweng,

South Africa, Private Bag

X1106, Sovenga, 0727

Telephone: 0725222671

Fax: 0865128875

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ABSTRACT An outcry in the country concerning lack of service delivery affects many government sectors of which education is no exception. Lack of service delivery in education is depicted by low pass percentages, high drop- out rate and a high level of crime within the school premises. Corrupt methods of recruitment and nepotisms are used to get people into positions they do not deserve. Therefore this paper argues that it is important to draw valuable lessons from Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Indigenous Knowledge Systems advocates that the right people should be placed at the right positions for the advancement of an organization. The objective of this study is to advance a workable recruitment, selection and placement plan that can be of use in schools. Literature review and participant observation are the methods used to gather data. Thus the research has revealed that human resources planning are of out-most importance when staff has to be selected. Therefore the researchers recommend that human *resource* planning should be organisational priority, because it will ensure that right decisions are made during recruitment and placement of employees.

1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa like the rest of African states is affected by quite a number of social governance issues that includes poverty, lack of resources and corruption. These issues and many other issues are the ones that tempt most officials in higher position to practice nepotism. (Brand 2008: 208) argues that *'many managers already know who they want to appoint, they merely go through the entire recruitment and selection process only to cover themselves from issues such as possible disputes from unsuccessful applicants'*. People are placed in positions for which they do not qualify and end up underperforming; as a result there are a number of strikes across the country which could be directly or indirectly linked to lack of service delivery.

Learners at schools sometimes fail to access resources earmarked for them due to corrupt tendering processes. They are taught by educators who do not have passion for learners; hence the low pass rates in schools, high-level of drop-outs and a lot of criminal activities. The moral vibe has collapsed in most government institutions and at schools specifically. Organizations should be managed in such a way that ethical principles are instilled. Schools should teach ethical education from as early as elementary level. Ethical principles that kept and preserved the indigenous people should be taught at schools. Thus ethical organizations should be created.

(Makhubela 2008:38) is of the opinion that conventionally, western beliefs, concepts and processes have been allowed to unconditionally dictate and control development activities around the world with little consideration for indigenous cultures. Indigenous knowledge was biasly rejected as being unscientific and superstitious. However, it should be noted that *'different knowledge systems also assume different ways of knowing which directly relate to cultural diversity and different cosmologies'* (Nel 2008: 96). Therefore there is no single explanation or definition of what counts as knowledge and the way in which that knowledge should be produced.

Thus for the government to resuscitate the moral standard in the country, people will have to be encouraged to dig deeper into their roots. Modern society believes that there is nothing that can be learnt from the indigenous knowledge systems and the contrary is true. There is a lot that can be learnt. (Nel 2008:94) maintains that indigenous knowledge is a community embedded knowledge which stands in direct relation to the well-being and health of the

community. It is a knowledge that includes aspects that we customarily call “skills”, “beliefs” or “propositional knowledge”.

We live in an era whereby knowledge is perceived as an asset; it is a competitive advantage. It is therefore imperative for the government to harness and manage knowledge for the improvement of the country. The human resources departments in the country face a great challenge of recruiting and selecting knowledgeable people as these activities are overshadowed by corruption and nepotism as already indicated.

Human resources departments should be objective and draw from Indigenous Knowledge Systems to improve on their selection of candidates for various posts. (Brand 2008:205) believes that effective recruitment and selection processes are strategically important to any organization; if correctly done, they can decrease staff turnover and increase production. On the other hand if the recruitment and selection processes were not done correctly this could have negative financial implications for an organization.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the study was to highlight the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in solving human resources problems in various organizations especially in public schools. In planning to achieve the main purpose of the study two objectives were formulated as follows:

- a. To outline the role which indigenous knowledge can play in human resources management.
- b. To suggest an ethnically-based human resources management processes in the appointment of staff.

3. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question that guided this investigation was phrased as follows:

Which valuable lessons can be drawn from indigenous knowledge systems with regard to human resources management? To further explore the question, the subsequent questions were asked. These subsequent questions were framed as follows:

- a. Is IKS still relevant to modern society?
- b. How were organizations managed in the pre-colonial era?
- c. What value system can be added to human resources management?

4. VALUABLE LESSONS FROM INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

4.1. Collectiveness

Indigenous organizations were social arrangements which pursued collective goals that controlled their performance. Organizations were established with the main purpose of helping the communities. People acted collectively in helping one another with social, economic and psychological needs. (Makhubele2008: 37) is of the opinion that indigenous African people are by nature highly gregarious, they are of help to each other socially, economically and spiritually. These organizations added value and improved the quality of life of their people.

Within indigenous organizations, people were well taken care of; especially the aged and the orphans. Collective set-ups encouraged people to share their resources with the less privileged.

4.2. Positions were given on the basis of expertise

People who were gifted and talented in certain areas were given the positions they deserved. For an example during traditional dances, only those who were gifted could take the lead. Even in music not every person could lead but only those who were talented could lead the choir. The same applies to traditional mourning and crying in public. There were some designated women who knew how to wail during funerals and such were given the platform to cry especially if the deceased was from the royal family.

Therefore selection and placement of people in different roles was based on merit. However placement in the area of chieftainship was on the basis of heredity. People became kings or chiefs on the basis of blood lineage. They were made to be accountable to the people they governed. (Koenane2008:96) states that the chief who was not prepared to change his ways as the community demands was risking having no people in his area. People were free to leave a chief who fails them if they were not satisfied with the way he conducts his affairs and relate to them.

4.2. Elimination of corruption

It is believed that African pre-colonial societies were not as corrupt as post-colonial societies. This is supported by (Koenane2008: 92) who maintains that '*African pre-colonial societies were less corrupt than colonial ones*'. The post-independence African societies have surpassed the colonial society in their level of corruption. Thus corruption follows the pace of modern history and civilization; the more civilized society is the greedier and corrupt it becomes. Therefore modern society should learn to do away with greediness.

In an attempt to address and alleviate corruption, valuable lessons from the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are required for civilized society to emulate. IKS has sustained people in Africa, free from fraud and corruption. *‘Over decades the indigenous people in Africa have practiced, innovated and kept unique knowledge related to many areas of life’*, (Sebito-Kibuka 2008:83).

4.3. Respect and accountability

It can therefore be observed that the issues of respect and accountability were highly regarded in the indigenous communities. These are the most important aspects of human resources management. Modern organizations should learn that if they do not treat people with respect run the risk of losing their support. The support of the stakeholders depends on the respect they receive from organizations. For an example, schools will lose the support of parents if they are not well treated. They will battle with issues of discipline alone. Therefore the modern organizations can practice to be accountable to the people they serve; not through lip service but by actions.

5. ETHICALLY BASED HUMAN RESOURCE MODEL OF APPOINTMENT

The success of any organization depends on the competency and commitment of its employees’ (Grobler 2006). Therefore without the high-quality workforce the organization is likely to underperform. The organisation has to do a need analysis. Recruitment has to be done on the basis of the needs of an organisation as well as on its aims and objectives. This system will eliminate incidences whereby posts are created for specific people. Intense study of the labour market should also be done so as to know what the market can offer in terms of the skills that are needed.

Selection and placement of candidates should be done on the basis of merit. In instances whereby the management cannot do the work objectively, outsourcing should be an option. The internal promotion and transfers of employees should also be conducted objectively. Once employees are placed into positions, they will have to be supported. Thus an important aspect of collectivism which is easily demonstrated in indigenous people should be embraced. People should be socialized into their organization, they should be made that they are part of a big family. Elements of jealousy and betrayal should be regulated. It is therefore the task of management to create an indigenous family environment in their organizations. People should perceive one another as *‘ngwanesho’* which if translated means my brother or my sister. *‘African institutions should take their cultural heritage resources seriously as one*

of the domain in which they can remain competitive in a globalizing world and contribute to global civilization', (Masoga and Kaya 2008:141).

6. CONCLUSION

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are still relevant to the modern society to learn from. They are rich on ethical practices and fairness; they promote social justice even though they have been side-lined and biasly referred to as being unscientific. Indigenous Knowledge Systems have stood the test of time by uplifting the quality of life for those who still believe in culture.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore imperative for organizations to tap on indigenous knowledge systems for good practice. Therefore the researchers recommend that human resource planning should be organisational priority, because it will ensure that right decisions are made during recruitment and placement of employees.

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