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SOME HRM TOOLS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Seminar

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I. INTRODUCTION

This presentation will focus on a number of HRM tools used by the Public Administrations of OECD and EU countries to manage and/or improve the quality of *training and development, motivation and performance appraisal*.

Each of these three topics will be briefly reviewed in this paper (they are also dealt with in the related PPT presentation). As a first step, some basic concepts of HRM in the Public Administration will be rapidly recalled.

❖ HRM and HRD : two key concerns of all organizations

1. Persons form the most important component of any organization. This is true in all sectors (public, private, associative). The quality of the results achieved by any working unit (e.g., in the public sector: a department, a ministry, a government) depends first and foremost on the quality of the workforces which produce these results.

2. *Human Resource Management (HRM)* and *Human Resource Development (HRD)* are therefore two key concerns of all organizations. Although these two areas are distinct, they are also complementary. HRM deals with current managerial obligations (e.g. paying salaries, managing working conditions and leaves, assessing annual performance and professional behavior), whereas HRD, which espouses a more strategic perspective, is concerned with reinforcing, in the long run, the capacity and the quality of the organizations' workforces (e.g. through adequate training, development and motivation policies, job security, career management and long term benefits offered to the personnel).

Both HRM and HRD are based on a system of rules, combined with managerial practices and tools.

❖ Two complementary components (or "levels") of HRM

3. Human Resources are managed at two distinct levels: *administrative, operational*.

HR administrative management focuses on *rules*, whereas operational management focuses on *targets*

a. The *Administrative level* is secured by specialized units which care, on an "day-to-day" (on-going) basis, for current tasks such as the payment of salaries, the management of leaves, the organization of professional competitive examinations (for recruitment or promotion), etc. The main concern of this first component of HRM is to warrant an equitable respect of the established *rules*.

In the *Operations* Departments and Units, the focus is put on teamwork and the achievement of managerial *objectives* (e.g. *annual targets*).

An important parameter : the level of deconcentration (and/or decentralization)

b. Both components operate on different scales, from central (i.e. at the Government's scale) to proximity (the last HR managerial unit, which really works directly with people). The degrees of freedom left (for

taking decisions) between the HRM units operating on two successive scales give a measure of the *level of deconcentration* (delegation of authority by the central unit to subordinate units), and in some cases also of the *level of decentralization* (devolution, i.e. transfer of authority) within the HRM System.

At each scale, persons have to be coherently managed by both types of managerial units

4. HRM involves, at each scale, both administrative and operational units. Rules and objectives have to be coherently taken into account and conveniently harmonized. The Operations Departments and Units are expected to be prevalent in this type of institutional game (it is in these Departments and Units that the HR needs are identified, and the institutional objectives pursued). But there has to be coherence and equity, across the whole organization, in the choices made (e.g. recruitments, promotions), and, of course, enough attention has to be paid to the costs of decisions and to the best use of available resources.

5. In the end, across the entire PA apparatus - with its different ministries, each of which (Education, Health, Economy, Justice, Energy, etc.) usually demands highly specialized human resources and professional profiles -, HRM requires a wide network of specialized managerial units. The tools used in these units may be quite diverse, for the reasons already underscored.

❖ Five main goals of HRM/HRD policies

6. Effective HRM/HRD policies, combining adequate administrative and operational sets of decisions, are expected to secure reasonably high levels of *motivation*, *competence* and *professional organisation*. As a result of the implementation of these policies, the workforce should (i) be *willing to achieve* the annual targets set up, (ii) *have competence (and enough self-confidence)* to do so, and (iii) *have also at their disposal the appropriate resources* (material and financial resources, relevant information), *organisational patterns* (organizational charts, job descriptions, target agreements, deontological and conduct codes) and *key managerial tools* (strategic plans, action plans, quality standards) enabling them to act both effectively and efficiently.

In addition to that, these policies should guarantee (i) an adequate size and a well-balanced composition and distribution of the workforce, and (ii) quality management at all levels.

❖ HRM types of tools depend on the scales involved

7. The types of tools used by Public Administration HRM/HRD specialists depend on the specific scale at which they operate (central, intermediate, proximity).

In agreement with the main intents and objectives of this seminar, only the *more fundamental tools used at governmental and ministry scales* are taken into consideration in this presentation. Tools used in more “peripheral” managerial units may present a very wide diversity, given the multiple factors that influence the choice of any given set of tools (countries’ cultural backgrounds¹, public administration systems

¹ Within the **European Union**, six main cultural backgrounds have been identified: *Anglo-Saxon / Continental European / Scandinavian / Mediterranean - South European / South-Eastern European / Eastern European*.

adopted², sectors involved, levels of deconcentration and decentralization, specific HRM types of tasks and concerns, distinct categories of civil servants, etc.).

II. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

8. **Training and Development** (T&D) are important components of HRM/HRD.

Associated with these two first key components are important *challenges* and a number of basic useful *tools* which should become familiar to HRM/HRD policy-makers and institutional specialists.

A. The Challenges

❖ The final goal pursued

9. The main goal of **Training and Development Policies** is to keep across the CS a *competent* workforce, sharing the PA *values* and *standards*, and abiding by these values and standards. The entire structure of competences and professional values and standards of the (governmental, ministerial, institutional) workforce has to be attentively monitored and regularly updated.

❖ How to secure global competence and adequate professional behavior

10. Competence needs (in a broad sense, including cultural competences related to PA and institutional values and standards) have to be clearly identified. Training has to be offered accordingly, annually, to a significant part of the PA workforce.

Training has to be made available to **managers** and to ordinary CSs working in the **technical** and **administrative** areas (*i.e. to the whole workforce*). The quality and results (benefits) of training have to be regularly monitored.

❖ Key issues and concerns

11. Three main issues should be kept in mind :

- the *relevance*, *opportunity* and *equity* of the training policies and decisions taken;
- the *quality* of training;
- the *costs* of training and the *time* invested.

National CS Training Systems have to find intelligent answers to these issues.

² In France, for instance, there are 3 different sub-systems of Public Administration (*State, Health, Territorial*).

B. Useful Tools

❖ Basic Tools

An adequate institutional system

12. The first fundamental tool is an adequate *institutional system* designed to answer the national - very often, huge and diverse - PA needs in the area of T&D. These needs include, as main concerns, the realization of adequate and reliable T&D needs assessments, the supply of quality T&D opportunities in many areas (and to many distinct categories of civil servants), and the regular monitoring and evaluation of the results of the T&D policies and activities.

13. To answer all these concerns, an adequate and equitable legal and regulatory framework has to be set up. In particular, the rights and obligations of the civil servants have to be clarified, and a convenient system for the funding of training has to be designed and implemented. The supply of quality training has to be secured. All this has to be done in agreement with the fundamental requirements of social dialogue policies, and taking into account the level of deconcentration and/or decentralization, as well as the specific characteristics of the national PA systems.

14. There is in this respect a lot of diversity across EU and OECD countries. Different institutional choices and options are available to set up and achieve T&D targets. Usually, these options tend to be influenced by national cultural traditions and, in particular, to be different in career- and position-based systems.

15. In career-based systems, a frequent trend is to build up a common training system for all civil servants, in order to try and answer their diverse needs (according to their professional profiles and statuses). Training offered at the entry-level staff seeks to harmonize basic knowledge and competences among new civil servants pertaining to the same categories. National and regional schools of PA, either generic or specialized (offering specific training in a given sector, such as Tax and Customs, Public Finance, Diplomacy or Equipment), also usually offer continuing education programs.

16. In position-based systems, candidates are selected largely on the basis of their expertise prior to taking the job, and in-service training is usually organized differently.

17. T&D activities require a lot of money and spare time. In most EU countries, significant financial resources are devoted to training (some Member States mention 2.7 % of payroll). On average, 5 to 10 days per person are spent annually on training activities.

Professional Development Plans

18. *Professional Development Plans* (designed and implemented on different scales: government, ministries, departments, operational and/or administrative units) are the core tool of most T&D policies and activities. They are expected to answer specific quality requirements.

PDPs should be:

- (i) *well integrated* (consistent) and *equitable* (offering similar T&D opportunities to civil servants belonging to the same categories); yet, they should remain, in each case, *flexible* and *adjustable*;
- (ii) *relevant* (offering T&D activities which correspond to the real needs and to the legitimate expectations of the civil servants), and *prepared in a coordinated manner*;
- (iii) *realistic* and *efficient* (attentive to the quality-costs ratios);
- (iv) *effective* (offering good quality training, whose results are indeed useful and beneficial to the relevant PA units or institutions);
- (v) regularly monitored, evaluated and improved.

Good Management Practices

19. Among good *management practices* which may significantly influence, and hopefully increase, the quality of institutional PDPs, the following deserve special mention:

- (i) *integrated and clearly differentiated management responsibilities* (namely between the central, regional and more peripheral PA relevant management units, and also among the different sectors, institutions and/or actors involved);
- (ii) a *sound information management system* (keeping readily available all relevant and useful information about the T&D activities carried out (or scheduled), the trainers, the trainees, the providers of services and financial partners, etc);
- (iii) a chart of *quality standards*;
- (iv) *special attention paid to needs assessments*;
- (v) *adequate coordination* with all training providers and funders.

❖ Some Selected Tools

Competency Frameworks

20. *Competency Frameworks* are among the HRM tools which have been used in many EU countries. Special competence profiles are used, in particular, for recruiting, *training* and assessing senior civil servants (SCSs), whose role is critical within the national PAs : about half of the Member States have a

*central competence profile for SCSs*³, whereas several other countries use *decentralized competence profiles*⁴, and others still do not use them at all.

21. In *SCSs' central competence profiles* the list of required capacities is, as expected, related to *leadership and key managerial skills and knowledge* (i.e. the capacities to bring out and set up a shared vision, to steer teams and lead change management, to develop effective professional networks, to ensure staff development and motivation, to display integrity and ethics, to be committed to effective communication and continuous learning and improvement, to achieve good results).

22. Competency profiles are useful not only for helping to define the contents of training programs, but also to facilitate and improve recruitment and assessment practices. They should be built up carefully and wisely used, not as rigid or stereotyped references, but as flexible, adjustable and evolving tools.

How to Assess the Impact of Training

23. In this decade, especially after the Monterrey Consensus (*United Nations International Conference on the Financing for Development, 2002*), there has been much concern with the assessment of the *impact* of training actions and programs. This is, of course, a sound and legitimate concern. However, a lot of confusion was often observed in this respect.

24. It should be understood that training is only a *sub-component* of a usual larger component of most projects, programs and policies, which is itself aimed at *developing the working capacity of the involved workforces* (i.e. the men and women working for these projects, programs and/or policies being implemented). Depending on the situations and contexts, which may be very diverse, this larger "HR capacity improvement" component may also include *other sub-components* that are complementary to training (these may be oriented, for instance, to increase *motivation*, the *organizational level* or the *available resources*, or yet to *redeploy in a more efficient and effective way* the available HR, to improve or replace current *leadership*, etc.).

25. Training programs are most often, and in a very characteristic way, directed to the *development of specific sets or clusters of competences*. Therefore it does not make much sense to try and measure or assess directly the quality of the training sub-component, in a non differentiated manner, through the final results (success or failure) of the projects, programs and /or policies whose results are being appraised. For this reason, *specific sets of Impact Indicators* (adapted to the expected training sub-component added value), focusing on competence and professional conduct improvement, should be used.

³ Such is the case, for instance, in **The UK, The Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia** (*countries with position-based systems*); **Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, Cyprus, Romania** and the **European Commission** itself (*where, on the contrary, career-based systems are used*); and also in **Italy, Bulgaria, Latvia, Slovenia and Hungary** (*countries with hybrid PA systems*).

⁴ This is the case, for instance, in **Denmark, Finland, The Czech Republic** (*countries with position-based systems*); **Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Greece, Lithuania**, (*countries with career-based systems*); and **Poland, Slovakia and Malta** (*countries with hybrid PA systems*).

III. MOTIVATION

26. **Motivation** is another key component of HRM/HRD policies. Motivation tools are currently designed at all levels and/or scales of the HR management units (central, intermediate, proximity).

A. The Challenges

❖ The final goal pursued

27. The main goal of the **Motivational Policies** is to keep across the CS a motivated workforce, wanting to achieve the (individual, team and institutional) targets set up. The levels of motivation of the entire workforce have to be attentively monitored and, as necessary, readjusted.

❖ How to secure and maintain adequate levels of motivation

28. To achieve this goal, CSs' main expectations should be identified. The golden rule in the field of motivation consists of, prior to any measure or decision taken, carefully listening to the civil servants' priority concerns and expectations, which may be very diverse, depending on the contexts. This prior consultation may help to appropriately select, weigh and adjust the motivational measures taken, thereby optimizing their combined effect.

In general, motivation levels may be improved mainly through 4 types of measures, aiming at increasing the CSs' satisfaction. These measures are related to :

- the *working conditions and environment* (e.g. the quality of the physical and social environment at the workplace, more or less flexible schedules, heavy or light workload, etc.);
- the *levels and fairness of remunerations*;
- the *management styles*;
- *job and personal security and long term benefits*.

29. These four main "motivational levers" may be broken down into several identifiable motivational (subordinate) dimensions. Boxes 1 and 2 highlight the main motivational dimensions usually taken into account by HRM specialists.

❖ Key issues and concerns

30. Special attention should be paid to the set of constraints which hamper or limit the scope of measures aiming at improving :

- the *working environment /conditions*;
- the *compensation system*;
- the *styles of management*;
- *job security and the management of the CSs' professional development and progress*.

B. Useful Tools

❖ Basic Tools

31. As in the case of T&D, the three basic tools are .

- an adequate *institutional system*;
- well-designed *annual motivational plans* (AMPs);
- sound *management practices*, with suitable operational instruments.

The basic requirements to be applied to the design and implementation of the motivational institutional system, AMPs and related managerial practices are very similar to those already listed in the corresponding paragraphs of the T&D section. They are developed in the PPT presentation.

BOX 1

24 KEY FACTORS THAT SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCE CIVIL SERVANTS' LEVELS OF MOTIVATION

1.	LIFE QUALITY AND PLEASURE AT THE WORKPLACE		Expert Mark*	Average Group Valuation**	Personal Weighting***
	1.1	Health & Security Conditions	(-1)	3.5/5	2.5/5
	1.2	Quality of the Physical Environment (including professional equipment)	(-1)	3/5	4/5
	1.3	Quality of the Social Environment (quality of the social relations)	(-2)	4/5	3/5
	1.4	Workload, Work Stress, Schedule Flexibility	(-2)	2.5/5	4/5
	1.5	Level of Personal Responsibility & Initiative, and of Adherence to the Organization System of Values (<i>Opportunities for personal feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction through the quality and results of the work carried out</i>)	(-3)	3/5	2.5/5
	1.6	(Internal) Institutional Prestige, Authority Level & Influence	(-3)	1.5/5	1/5
2.	QUALITY OF THE COMPENSATION (FOR THE ADDED VALUE GENERATED)		Expert Mark*	Average Group Valuation**	Personal Weighting***
	2.1	Basic Salary Level	(+3)	5/5	5/5
	2.2	Basic Supplements, Non Monetary Compensations, External Prestige	(+1)	3/5	4/5
	2.3	Supplements related to the Place of Residence & the Family Situation	(0)	2.5/5	3.5/5
	2.4	Supplements related to the Job Position & Responsibilities	(+1)	3.5/5	4/5
	2.5	Supplements related to the Education & Qualifications Level	(+3)	4/5	4/5
	2.6	Incentives Related to Job Performance & the Quality of Professional Results	(+1)	3/5	4.5/5
3.	QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM & PRACTICES		Expert Mark*	Average Group Valuation**	Personal Weighting***
	3.1	Clear, Realistic, Negotiated & Challenging Objectives	(-3)	3.5/5	3/5
	3.2	Managerial Support & Clarifications during Implementation	(0)	3/5	4/5
	3.3	Managerial Adequate Monitoring and Evaluation	(-2)	2.5/5	4/5
	3.4	Managerial Acknowledgement: Equitable Sanctions & Compensations	(-4)	4/5	4/5
	3.5	Participatory Style of Management (<i>Listening Capacity</i>) & Autonomy Level	(-3)	4/5	2/5
	3.6	On-the-Job Learning Opportunities ⁵	(-1)	3.5/5	5/5
4.	STRUCTURAL AND LONG-TERM BENEFITS		Expert Mark*	Average Group Valuation**	Personal Weighting***
	4.1	Job Security	(+3)	5/5	4/5
	4.2	Opportunities for Promotion/Advancement, Training & Career Development	(-1)	4.5/5	4/5
	4.3	Coverage of Health Hazards and Quality of Family Supporting Measures	(-2)	4/5	5/5
	4.4	Quality of Retirement System	(-2)	4/5	4.5/5
	4.5	Quality of the Social Assistance/Helping System	(-3)	3/5	2/5
	4.6	Other Long-Term Benefits	(-3)	1.5/5	1/5

* This is an example of a *standard expert evaluation* of the level or value reached by the employment position regarding the motivational factor or dimension under consideration (similar current ratings are common in other areas). A high mark means a favorable situation. The mark given may be *descriptive* of a single employment position or *comparative* (giving the difference between two employment positions). According to the scale adopted, the score may vary: e.g. between -5 and + 5 for descriptive evaluations, and (therefore) between -10 and +10 for comparative ones.

** This is an example of an *average evaluation* of the importance given to the motivational factor under review by a *group of candidates* for employment (conventional scale used: 0-5). This information may be of much interest for HRM/HRD managers.

*** This is an example of a *personal evaluation* of the importance granted to the motivational factor under review by a *given candidate* (scale: 0-5).

⁵ Opportunities for acquisition of new personal competences: instrumental, linguistic, cultural, related to team work & interactive communication, methodological & strategic, technical & administrative, deontological & juridical, managerial, pedagogical, coaching & counseling skills.

BOX 2

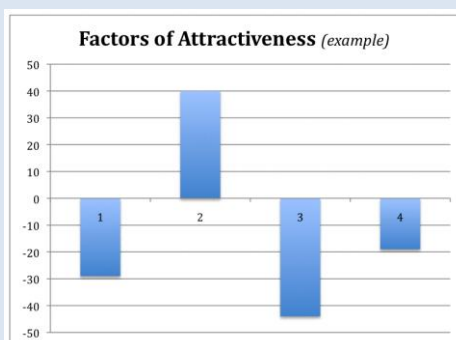
EMPLOYMENT ATTRACTIVENESS DEPENDS ON A COMBINATION OF **OBJECTIVE**, **SUBJECTIVE** AND **CONTEXTUAL** FACTORS

The total (*resulting*) **attractiveness or motivational power** exerted over a given candidate (or employee), at a given moment, by a specific employment position, as assessed, in practice, through this illustrative comprehensive 24-dimension motivational grid, may be estimated by multiplying, for each of the 24 dimensions included, the *standard score* (expert mark) appearing in the first evaluation column by the *personal weighting coefficient* inserted in the last column, and then *summing up* all these intermediate products.

For each dimension under review, the *standard score (expert mark)* is supposed to assess as objectively as possible the true situation (expert “objective” scales may easily be built up for this, as is the case, for instance, when quality is assessed), whereas the *personal weighting coefficient* is very much influenced and modulated by the *personal value system* (what is important for one candidate - e.g. *prestige* (1.6, 2.2) - is not necessarily so for another one) and by the *contextual situation of the labor market* (e.g. an employment crisis tends to give more weight to *job security* (4.1)). Thus, young mothers, for instance, may be more sensitive to *schedule flexibility* (1.4) and *family supporting measures* (4.3), whereas young professionals in general (men and women) may heavily value *on-the-job learning opportunities* (3.6).

Moreover, even when we have possibly calculated⁶ by a “linear combination” formula such as the one here suggested, the “**absolute attractiveness**” resulting from the *interaction* between **objective** and **subjective** evaluations of the 24 selected *motivation factors* highlighted in box 1, we still need to take into account the attractiveness of competing jobs (“competing offer”) operating at the same time on the same candidates. Only thus may we confidently estimate the final “**relative attractiveness**” (of the job under consideration, on a given individual or group of individuals, at a given moment). Now, *relative attractiveness* is, in fact, the **relevant variable** influencing **decisions** and **behavior**.

Two main conclusions may be drawn from this illustrative analysis. First, money - and in particular the *basic salary* (2.1) -, although of course important and very clearly visible, is not, by far, the only **motivational factor**. It is only one among 24 factors highlighted here. Secondly, as sound public employment requires from public and civil servants personal system of values giving special weight to ethics and equity, and genuine commitment to the public service and interest (see, for instance, the motivational dimension 1.5), and provided that the levels of salaries and other advantages allow civil servants a decent living, it is therefore unnecessary for public employment to offer the same levels of salaries as the ones set up in the private sector (where the material benefit is often paramount, and moral standards are less strongly imposed and incorporated). In fact, this difference in monetary compensation may even be an effective filter to discourage those who have not the personal qualities inclining them to serve with loyalty the public interest.



⁶ This type of *practical estimation* is easy to make, with adequate *tools* and *data collecting methods*. The same may be said of the estimation of the final *relative attractiveness*, which is, in fact - it should be underlined - the *relevant variable* influencing **decisions** and **behavior**. In practice, things are even easier than they seem, for *relative attractiveness* may be *directly estimated* by interviews with the appropriate candidates (exactly as this is currently done in other marketing surveys).

❖ **Some Selected Tools**

32. Three types of selected tools, used in a number of EU / OECD countries, are illustrated in the PPT presentation:

- combining the *mutual advantages of the PA position- and career-based systems*;
- improving *working time flexibility*;
- offering attractive *parental leave conditions*.

IV. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

33. **Performance Appraisal** is the last component of HRM/HRD dealt with in this paper (and in the corresponding PPT presentation).

A. The Challenges

❖ **The final goal pursued**

34. The main goal is, in this case, to get a periodic and reliable assessment of :

- the quality of the professional *performance and results* of the *individual CSs*, of the *teams* working in the different units and, finally, of the *institutional workforce* as a whole;
- the quality of their *behavior* and of their *competence profiles*.

❖ **How to secure global competence and adequate professional behavior**

35. To achieve this goal, an *adequate monitoring and evaluation system* has to be set up, and *suitable assessment practices, methods and tools* have to be carefully introduced.

Effective and fair, transparent, well-accepted performance appraisal systems are *not easy to design and/or implement*. In practice, many difficulties have to be overcome.

❖ **Key issues and concerns**

36. Key issues to be kept in mind are those related to the 4 following main needs :

- to *reduce subjectivity* and arbitrary and secure the *possibility of contesting unfair assessments*;
- to ensure the technical and *methodological quality* of the assessment system and practices, their overall robustness and *coherence*, and their wide *acceptation*;
- to currently *integrate the results* of professional assessments into managerial decisions
- to effectively cope with the *additional costs, workload* and *time* required.

B. Useful Tools

❖ Basic Tools

37. As in the case of T&D and Motivation, the three basic tools are:

- an adequate *institutional system*;
- well-designed *professional assessments plans (PAPs)*;
- sound *management practices*, with suitable operational instruments.

The basic requirements to be applied to the design and implementation of the institutional system, PAPs and related managerial practices are similar to those already listed in the corresponding paragraphs of the T&D section. They are further developed in the PPT presentation.

❖ Some Selected Tools

38. Three types of selected tools are illustrated in the PPT presentation:

- *performance ranking: reducing subjectivity*;
- *keeping the system simple and affordable* (with examples of good practices);
- *integrating job descriptions and target agreements: the top-down approach*.

FURTHER READING

Useful References

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