


Chapter 12

The Impact of Talent Retention and Management Practices on Service Delivery Outcomes in the South African Public Service

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ABSTRACT

Talent management requires the identification of talented employees who work in the organisation. The South African public service continues to have a high concentration of an ageing workforce within its management and leadership occupational levels which poses a risk to business continuity. Poor recruitment practices linked to political interference have led to the appointment of inadequate leaders in key positions thus stifling leadership potential and service delivery outcomes. The South African public service aims to develop talent for service excellence which drives all talent-related initiatives within the organisation. This chapter explores variables such as compliance with regulatory provisions, talent acquisition, talent development, employee performance, digital hiring, digital workforce and succession planning, and digital transformation. Digital transformation influences human resource factors and contributes to enhancing productivity.

INTRODUCTION

The South African public service is operating under unprecedented political conditions and economic turbulence, it is increasingly difficult to attract and retain talented employees with scarce and critical skills leading to an adverse impact on service delivery. It is, therefore, imperative that during these tough times, the government develops a purposeful process for sourcing, attracting, engaging,

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managing, developing, and retaining key talent. Capacity constraints within the public service could hamper economic growth, therefore effective talent management is a business imperative as a lack of necessary skills could have serious consequences for South Africa's economy. It points out that Human Resources (HR) practices as part of HR strategy can "have an impact on HR outcomes such as engagement, motivation, commitment and skills," which together, can affect organisational outputs in terms of high service delivery, quality, and community satisfaction. Critical talent is becoming increasingly scarce due to rapid economic growth whilst there is also a growing skills shortage, on the other hand, HR practices are a subject of controversy. To achieve the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP), the South African government must cultivate, retain existing talent, and grow new talent rather than rely on recruitment alone. A Talent Management Strategy must be employed to provide a pool of managers/leaders and technical specialists in all fields where there is a critical shortage of skills (NDP, 2012). This chapter analyses the importance of digital transformation within public organisations and its impact on related human resources factors like human resource development, digital talent management and performance management.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The South African government has identified areas where there has been regression in terms of service delivery. The eThekweni Municipal Services and Living Conditions survey (2019/2020) mentioned in the IDP of the municipality indicated that poor service delivery and poor provision of basic services was the highest rating in reasons for dissatisfaction with municipal services at twenty-nine-point three percent. Other reasons that were mentioned were those municipal employees are unprofessional, and the municipality does not provide basic services such as, refuse collection, water, electricity, and grass cutting. Capacity constraints within the municipality could hamper economic growth. Therefore, effective talent management is a business imperative because deficiencies in leadership and technical competencies skills could have profound consequences for the entire public service. This can be enhanced through digitalisation.

Talent management is a broad phrase with no universal definition. It depends on the context and purpose in which it will be used. The interchangeable use of talent management with succession planning and human resources planning triggers further controversies. Tetik (2016) explains talent management through various approaches, including competency, individual strength, giftedness, high potential, and high performers Gallardo et al. (2020) describe talent management as all activities that include planning, identification, engagement, retention, deployment, and developing the individual (staff) training, development, and education need systematically. Talent management is essential for attracting, motivating, and retaining productive employees in the public sector (Mehale et al., 2021).

Therefore, talent management and digital hiring should be institutionalised in municipal planning to enhance efficiency in public service delivery. Nevertheless, the chronic shortage of skills has been a barrier to effective service delivery in South African municipalities (Van Dyk, 2017). There has been a slow implementation of talent management programmes to improve the competence of officials to accelerate service delivery in communities. Gibson and McKenzie (2011) hold that skills shortage emanates from poor talent management that triggers a massive scale brain drain in South Africa.

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