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THE MAIN REQUISITES FOR A  
SOUND PERSONNEL SYSTEM 1/

1/ This paper has been contributed by Mr. G. Mwanza, Lecturer at the Institute of Public Administration, Tanzania. The paper does not necessarily express the views of the United Nations.

THE MAIN REQUISITES FOR A SOUND PERSONNEL SYSTEM <sup>1/</sup>

It is difficult to enumerate all the requisites for a sound personnel system of a government. Requisites are normally influenced by the political system of a country and thus may vary from one country to another. It is, however, possible to draw up generally accepted requisites which are considered essential for a sound personnel system in any given form of government. The detailed analysis of these requisites, it is accepted, will differ from country to country but from whatever angle they are viewed, they reflect the same spectrum in all cases. In this short paper I have confined myself to the main requisites for a sound personnel system in local government. As I have said there are many prerequisites and requisites for a sound personnel system, but mention has only been made of those that I consider as the main requisites. It should also be mentioned here that there are arguments already in existence in various quarters as to what is called "a sound personnel system". It is hoped that this argument may be discussed by the participants during this seminar and I, therefore, do not intend to deal with it here.

The topic under discussion has been divided into four sub-heads. These sub-heads could be further sub-divided but it is not intended to do so in this paper. The paper is supposed to bring to light some very important points which may be used in the discussion.

<sup>1/</sup> This paper has been contributed by Mr. A.G. Mwanza, Lecturer at the Institute of Public Administration, University College, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. The paper does not necessarily express the views of the United Nations.

1. Attitude of mind. Career choice is governed by a person's attitude of mind on the particular type of work. There are some persons who decide to take a certain job or profession just because their family line have been taking the same for years immemorial; there are some who take a job because they have been enticed or even forced to take the same; there are others who take a job because they have had disappointments in another while others take a job because there are no other jobs of their liking. Irrespective of the attitude of mind governing the primary choice of a career, the effect of the attitude of mind during the performance of career is important and has a great influence in the working of a personnel system of an organization. If the primary attitude of mind is strong and prolonged while one is already doing the work it may bring positive or negative influence in any desired sound personnel system.

In Tanzania, for example, prior to the introduction of the present local government set-up, it was generally observed in the rural areas that working in the then Native Authorities was "infra dig" and consequently those who were employed by these native authorities were the "rejects" of other civic organizations. The attitude of mind of the great majority of these employees was tuned to the thinking that their work was inferior when compared to other employees, although in fact in some cases these native authority employees received better remuneration than, say, a civil servant. (Albeit a Boma messenger i.e. central government employee, was considered superior to a native authority head tax collector!). Indeed there are many examples which could be quoted, but it should suffice to say that the attitude of mind is influenced by (a) the type and status of the employing authority, (b) the geographical situation of the authority, (c) the organizational set up of the authority, and (d) the leadership (political or otherwise) of the authority.

It is claimed that to have a sound personnel system a negative attitude of mind has to be changed. This change does not only apply to the employees but also to the authorities that may hire or fire these employees. (The demarcating line between what is a negative and what is

a positive attitude has not been quite distinct). I would venture to suggest that to change a negative attitude of mind in an employing authority and/or an employee, is a serious task to be undertaken by the leaders of the day. In local government this could be done by various methods. The major suggested method would be for the leaders to be quite clear of the type and system of local government suitable to their particular country. Although it is accepted that this may not be possible due to changes of political authority, this should not obstruct the continuity of the main features of the local government set-up. The chosen system of local government should be uniform throughout the country concerned; and any subsequent changes should be uniform in the local government units of the country.

The employee of a local government should change his attitude towards his social standing by accepting and regarding that the work he is doing is as important as the work another person is performing in a different organization. It is my contention that if the attitude of considering local government service as an inferior service continues, then it will be difficult to achieve a sound personnel system.

## 2. Career Service and Condition of Service

A sound personnel system should have a sound career service and clear and attractive conditions of service. By career service it is meant that the service should not be a 'sealed' service but that it should be an 'open' service. In a 'sealed' service the career of an employee is limited to the particular grade and scale that person was employed. That is to say, for example, a clerk or an assistant engineer will die a clerk or an assistant engineer however hard he tries to advance himself in his work. In an 'open' service, room is given for advancement in rank and remuneration. Promotion prospects should, therefore, be clearly laid down and such promotions should be awarded to employees without favour or nepotism but through merit and experience. Promotion by competitive examination is being used in some countries to counteract nepotism, favouritism and corruption. In other countries upgrading courses are being used to facilitate unbiased promotions.

In any of the three types of local government personnel system viz. "separate", "unified" and "integrated" it is essential to have attractive conditions of service laid down. Salary scales should be made comparable with those of other civic and private organizations. Housing, allowances, leave, codes of discipline etc. should be clearly laid down for the employees to avoid favouritism and victimization.

It would be mere mockery if the career service and conditions of service were laid down and they were not followed and adhered to by the authorities. It is, therefore, essential that machinery should be established through which not only the employees can channel their grievances, requests, demands etc. but also through which the authorities would communicate with the employees. This machinery should be an impartial body which should consider the authority's and employee's case without favour.

In Tanzania, the local government is of the unified service type. As the participants might have noticed, clear conditions of service for the local government employees have been laid down. Machinery in the form of a Local Government Service Commission has been established and is doing its work admirably.

There are, however, limits in a career service, particularly with regard to promotions. Most local authorities have limited funds not only to pay their employees' salaries but also to pay for services which central governments are delegating to them. If the career service which has good promotional prospects has to be encouraged, the central authorities, inevitably, will have to be called upon to assist the local authorities.

### 3. Loyalty and Relationship

Loyalty to the employers is an essential element which any employee should possess. In local government, an employee should be loyal to the authority under which he is working. The authority in turn should have confidence in its employees serving under it. In other words loyalty has a greater meaning when an employer shows confidence in the employee. Once no confidence is shown, loyalty tends to fade away, thus disrupting the establishment of a sound personnel system.

It has been argued, much more so in a unified type of local authority personnel system and to some extent in an integrated type of local authority personnel system, that the loyalty of the employee is either completely not with the authority he is serving, or divided between the controlling body which appointed the employee and the local authority concerned. This argument may appear without substance, but its effects, I contend, may be disastrous. A method by which employees of local authorities should be made to devote their loyalty to the authority they are serving has to be found.

This leads us to the question of relationship between the local authority and the central government. Whenever there is suspicion and distrust between the central government and the local authorities, the loyalty and subordination of the local authorities is destroyed, and consequently the chances for a sound personnel system for local government to exist are endangered. Squabblings, no confidence resolutions etc., are often heard! Although it is true that a local authority is subordinate to the central government and that it derives its powers from the national government, it does not mean that the central government should merely clamp down the local authority. Conversely the local authority should not take the attitude that since it is an authority it should override the central government. What is required of the local authority is that it should realize that it is an instrument of the central government to perform the functions which it has been deliberately given and to work within the framework and limitations given to it. At the same time the central government has to guide and secure the goodwill of the local authority, to which it has decentralized some of its functions, for the good of the whole country as such. It cannot but appear an abuse of privilege if a local authority attempts to take unwarranted powers from a central government.

Many times, the relationship between a local authority and its employees has been the cause of this bad relationship between the local authority and the central government. It is clear that because

either the employees, (who are in most cases more conversant with the central government policy) have ill-advised or adversely advised the local authorities, (for the sake of winning popular support), or the local authority has refused to accept the good advice given by the local authority employees, that a conflict arises. It is self-evident then, that a local authority should have a good and trusting relationship with its employees.

On the other hand the employees themselves may come under an interacting strain of bad relationships between the senior administrative (professional officers) and their subordinates, or amongst the officers (senior or subordinates) themselves. This relationship is important in so far as it is a vital part of the requisite described at subhead 2, and it should be borne in mind by all officers in any established institution.

#### 4. Training

I am confident that Mr. S.O. Asabia, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Establishment and Training - Western Nigeria, spoke rightly when he was presenting his paper to the Seminar on Personnel Administration in Addis Ababa (November 1965) and when he said, inter alia:

"Training for the public service is a vast subject on its own. A great deal can be said about methods of training and the subject matter of training; I make a brief reference to it in this paper in view of its relevance to the subject of management of persons. Training for professional positions in government departments is perhaps, by comparison, a relatively straightforward matter. In broad terms, the problems of choice and method of training do not give rise to so much searching inquiry as the training requirements for the administrative and executive classes. It is generally recognized for instance that while one might successfully provide the young administrator with a respectable educational background and other facilities which he requires for his job, it is essentially impossible to make an administrator out of him through a process of formal instructions. The important task of acquiring the ability and habit of

sound judgement, vision and a thorough appreciation of the background against which recommendations and decisions must be made fall outside the scope of formal instructions. In general, a sound university education appears indispensable and it is probably futile to argue the relative merits of training in the humanities, etc., over the social sciences. Not so very long ago, the accepted qualification for entry into the administrative class in colonial territories in West Africa was a good degree in Classics taken at a reputable university. I am myself not altogether certain as to the relevance of the knowledge of Classics to the problems of African countries today; I do not, however, wish to be understood as saying that training in Classics is in all circumstances unsuitable; my contention is that a great deal more than this is required for successful administrators in African countries today. Training in the humanities, the social sciences, law, etc. will not necessarily provide the answer and although training in one or other of these disciplines may be more directly relevant, it will by no means serve as a satisfactory substitute for the right attitude of mind and the strength of character which are, without doubt, essential prerequisites."

Training therefore is a must and should be planned in such a way as to allow room for the required essential staff to continue the services of a local authority. It would be unwise to take all the good staff for training at the expense of temporarily closing down the required services of an authority. Experience has shown that even when temporary expatriate staff have been hired merely to perform the work of local authority staff undergoing training, work has been improved. It is now thought advisable to phase training, not for the sake of training alone, but for the sake of making a good future work product.

##### 5. Conclusion.

As said earlier, one cannot enumerate all the various requisites for a sound personnel system, but I hope the four points raised can be a working ground for discussion.



6. Suggested questions for discussion

- (i) What is sound personnel system?
- (ii) Should the conditions of service be clearly laid down for employees of a local authority?
- (iii) Should there be inducements to attract persons to jobs with the local authorities? If so, what inducements.
- (iv) How can loyalty to an employing authority be best achieved.
- (v) What should central government do to eliminate bad relationships between the local authority and its staff.
- (vi) What should be the attitude of local authority senior staff to their junior staff?