

THE ROLE OF INTERVIEWERS IN JOB EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES

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Abstract

Interview processes are dynamic and sometimes very sensitive and as such, they need to be managed effectively and efficiently by evaluating applicants equally without showing favour or prejudice prior, during and until all processes have been completed. A lot of interview processes for purposes of appointment selections have been tainted with unethical practices where the panellists, who took part in the processes, displayed various forms of partisanship, prejudices and so on. Sometimes, a selector may have premeditated negative mind set towards an applicant which may be evidenced during the interview. This may impact on the reasoning and judgements of the selector and the panellists, thus influencing the decisions of the selector. A brilliant and well performed applicant may be found unqualified. Ineffective selection and recruitment processes are increasingly affecting employers by denting their cooperate image and sometimes being subjected to vicious legal battles in courts. This article examines the problems associated with prejudices and unethical practices during selection processes particularly by the recruiters and selectors. It points out that panellists must be properly scrutinised before they are appointed to be part of any selection process and that they should disclose any interest, prejudices, bias and so on that could affect the outcome of the process. It is argued that any member of the panel who is found to have compromised his or her position in any selection processes should be punitively sanctioned.

Keywords: Selectors, Panellists, Management, Unfair labour Practice, Prejudice, Organisation

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1. Introduction

The processes of recruiting employees in any organisation are very dynamic and sensitive (Bate et al., 2000). Potential employees need to be handled and managed with care in order not to impact their labour rights, the policy and procedures for selection of the company and also laws governing employment relations. Instances of where interviews have led to bad selections and appointments abound, and these are reflected in the numbers of the recruitment processes being challenged in courts by the aggrieved applicants (Proctor et al., 2008). The conducts and the mind sets of the panellists who will be involved in the employment recruitment processes are expected to be fair at all times. They must be seen to genuinely apply their minds during the processes without bias or prejudice. Recruitment processes are very challenging and need to be handled carefully, ethically and professionally. However, a lot of literature on job interviews and selections processes have emphasised that an interviewer needs not be an expertise but should be able to apply his or her mind during the processes and be able to deliver a good verdict based on good judgement (Chabu, 2014).

Often times, those who have been nominated to serve as members of recruitment and selection

processes have been found to be wanting in many respects due to their conflict of interests, mind sets, racist tendencies and prejudices. It is therefore incumbent on the organisation to ensure that before selection process for recruitment is underway, nominated members should be asked to make undertaking by declaring that they do not have any prejudices, compromises or conflict of in interest that will undermine the process and put the organisation in disrepute. The importance of good recruitment and selection cannot be over emphasised as it is a major determinant of the output of any organisation. Against the backdrop of this, Schweyer (2010) admonished that “long gone are days when most workers could be dealt with in bulk, like commodities. Today, virtually every full-time hire requires a search followed by careful screening and selection. Staffing takes more time because the consequences of good and bad hires are magnified. Recruiting training and replacement costs are higher than ever. The cost of turnover is a staggering two to three times most knowledge workers ‘annual salary.’”

Therefore, the processes need to be effectively and efficiently managed from the beginning to the end. This is because the consequences of recruitment and selection episodes and their impact on future relationships between employer and employee should

be cordial not dire or strained (Pinder, 2014). Undoubtedly, if it is cordial, it is as a result of well managed selection and recruitment processes which have produced the best and fit candidate for the job (Billberry, 2007).

2. Research Methodology

Reliance was placed on literature pertaining to recruitment and selection processes in order to establish the reasons why selectors, recruiters and interviewers' mind-sets, attitudes, bias and prejudices could negatively impact the decision on the best candidate to be selected and appointed for the job. After a careful review of the literature, critical analysis was used to fill and close the knowledge gap by offering new ideas which produced new knowledge that assessment and evaluation of potential selectors and interviewers should be done for purposes of an effective recruitment and selection processes. This intervention will, to a large extent, eliminate obstacles that would have tainted and compromised the processes.

3. Research Problem

Finding the right person to recruit for a particular job is truly a herculean task especially during interviewing and selection processes (Lavigna and Hays, 2004). The decision on whom to hire is very crucial for an employer (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991). If the right selection is made, it will be beneficial to the employer and add value to the organisation. However, if it is the contrary where selection is made based on prejudice, compromise, bias and so on, this may affect and negatively impact the company. At the end of the day, the company will be responsible for the bad decision and also become liable for any wrong. More importantly, the interview panellists must be able to apply their minds freely but fairly because "the objective of recruitment and selection is to decide which jobs are available in the present and how these relate to the jobs that will be required in the future" (Proctor et al., 2008). Before the commencement of any recruitment procedure, panellists that are free of prejudices such as race, religion, creed or sex should be nominated to serve on the panel. However, if the law allows fair discrimination on any grounds, this should be addressed and applicable laws should be made available.

4. Literature Review

The new workforce science acknowledges that the processes of recruitment and selection must be properly managed from interviews, hire and up until retirement (Schweyer, 2010). Selection process through interview may make or mar an organisation (Alvarez and Urla, 2002). A reputable organisation

must ensure that it applies and implements best practices and high ethical standard during recruitment processes (Bartram 2004). Although, it is unlikely that all organisations have policy and procedure for selection, most organised and reputable organisations do have such policy and procedure guiding selection and recruitment (Rainey, 2009). It is equally important to have policy and procedure in place regulating those that will be nominated to serve as interviewers and selection panellists where their duties, obligations, responsibilities and liabilities during the processes are articulated and spelt out (Zapała-Kraj, 2012). This is crucial against the backdrop that some selection and recruitment processes have produced outcomes that do not suit the purposes of the organisation resulting in the hiring of unsuitable persons while suitable ones are frustrated as a result of prejudices shown to them during the selection process (Billberry, 2008).

These prejudices are barriers to appointing suitable person for the job. Braddock and McPartland (1987) mentioned some of these exclusionary barriers thus "segregated networks" at the candidate stage, "information bias" and "statistical discrimination" at the entry stage, and "closed internal markets" at the promotion stage" (Braddock and McPartland, 1987).

Some organisations have prejudice for divorced or pregnant persons and they do, most times, hide under the requirements of the job. This is discriminatory and violates both national and international laws on employment relations (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991).

It is therefore important that when recruiting, top management must have reasonable amount of impact in the selection process in such a way that a top manager forms part of the selection processes (Gilliland, 1993). This does not mean that other less ranked management staff cannot perform this task but for robust and credible engagement, it is advisable that a top ranking personnel is part of the process (Proctor et al., 2008).

Gatewood et al., (1993) study focuses on image being portrayed by organisation regarding their recruitment messages. Essentially, the adequacy and otherwise of the amount of information available to an applicant is very important at the initial stage when applying for the job. This information influences and shaped the credibility of an organisation one way or the other. Potential applicants use this as consideration of whether to apply for the job or not.

It is therefore pertinent to point out that "a time of recruitment and selection is an extraordinary memorable period in someone's working life. It is a moment when people are acutely sensitive to cues that can help them make sense of the new appointment. Many of the impressions formed during the period stay with applicants and shape their future behaviour"(Billberry, 2007). This is why it is

reiterated that the selectors' interactions with the applicant at the time of the interviews are crucial as they may make or mar the process (Johnson, and Intner, 1994).

The study of Bartram (2004) investigated current practice and emerging trends in assessment in organizations for purposes of recruitment using meta-analysis techniques which is considered to have radically changed the way in which the state and psychological readiness of the applicant is tested in order to assess whether he/she is the right candidate or not.

The work of Zapała-Kraj (2012) reinforces the need for the best candidate that fits the job to be appointed because of the skills and improvement that such person will bring to the organisation and writes thus "regardless of its human resources (HR) policies, the search for a new workforce is a crucial element for all organisations as all employers would like to hire the most qualified candidate who will not only possess the most suitable knowledge, experience, and qualities, but will also fit into the company's organisational structure. The process also ensures that the best candidates have been selected for the positions offered by an organisation that aims to expand and has concrete sales targets to fulfil." Zapała-Kraj (2012) also indicates that "by applying the right methods of employee selection, businesses do not only have an opportunity to achieve their desired results but also to avoid the job mismatch issues leading to enormous costs of staff turnover...since recruitment is merely one of the stages of the entire process. To be precise, the process involves finding the most suitable employee on the employment market. During this stage the employer's responsibility is to encourage the best candidates to apply for the job."

5. Consideration Of Recruitment Best Practices

According to Billsbery (2007), "recruitment and selection is a multi-faceted affair with many players, all of whom have an interest in its conducts and outcomes." If the process is not well managed, it could lead to abuse and compromise. Whatever interest a selector has in the process; this must be disclosed and declared so that the organisation can benchmark this with the best practice in the discipline and field of recruitment and selection processes. Therefore, the human resources of an organisation need to provide leadership and professionalism by guiding all recruitment and selection processes. The intrinsic role of a formidable human resources management is aptly put by Zapała-Kraj (2012), it is "responsible for identifying, selecting and inducting the competent people, train them, facilitating and motivating them to perform at the high level of efficiency and providing mechanism to ensure that they maintain their affiliation with their organization.

Human resources management is also an art of developing people and their potentialities for their personnel and the growth of the organization." As part of effective recruitment and selection best practices, the human resources must ensure that the process follow the structure, policy, procedure, references of the applicants duly obtained, interviews are well structured after applications have been scrutinised and candidates shortlisted, the experience and credibility of selectors also properly scrutinised and so on (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004).

The application of best practices is important in recruitment and selection because most of the organizations place full reliance on the impressions formed by the applicants during the interviews which is more or less a limited amount of information as a result of time and space constrains (Dipboye, 1995). It is this same information supplied within the process that the selectors would evaluate and access for purposes of determining and deciding whether an applicant is the right and proper person for the job. The dilemma is that sometimes, information provided might not reflect the true competency of the applicant especially if the interview processes are unfair (Goodwin et al., 1998). "Achieving a good fit between people and their jobs is a primary objective of human resources management (HRM). Recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and selection are the chief strategies, and in each case, a structured process has been proposed to achieve an optimal person-job fit" (Dipboye, 1994).

Dipboye, (1994) indicates that "through structuring interview procedures, biases in information gathering, judgment, and decision making can be reduced and the reliability and validity of interviewer judgments improved." While this assertion might be true, it should be considered whether it is workable where a selector had formed an opinion to be biased during the process. How can this be detected? This question begs for an appropriate answer. However, the selector should be a person of good moral standing who will be able to own up and decline an offer to be a member of the interview panel. This is more noble and dignifying. It will allow the organisation to look for a replacement. Moreover, the essence of the processes is to ensure that the right decision based on well processed and well thought interactions between the panelists and the applicant is taken.

6. Significant Of Interviews Before Recruitment And Selection

While some studies have shown that interviews are unable to predict an applicant's success on certain jobs; other studies have shown that interview may be used as a valid means of predicting success in various activities (Wagner, 1949). Consequently, almost all studies accept interview as inevitable if not indispensable in recruitment and selection processes

(Barber 1998). Confirming the persistent use of interviews for recruitment and selection, Arvey and James (1982) indicate that “research dealing with the reliability and validity of the interview, methodological issues, decision making, interviewer training, minority characteristics, nonverbal behavior, interviewee characteristics, and interviewee training show why persistence in the use of interview still exists.”

Interview is one of the methods being used by an organisation to assess and evaluate the suitability of an applicant for the job (Cable and Judge, 1997). It could be in many forms but most organisations use the formal structured interviews to recruit and select their employees (Cassell et al., 2002). The competitiveness in most of the industry and sectors of the economy dictates that the best person should be appointed to fill the post in order to deliver in accordance with the mission and vision of the organisation (Donnellan, 2010). Cheese et al. (2007) point out that in today’s organisations, “the key factor in determining the success of any organisation is its ability to use human talent to discover it, develop it. Human talent-the combined capacity and will of people to achieve an organisation’s goals-is a productive resource like no other.” Therefore, if a company wants to remain contemporary and competitive, it has to do everything to improve and strengthen knowledge based faster than the competition (Sveiby, 1997). This is the knowledge based asset of contemporary organisation. This will make the company to be on top of its business and continue to excel because of the knowledgeable human resources it has acquired and being used to drive the operations of the company. Though physical resources are still parts and parcels of the corporate assets such as physical plants and financial capital, (Itami and Roehl, 1991) knowledge based assets drive the organisation in terms of achieving its corporate goals (Bontis, 2001). Previously, workers used to contribute their brawn not their brain, these days, what counts and matters in an organisation is the people, knowledge, systems and processes (Razmerita et al., 2009).

7. The Intrinsic Role Of Selectors In Recruitment Processes

There is a lot of literature on the modes of selecting candidates for an organisation but little is written on the roles to be played by the selectors throughout the processes (Krook, 2009). The interview panellists, the human resources and the selectors have a lot of roles to play in the recruitments and selection processes (Chinn et al., 3007). Considering the fact that organisation usually relies on whether to hire a certain candidate or not, it will profoundly rely on the assessment and evaluation reports of the selectors to take such decision (Nelson, 2004). This therefore

makes the role of selectors more important in hiring the best and fit applicant. Although the significance of the role of selectors is easy to underestimate as it may be seen as obscure function performed by nominated persons by the human resources to sit as the panellists at the interviews. The role is very challenging and demanding and it needs to be performed without fear or favour because any decision taken has a very wider implications in the short and long run for the organisation. It must reflect fair labour practice. If not, it will be seen as an unfair labour practice and there are consequences for this in employment law.

Various methodologies that have been espoused by different scholars on how the roles of the selectors for effectively recruiting and selecting the best person for the job. Scholarios and Lockyer (1999) writes that “evidence based on a survey of professional firms and in-depth interviews with decision-makers responsible for selection examines the most frequently used and valued methods for hiring qualified professional staff.” Their study suggested that with regard to recruitment for senior posts, “an emphasis on personality, work experience and general attributes and that high value is placed on interviews and informal sources of information in assessing these qualities.” They suggested that “informality may play an important role when partners responsible for selection have long tenure with their firm and when firms experience recruitment difficulties. More generally, informal networks and interview processes may act as effective information and communication vehicles for small and medium-sized professional practices”(Scholarios and Lockyer, 1999).

Regardless of the method or methods used, the selectors have to ensure that they apply their minds irrespective of how the applicant is perceived prior the interviews. They are to look for the best attributes of the applicant and the value the applicant will bring to the organisation to take it to another higher level.

Recruitment should be well planned and must be consistent with overall corporate strategy, culture and values of the organisation (Bryson, 2011). It important to point out that some organisation’s recruitment and selection strategy policy and procedures may adopt the use of internal promotion with the main aim of ensuring that staff remain motivated and loyal (O’Meara, 2013). While this is desirable, there is need for caution because it might become a problem and work contrary to what was set out to be achieved especially if there are disgruntled members of the interviewers having grudges and prejudices against their colleagues seeking promotions. Also, caution should be taken regarding using internal promotion processes in order not to demotivate other competing applicants who will fail and found not appointable (Reichheld and Teal, 2001).

The processes must be seen to be fair and the applicant must perceive it as such based on his own

assessment; otherwise it will be contrary to natural justice. Most importantly, it must follow due process and procedure. It will also be perceived as unfair labour practice if the applicant feels that there are intimidations and harassments during the interviews. This is emphasised because the concepts of fairness and justice play very significant role in the way and manner recruitment and selection processes and procedures are conducted and handled (Chan and Schmitt, 2004). This is why it is the practice in most interviews that the panellists will ask applicants to assess and evaluate the performance and conduct of the interviewers and comment generally on how he or she perceives the interview processes.

8. Conclusion

Employee recruitment and selection processes are dynamic and crucial to an organisation. There should be ample preparation before it is embarked on because the processes will always bring additional personnel(s) to the organisation. However, the additions might not add value to the organisation if not effectively scrutinised before selected. An interviewee must properly and adequately prove himself during the interviews. To get the best out of the applicants, interviewers have to evaluate, interact and interrogate both the applicant's applications and the applicants. The interview stage is critical in selection processes and it must be handled professionally. Those who will form part of the panellists must possess not only necessary experiences and expertise but must also be of high moral standings within the organisation or as external. They must disclose any conflict of interest which might taint the process. An interviewer has the right to decline nomination to be a member of the panel if convinced that it is likely that he will exhibit prejudice against any of the applicants. It is important to point out that job recruitment and selections processes are protected by labour laws and any misconduct from the members of the panel will definitely be categorised as unfair labour practice which may lead to disciplinary processes being instituted against the erring member.

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