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INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF MANAGEMENT^{1/}

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Individual Acts of Management

1. In the Statement on Personnel Management and Personnel Policies which the Institute of Personnel Management issued in 1963 the following definition and indication of the aims of personnel management was given:

"Personnel management is a responsibility of all those who manage people as well as being a description of the work of those who are employed as specialists. It is that part of management which is concerned with people at work and with their relationships within an enterprise. It applies not only to industry and commerce but to all fields of employment.

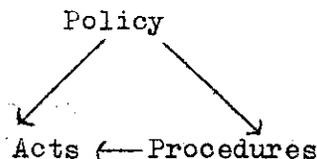
Personnel management aims to achieve both efficiency and justice, neither of which can be pursued successfully without the other. It seeks to bring together and develop into an effective organization the men and women who make up an enterprise, enabling each to make his own best contribution to its success both as an individual and as a member of a working group. It seeks to provide fair terms and conditions of employment and satisfying work for those employed."

2. A British firm of management consultants has defined the objective of the personnel function as follows:

"To provide both the right kinds and numbers of staff at the right time and suitably motivated to enable the organization to meet both its short- and long-term objectives at an economic cost."

3. This topic is taken to concern those situations in which the manager or the specialist personnel manager has to deal with the individual employee rather than with employees in the group.

4. These acts must, however, reflect a personnel policy and the procedures which have been designed to give it effect. They will also contribute to policy and in turn lead to procedures. Thus:



5. The principal occasions when management deals with the individual are:

(a) At initial selection

This is a skilled activity needing careful preparation. It extends from the design of the application form, through the analysis of job requirements, preparation of advertisements to the conduct of the interview itself.

(b) In selection for promotion

This may be either selection for specific posts or the periodic review of talent. In the former there may be difficulties of choice between immediately available experience and potential for development, with the possibility of divergence of view between departmental or line management and the personnel manager. In either case there needs to be a well-understood promotion procedure; and the conduct of the promotion interview is of cardinal importance.

(c) In periodic staff assessment

This occurs in part at the promotion board. But it will also arise from a system of staff reports or performance appraisal. Whatever method of performance appraisal is used it must be seen as an essential part of the responsibility of the departmental or line manager for the management of his own staff.

(d) In training

This extends from induction for new employees, through skill training, refresher training and training directed at immediate performance improvement to schemes of professional training and planned experience as part of career development. In all cases it needs to be purposeful. And it should be an act of management to which personnel management contributes, not an activity special to personnel managers.

(e) At salary reviews

In the public service with incremental scales there may be limited scope for flexibility of reward. But within these limits it is desirable that salary progression should be related to performance. The annual salary review should be a significant act of management, not a formality to be gone through automatically.

(f) In dealing with grievances

The aggrieved employee is likely to be a less effective employee. Management needs to be alert and accessible to complaints about grievances. The immediate responsibility for dealing with grievances lies with line or departmental management; and it is important that this is not usurped by the personnel management function. But it may influence the way in which grievances are handled both informally (by advice and guidance in individual cases) and formally (by the design of policies and procedures - including joint consultation arrangements).

(g) In disciplinary situations

Again, line or departmental management has the first responsibility for the discipline of its own staff. But personnel management may be - and should always be ready to be - called in to advise on individual disciplinary cases; and it has a particular responsibility to determine procedures which will enable disciplinary cases to be dealt with justly and effectively. These will include provisions for representation and appeal.

(h) When appointments terminate

Termination can come about by an act of management or of the employee. In the former case it may be a direct sequel to disciplinary action and be covered by guidance in any disciplinary code or procedure. Or it may come about by redundancy or as a voluntary act of the employee. The conduct of the termination interview is important. With voluntary leavers its value as a source of information for manpower planning purposes should not be overlooked.

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