

Public Service Commission Limited Personnel Audit

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Introduction

From November to December 2009 the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) undertook a Technical Assistance Project to inform a proposal for a loan program to assist the RMI respond to current fiscal and economic challenges. This technical assistance involved analysis of State Owned Enterprises (SOE's), finance and budget analysis, public service analysis and public consultations.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) was assisted to explore opportunities for rationalizing public sector expenditure and improving performance with the input of a Human Resource and Structural Reform Adviser (SRHRA). The PSC requested that the part of the Adviser's input go towards working with the deputy Commissioner to conduct a limited personnel audit of the three largest Ministries: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of Health. The PSC identified three areas of interest:

1. To identify examples of duplication in roles, responsibilities and activities between positions;
2. To examine the accuracy of job descriptions in describing the key responsibilities and tasks of positions, and;
3. To identify any examples of misalignment between categorizing positions and remuneration received by position holders.

Audit Process

The personnel audit was limited because of the time constraints of the SRHRA. The SRHRA had four weeks to complete his original terms of reference and assist in the personnel audit. The audit was limited to examining approximately sixteen staff position in each of the three Ministries over a two week period. It was decided to use three work groups to collect the audit information. Two representatives were nominated from each of the Ministries of Health, Education and Finance. Together with three Personal Officers of the PSC each work group consisted of three people. Working group members are attached as appendix one.

The working groups were briefed on their responsibilities at a meeting on the 20th November and provided with templates to collect the required data. The data collection forms are attached as appendix two. The process for collecting the data was discussed to ensure consistency and accuracy. The importance of collecting the data in a confidential and non threatening manner was highlighted. The working groups were also to ensure all participants in the audit were

voluntary and told the purpose of the audit and how the information was to be used. The need for confidentiality was reinforced at this and subsequent meetings. The working groups developed action plans and identifying positions to be audited. Two more meetings of the working groups with the SRHRA and Deputy Commissioner were held to monitor progress during the two week data collection period. The PSC personnel officers participating in the working groups also met regularly with the SRHRA and Deputy Commissioner during this time.

The Chairman of the PSC advised the three Ministers and Secretaries by memorandum of the audit and requested their Departments cooperation.

The PSC Personnel Officers collated the information for the working groups and the SRHRA summarized the results.

Outcomes

In discussing outcomes the small sample size audited has to be considered. While the quantitative results can not be statistically relevant their main contribution, when combined with the results of discussion, is to identify possible problem areas for further investigation and action. Similarly the reporting of the working group members was partially subjective, for example assessing whether duplication between positions was justified or not.

Audit Area One: Duplication of roles and responsibilities

Within this audit area position job descriptions of a sample were examined to ascertain any duplication. Position holders were then interviewed as to their key responsibilities and activities. Where duplication was identified the working group made an assessment as to if the duplication was 'justified' or 'unjustified'. Justified was defined as appropriate duplication e.g. a number of positions having the same responsibilities or doing the same activities because the volume of work demanded more than one person. Unjustified was where no reason could be found to explain why some positions duplicated work. E.G. Two positions from different categories with different remuneration doing the same work.

All three Ministries had identified cases of duplication with 30% of the cases being assessed as unjustified duplication. MPW had more than half the sample (9 out 16) with unjustified duplication. This together with inaccurate or no job descriptions identified in audit area two suggests unclear roles and responsibilities. This would make it difficult for managers to implement plans, monitor progress and achieve outcomes on a daily basis. It is also difficult to manage the performance of work teams and individuals if staff are unclear about what is expected of them. An outcome of unclear roles and responsibilities is that people tend to do those parts of the job they like and leave those parts they don't. Gaps in the service delivery process can result in poor public service. Table 1 shows the results for audit area one;

Table 1: Duplication of Positions

Ministry	Number of Positions Reviewed	Number of cases where duplication of roles could be justified.	Number of cases where duplication of roles is not justified.	Number of reviewed cases with no duplication.
MOE	18	3	4	11
MPW	16	4	9	3
MOH	16	3	2	11
Total	50	10	15	25

Audit Area Two: Job description accuracy

This audit area clearly suggested that job descriptions in the public service were in need of review and updating. 90% of the sample showed some degree of inaccuracy and more than half the positions rated as having mostly inaccurate or no job description. This has implications for a range of workforce planning issues such as recruitment, transfers, promotion and skill development. Lack of accurate job descriptions is both a symptom and a cause of role duplication and can contribute to lack of accountability and poor performance. Table 2 identifies the job description ratings across a five point scale.

Table 2: Accuracy of Job Descriptions

Ministry	Number of Positions Reviewed	Rating 5 Accurate.	Rating 4 Mostly Accurate.	Rating 3 Some Accuracy.	Rating 2 Mostly Inaccurate.	Rating 1 Inaccurate or none.
MOE	18	2	0	4	5	7
MPW	16	0	0	0	16	0
MOH	16	3	0	7	3	3
Total	50	5	0	11	24	10

Audit Area Three: Position category and remuneration alignment

The sample results of this area identified a small number of positions in the sample as not being aligned and therefore being either under or overpaid. While this is a small number (4?) it is still a serious concern. From this limited audit it appears that the classification of position can sometimes change from the original classification when the position was first created to a higher classification when a person is appointed resulting in a higher remuneration than what was intended or for which the position holder may be qualified for. Table 3 shows the results for this audit area.

Table 3: Alignment of Job Category and Remuneration

Ministry	Number of Positions Reviewed	Number of Position Aligned	Number of Position not Aligned	Amount Overpaid	Amount Underpaid
MOE	18	15	3	\$7975	\$2000
MPW	16	15	1	\$4945	0
MOH	16	11	5	0	3000
Total	50	41	9	12920	5000+

Recommendations

Outcomes from this limited personnel audit suggest it would be of benefit for the Public Service Commission to conduct a similar but more detailed audit across all Ministries. The results could then be used to prepare a job evaluation exercise that would aim to bring equity and consistency of responsibility levels and remuneration to the public sector. This would be an important step towards workforce planning and rationalization of the public service to reduce expenditure and achieve sustained organizational performance through the development of a capable workforce.

Appendix One: Work Group Members

Mr. Jemi Nasion	MOF
Mr. Clarence Samuel	MOF
Mr. Richard Bruce	MOE
Mr. Peter Anjain	MOE
Mr. Sorry Riklon	MOH
Mrs. Salome Lanwi	MOH
Mr. Simon Kattil	PSC
Mrs. Anna Ruth Reither	PSC
Mrs. Takwoj Lanwi	PSC

Appendix Two: Data collection forms

PSC Personnel Audit Worksheet 1

Ministry:

Division

Recorders Name

Duplication: *Identifying similar job descriptions that do similar tasks or have the similar responsibilities.*

Position A: Name and classification	Position B: Name and classification	Areas of duplication or similarity

PSC Personnel Audit Worksheet 2

Ministry:

Division

Job Title

Job Descriptions: Check that the job description has the following accurate information: Tick for 'yes' (√) or Cross (X) FOR 'no'.

Does this job description have the following?

Checked by:

ELEMENT	YES	NO
Job title		
Classification level		
Division		
Who position holder reports to		
Overview or purpose		
Key areas of responsibilities		
Key tasks		
Standards of work experience required		
Pre-requisite qualifications		
Pre-requisite experience		
Pre-requisite skills and abilities		
PSC approval		
Comments on job description content and accuracy		

Rate each job description using the following scale: 5 = Accurate; 4 = Mostly accurate; 3 = Sometimes accurate; 2 = Mostly inaccurate; 1 = Inaccurate

