

4. MANAGING CAREERS IN THE ABSENCE OF FORMAL PROGRAMMES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 3 only three departments in the entire Public Service are in the process of implementing career management programmes. This Chapter provides the reasons why career management programmes have not been put in place in the majority of national departments and provincial administrations and the manner in which career management is currently dealt with. Envisaged actions regarding the development and implementation of career management programmes are also assessed.

4.2 REASONS FOR THE NON-EXISTENCE OF A CAREER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

High work pressure, backlogs in work, a high number of vacancies, lack of expertise and knowledge, the fact that career management is not deemed a priority and, in an isolated instance, resistance from line management are all reasons provided by departments and provincial administrations for the non implementation of career management programmes.

In addition to the above, the following issues were furthermore emphasized by certain departments as major contributing factors which prohibited the development of career management programmes:

X Outdated organisation structures

Reason

Outdated organisational structures do not meet the functional needs of departments. A comprehensive restructuring will have to be undertaken before career opportunities can be mapped out.

Comment

Restructuring should not be an excuse for not engaging in career planning and development. If it is clear that the organisational structure does not meet the functional needs it should also be clear what the developmental needs of the department are.

X Decentralisation

Reason

The process of decentralisation in departments, e.g: the creation of regional offices, etc., impacts on the ability to finalise HRD

policies. Policies and strategies are therefore in different stages of development.

Comment

The development of HRD policies should not be affected by the process of decentralisation. The appointment/absorption of new staff could, however, delay the consultation process in respect of new HRD policies.

X **National policy does not stipulate a time-frame**

Reason

No target date was set for the implementation of a career management programme in the various White Papers. The development of such a programme has therefore not received priority.

Comment

Although this issue is not addressed by the new Public Service Regulations (PSR), the matter is clearly addressed in the various White Papers. It would appear as if certain departments and provincial administrations are still over-reliant on direction from the DPSA.

X **Career management is not addressed as a separate programme or policy but is provided for by the multitude of HRD policies that are in place**

Reason

No need exists for the development of a career management programme *per se* as the principles of career management are also addressed in policies on HRD which have already been developed.

Comment

An assessment of this reason is not possible without full knowledge of the details of the policies on HRD that are in place.

It is, however, questionable whether the policies would provide sufficiently for the practices of career planning and pathing.

X **Departments are newly created or restructured**

Reason

The progress with HRM and HRD policies is limited in view of the fact that institutional transformation has only been completed recently and departments have been newly created or incorporated in the Public Service.

Comment

The difficulties experienced with the establishment of new institutions are acknowledged. Departments and provincial administrations should, however, consider establishing partnerships with each other. Certain departments and provincial administrations have already progressed significantly with the development of HRD policies. These policies can be obtained and tailored to suit departments= and provincial administrations= unique circumstances.

X HR policies supporting career management must first be developed

Reason

Other human resource policies, e.g: affirmative action, training and development, etc., are currently in draft and should be finalised shortly. Career management, as a strategy, is an integrated approach to human resource practices and it would therefore not be sensible to develop a career management strategy if the building blocks are not in place.

Comment

Career management is supported by and reliant on other human resource policies such as affirmative action and training. This, however, does not preclude departments and provincial administrations in developing a framework for career management before such policies are implemented.

X Implementation of the new PSR was awaited

Reason

The implementation of the new PSR was awaited as this would provide an appropriate framework to create a comprehensive career management strategy.

Comment

The elements and principles of career management remain the same,

whether the framework for career management was provided by the old PAS system or in the new CORE. The CORE put in place by the new PSR allows for more career path opportunities than the old PAS=s.

4.3 **THE MANNER IN WHICH CAREER MANAGEMENT IS CURRENTLY DEALT WITH**

In the absence of a formal career management programme, departments and provincial administrations indicated that careers are managed as follows (comments are provided on possible risks involved with such approaches):

X By employees themselves

Employees are solely responsible for the identification of career paths and career development opportunities. The obvious risk with such an approach is that there is no balance between the needs of the employee and the employer. It could, for example, happen that an employee obtain a tertiary qualification with a view to being promoted to a specific higher post whilst the employer does not have a need for an employee with such a qualification. The employee furthermore receives no structured assistance in achieving career goals.

X By managers in an informal manner

This is done by making subordinates aware of career development and promotion opportunities. Although this approach allows flexibility in that the subordinate is not bound by a structured career planning process, the benefits attached to such a structured approach are not available to the subordinate. The organisation in such instances will not be able to provide informed career development support.

X Within the framework of guidelines and measures set out in the PAS=s

This approach is very restrictive as it limits career pathing to the occupation covered by a PAS. PAS=s also do not address training and other career development opportunities unless legislated (registration requirements, etc.). This could lead to loss on multi-

skilling opportunities as well as the inability to follow alternative career paths. It should also be borne in mind that the CORE, which replaced the PAS with effect from 1 July 1999, provides for more flexibility in terms of mapping out career paths.

X As part of systems designed to enhance competency and to evaluate potential

Such an approach focuses on development needs of employees and may not necessarily address career pathing opportunities. It is furthermore not clear whether these systems are informed by the results of career planning. The success of this approach would therefore be dependant on the extent to which the enhancement of competency is focussed on immediate circumstances or whether it also caters for future needs and expectations.

X Career counselling is provided by the HRD component

Career counselling is a necessary and integral part of a career management programme. It is assumed, however, that career counsellors are not in all instances familiar with the career development (training, performance) needs of an employee in his or her current position. Interaction between the employee and supervisor is therefore an absolute requirement.

X Career management is part of a mentor or protégé programme

Such an approach limits itself to new appointees or newly promoted employees and may have as its primary focus the orientation of individuals to the institutional culture.

X By completing and signing career path agreements prior to employees attending courses

Nominations are requested from employees to attend training courses with a view to strengthening certain line function fields in departments. Employees are required to sign career path agreements prior to attending such courses, thereby binding themselves contractually to remain in the service of the relevant department after completion of the course. The duration of such a contractual obligation will depend on the duration and cost of the training course. By following this approach career paths are clearly

demarcated and skills could be developed optimally. In order for this approach to be successful, it will have to be preceded by a comprehensive career planning process. On its own it serves merely as a mechanism to ensure that the skills developed through courses are not lost immediately to the labour market.

X Lower graded employees are identified for placement in higher posts, provided that the minimum requirements of the post are met

The upliftment of lower level workers through placement in higher posts are commendable, but is also just a very small part of a career management strategy. The identification of development needs and appropriate career paths may not receive the required attention. The problem can be eliminated by means of regular training need surveys as well as the implementation of capacity building programmes. During these interventions lower level workers should be familiar with the concept of career management, including its advantages.

Newcomers at the majority of departments and provincial administrations are informed of possible career paths and development opportunities through induction and orientation courses presented by their direct supervisors or by the human resource components.

4.4 FUTURE ACTIONS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

The majority of departments and provincial administrations are currently in the process of developing career management programmes. Those who have not, indicated that they intend developing such a programme in due course.

Based on the information received, the implementation of career management programmes in the majority of departments and provincial administrations could be expected during the latter half of 1999, as well as during 2000. The implementation of career management programmes was also linked by a specific department to the implementation of the new PSR on 1 July 1999.

Although it was indicated that the responsibility of developing suitable career management programmes will largely rest with the human resource

and training components, other role players will also be involved, viz:

- X developmental offices within line departments and components;
- X line and senior managers;
- X project teams;
- X regional training committees; and
- X HRD committees.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The concept of career management is relatively alien to the Public Service. Departments and provincial administrations on face value seem to approach career management incoherently through various HRM practices.

The envisaged development of career management programmes as discussed in paragraph 4.4 is commendable, provided that departments and provincial administrations give effect to their intentions. The Public Service Commission will at an appropriate point in time again monitor progress in this regard.