

Morgan Ralph
October 25, 2024
PAPA 6324 Public Human Resources
Midterm

The following is my response to the question:

Describe three paradoxes in public sector recruitment, and detail specific recruitment strategies that help managers to grapple or deal with these paradoxes. In your essay, provide insight into how recruitment and demographics are linked and how the strategies you detailed incorporate the realities of a diverse workforce.

The literature I used to answer this question was *Human Resources Management in Public Services: Paradoxes, Processes, and Problems*. This work highlights my understanding of professional norms and the importance of diversity in the workforce.

Human Resources Paradoxes

When someone thinks of human resources, their mind often goes to recruitment, hiring, and establishing the guidelines of an organization. Overall, the function of human resources is considered to be positive and essential within public organizations. However, no matter what field one is in, paradoxes will exist. This is especially true for the public sector, public administration, and human resources. For this essay's purpose, the definition of paradox is considered to be "an argument that apparently derives self-contradictory conclusions by valid deduction from acceptable premises," (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The paradoxes existing in human resources are difficult hiring processes for recruitment, few desirable positions but lots of openings in an organization, and a general confusion regarding hiring or 'mixed messages' (Berman, et.al., 2016). These paradoxes convolute the mission of human resources and can bog down internal functions of the public sector.

The first paradox is a difficult hiring process within the public sector. Berman describes this as Personnel Procurement Strategies (2016). Becoming a civil servant should not be as difficult as it is today. According to Berman, recruitment strategies have "historically been

passive; until the 1950s, it was not legal for the federal government to advertise open employment positions,” (2016). This legacy has left complicated repercussions in the 21st century as potential applicants are discouraged by a perceived secretive process. One strategy to mitigate the confusion and negative history of public sector hiring is to increase ways that open positions are advertised. Essentially, it is the exact opposite strategy of the early 20th century. Increasing where open positions are advertised could be done by posting the position on multiple forms of media outlets, including social media accounts. Another way strategy would be to provide clear instructions on public sector websites for job applications, hiring process, and what to expect as a candidate moves through the selection rounds.

The second paradox of human resources in the public sector is the abundance of open positions but very few “desirable positions,” (Berman, 2016). Berman writes this is paradox highlights the lack of fast-track positions, also known as “positions that offer rapid career opportunities for training, management, exposure to a variety of techniques, and ultimately, promotion,” (2016). Changes in the structure of the public sector have reduced these positions, leaving entry-level positions open that may not compensate well and highly specialized upper-level positions that are difficult to acquire. Middle management positions have been eliminated (Berman, 2016). To mitigate this, this public sector organizations need to be restructured. Promotional programs need to be reinstated to ensure employees can move through an organization vertically.

Another paradox in human resources is the persistent confusion over public sector patronage or merit in hiring practices. Historically, patronage, or hand-picking someone for a role, was the standard (Portillo, 2023). After the Pendleton Act of 1883, the merit system was introduced, which focused on picking the most qualified candidate (Portillo, 2023). New or

potential hires can face confusion on the nature of the position because of the public sector's complicated hiring past. Will someone get the job because of who they know or their skills? In relation to whether hiring is merit or patronage, Berman writes, "paradoxically, depending on the position, both perspectives can be true" (2016). One has to understand that connections are as important to having the right qualifications for the job.

Affirmative action is the link between recruitment and diversity. Affirmative action is a hiring practice that focuses on "women and members of certain minority groups for the first time," by using "goals and timetables," (Portillo, 2023). By using affirmative action in the public sector, human resources managers are providing an even-playing field for every applicant and an equitable system. This ensures that the best candidate, regardless of their identity or background, is picked for the job or promotion within the organization. Another important link between recruitment and diversity is the Title VII Act which "protects all groups, including majority groups, from discrimination" (Berman, 2016). Title VII also helps assure diversity and equitable practices in human resources management. These programs assist in the strategies outlined above to mitigate human resources paradoxes by providing equal opportunities in hiring processes.

Citations

Berman, E., Bowman, J., West, J. and Van Wart, M. (2016) *Human Resource Management in Public Service: Paradoxes, Processes, and Problems*. 7th Edition, Sage Publications, Inc., London. Accessed through Kindle.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Paradox. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved October 24, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradox>

Portillo, S. K. (2022). *The Myth of Bureaucratic Neutrality: An Examination of Merit and Representation* (1st ed., Vol. 1). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003322795>