

Jobs of Convenience

The competition for jobs in a scarce job market, has led to many qualified persons resorting to accepting jobs for which they are over qualified. This has made life difficult for some, who would argue that their worth has been undervalued. At the point of recruitment, the intention is to attract and select the best available talent and expertise for the job. This requires that there is fairness and transparency in the recruitment and selection process. It is quite possible that the process may be compromised where an individual is hand-picked or cherry picked for the job. This mode of selection basically means that someone with influence has determined that an individual is best suited for the job.

This approach is not ideal and although frowned upon, is claimed to be an ongoing practice. The real difficulty with this approach, lies in being unable to prove that an individual was hand-picked for a job, although to some it may appear to be quite obvious. When this occurs, it makes an absolute mockery of the recruitment process, as transparency is basically thrown out of the window. In many cases, there is little that those charged with undertaking the recruitment and selection process can do to ensure that fairness and transparency take place. As a matter of fact, in some instances, the interview process is considered a mere formality. To make matters worse, there are times when the interview process is even by-passed.

With the lack of transparency and accountability in the process, red flags are likely to be raised. In the absence of a transparency process, questions are also likely to be raised over the candidate's suitability, honesty and credibility. In order to ensure that these shortcomings are eliminated from the recruitment and selection exercise, it would be preferred that the process is transparent, so as to avoid any form of bias in the selection of the right candidate. Moreover, by engaging in a transparent process, it will help to eliminate those candidates who lack the knowledge, attitude, aptitude, ability, and skills which the job demands.

It can be argued that those who benefit from a flawed process of recruitment and selection are generally beneficiaries of favouritism, nepotism and patronage. Favouritism is where an individual is awarded preferential treatment over others. A classic example of this is evident in the case of a job promotion or the filling of a position. This occurs when an employee is treated favourably and supersedes other

employees based on matters unrelated to performance. This is considered to be a bad management practice and one which should be discouraged, as it has the potential to destroy employee morale, create resentment and impact on workers' productivity.

Favouritism is basically about promoting and preserving self-interest. Those who practice favouritism in recruitment, selection and appointment of workers, stand to be accused of using this method as a tool to manipulate and control. Invariably, it would appear that the intention is to gain the loyalty of individual workers and to exercise the power of control over people. This is unethical behaviour which ought to be condemned. Those who are highly favoured tend to share the view that they can do no wrong, are untouchable and are aware that the one who is ultimately in charge, has their back. This is the start of a vicious cycle, as the head of the organization or manager has a similar expectation of those favoured employees to look after and protect their interest. This is an ingredient for the recipe of corruption.

This brings us to the issue of political patronage. There is no secret that this is commonplace and has been from time in memorial. Governments and politicians are known to engage in the practice of the Spoils or Patronage System. This system is practiced where government jobs are given to political party supporters, family members and friends after an election victory. Jobs are the rewards provided to those who worked hard on the campaign trail, and is an added incentive to keep them working on the behalf of the party. This practice has generally been referred to as cronyism.

The downside of the Spoils System is that it allows some who have no level of experience, skills, knowledge of governance and administration, to assume prominent positions within Government Departments and Agencies. It also enables persons to enjoy employment at lower levels over persons who are far more eligible. It is at the lower levels that nepotism seems to be rife, as those with power or influence, favour family members and friends by giving them jobs.