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MODULE THREE

UNIT ONE

Staff Selection

Introduction

Some of the procedures of staff selection are prescribed by the Ministry of Education or by the Public Service Commission. These prescriptions must be studied by those involved in selecting staff. It will then be clear in which areas initiative can - and should - be taken.

Individual study time: 3 hours

Learning outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- understand the processes of staff selection
- understand the roles of the key figures in selecting staff members.

Types of vacancy

A vacancy may be either permanent or temporary in nature.

Activity 1.1

- (1) What type of vacancy occurs most frequently at your school?
- (2) What difference does the type of vacancy make when you are considering an appointment?

15 minutes

Comments

When a permanent appointment is to be made, it is crucial to ensure that the right person with the most appropriate skills is appointed.

For a temporary appointment, this may or may not be critical: it will often depend on the period of time for which the appointment is to be made. While one should try to appoint someone with the appropriate skills, it may be more important to have a committed teacher in the classroom rather than leaving the post unfilled simply because no-one with exactly the right combination of skills can be found.

Assessment of needs

A vacancy on the staff of the school offers an opportunity for a reassessment of

needs. In some cases it will be desirable to find someone who can offer the same combination of skills as the person who has left the staff; but on many occasions it may be better to rationalise or to introduce new skills.

Activity 1.2

A teacher has recently resigned from your school.

- (1) What steps will you take to assess the needs of your school in replacing that particular teacher?
- (2) What factors will influence your assessment of those needs - subject choice, gender, extramural abilities? List as many as you can.

15 minutes

Comments

As an example, mathematics may have been fragmented among several members of staff because it was a subject in which no-one was qualified and which no-one really wanted to teach. Irrespective of what subjects were taught by the teacher who left the school, this may be an opportunity to secure the services of a mathematics specialist.

In assessing needs, the school head should consult with the rest of the school management, with the school board (committee), and possibly with other members of staff.

Advertising the position

Different ministries follow different procedures for advertising vacant posts.

Activity 1.3

You have the task of placing an advert for a science teacher for your school. What information do you think should be made available to ensure that the correct applicant applies for the post?

15 minutes

Comments

Some ministries have circulars issued at regular intervals, in which all vacant posts are advertised. Other ministries rely on the public media for advertising vacant posts. Sometimes a combination of the two approaches is used. In some situations, particularly where there is a critical need, a school may place an advertisement at its own expense, while for short-term temporary appointments it may not be necessary to advertise at all.

Whether the advertisement is placed by the school or whether information for an advertisement is submitted to an education office, care should be taken that the information submitted is clear, correct, and complete, and that it is submitted as early as possible.

The school should keep a copy of the information submitted.

Some types of appointment can be vacated on twenty-four hours' notice, while for others a month's notice is required. But a month does not normally allow sufficient time for the advertising and filling of the vacancy. The school head should develop an atmosphere among the staff which will encourage them to give notice of their intention to leave at as early a date as possible, so that the post can be filled with minimum disruption to the activities of the school.

Selection

Selection should never simply be on the basis of documents submitted, although these will play an important role. Documents should be carefully studied to determine:

- whether the applicant appears to meet the advertised requirements
- the applicant's previous employment record
- the care which the applicant has taken in filling out the application.

The necessary follow-up should then be undertaken. Watch out for possible forgeries.

Activity 1.4

Design an application form for a teaching post which will provide all the information you require for a preliminary sifting.

30 minutes

Comments

Applicants who do not meet the advertised requirements cannot be considered for permanent appointment, while in short-term temporary posts exceptions can be made. If copies of certificates are enclosed, it may be necessary to verify their authenticity, even if they are certified as true copies.

The previous employment record will indicate whether the applicant's experience matches his or her qualification. It will also reveal whether the applicant has progressed from one position of responsibility to another, or, on the other hand, whether he or she is someone who apparently cannot stay in any job for long. If at all possible, the applicant's supervisor in the most recent post should be consulted about his or her abilities. A written record should be kept of these inquiries.

The appearance of the application is important. A candidate who has taken little care over completing the form and attaching necessary documentation, is not likely to take much care in lesson preparation or in following-up pupils' difficulties.

During this sifting exercise, those candidates who are clearly unsuitable will be eliminated and should be advised accordingly. If many apparently suitable candidates remain, further sifting can be done by making contact with their former supervisors. Those who remain on a short list of suitable candidates should be interviewed for the position.

Interviewing

Applicants who have been short-listed should be advised in good time of their interview. If at all possible it should be arranged for a time which is not going to

interfere with their present job. Approximately 40 minutes should be allowed for the interview, after which the members of the panel should have about 20 minutes to discuss their impressions of the applicant before the next interview starts.

Activity 1.5

Design a standard form of questions to ask during the interview of a prospective teacher.

20 minutes

Comments

Interviewing should be undertaken by a panel of two or three. Too large a panel might intimidate the candidate, while leaving the interviewing to a single person places an extremely heavy responsibility on that person. Remember, two heads are better than one.

If the interviewing is being done at the school the panel might consist of the school head, the deputy (or a head of department in the subject field for which an appointment is to be made) and a representative of the parent committee. The members of the panel should decide among themselves who is going to head the panel for a particular interview. This person will take the lead in asking questions, but should also give the other members of the panel an opportunity to ask questions.

All members of the panel should be thoroughly familiar with the documents submitted by the applicant and with the results of any telephone or other inquiries which have been made.

The assumption when interviewing starts is that all those to be interviewed are equally suitable for the position. If this were not the case, the less suitable ones would have been eliminated without an interview. There are two purposes of the interview:

- 1 To confirm the suitability of the candidates.
- 2 To distinguish clearly which candidate is best, which one second best, and so on.

When the applicant is shown in for the interview, he or she should be introduced to the members of the panel. The head of the panel should engage the interviewee briefly in casual conversation to establish a relaxed atmosphere.

Questions should focus on the job which the applicant will be expected to perform, and may take the form of posing problems and asking the applicant how he or she would deal with them, or of asking how routine tasks would be tackled. For example:

1 How would you deal with a pupil who fails to bring written homework to school, and says it has been done, but left at home? How would you deal with the same pupil the second time this happens?

2 How would you deal with a group of a dozen pupils who have performed very poorly in a test?

3 What sort of preparation would you do before conducting a lesson at grade 10 level on an English poem?

4 How do you integrate theory and laboratory work in the grade 12 curriculum?

5 How would you respond if your head of department were to give you what you considered to be an unfair assignment?

At the end of the interview the applicant should be given the opportunity to ask questions, then thanked for coming, and advised that the result of the interview will be communicated as soon as possible.

During the interview and in the course of the discussion which follows it, brief notes should be made of the applicant's responses to questions. (It might be necessary at a later stage to remind the successful candidate of a response made during the interview!)

Appointment

After the interviews, the process of appointing the best candidate should be kept as brief as possible. The best candidate should be contacted soon after the interview, told that he or she is being nominated for the position, and asked whether he/she is likely to accept. (It may be that the applicant has been short-listed for two or three posts, and would actually prefer one of the others.)

Activity 1.6

Draft a letter advising an applicant that he or she has been unsuccessful.

10 minutes

Finalising the appointment

In government service the chief executive officer of the Ministry of Education normally has final responsibility for the selection and appointment of teaching staff. This authority is delegated to an appropriate official, who will probably not be the same for all levels of posts. For example, authority to fill a short-term temporary post might rest with the school head, while an inspector or chief inspector might be responsible for the permanent appointment of teachers, and the head of a regional office for the appointment of a school head.

If the power to finalise the appointment does not rest with a member of the interviewing committee, the necessary documentation and recommendation should be forwarded to the responsible official as speedily as possible, and if there seems to be undue delay in acting on the recommendation the head of the interviewing committee should follow up, as there is always the danger of a good candidate being lost to another post.

The successful applicant should receive oral confirmation of the appointment as soon as possible, followed up by a formal letter of appointment (setting out any conditions

attaching to the appointment) and a clear job description. The successful applicant should sign the forms for the acceptance of the post.

Summary

The correct decisions made at this stage of the appointment of members to the staff will to a large extent determine the atmosphere and general tone of a school. Judicious planning at an early stage of the process, for example, the careful compiling of the information for the advertisement of the post, can save the school head considerable time and possible headaches in the future.

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