A STUDY OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRACTICES IN A LARGE GOVERNMENT MINISTRY

———◆———

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Arts in Psychology
at Massey University.

LEANNE BROWN

———◆———

1999

ABSTRACT

———◆———

This thesis examined recruitment and selection practices within a large government ministry in New Zealand. Information was gathered on all vacancies and the associated recruitment and selection practices that occurred during the calendar year of 1996. A variety of data collection methods were used to build a detailed picture of the recruitment and selection process from the perspectives of both recruiters and successful applicants. The data collection methods included a questionnaire survey of all recruiters, in-depth interviews with a sub-set of the recruiters; a questionnaire survey of all successful applicants, in-depth interviews with a sub-set of the successful applicants; and content analyses of exit interview notes, vacancy schedules and associated recruitment and selection documentation.

The results show that most of the people involved in the recruitment and selection process in the Ministry have been employed by the Ministry (or one of its predecessors) for at least five years and the majority have not had training in recruitment, selection or interviewing skills.

In general, the results indicate that, although there is some variance between different divisions, there is an emphasis on traditional methods of recruitment and selection throughout the Ministry.

The most popular methods for recruiting staff are the traditional ones utilising newspaper advertisements, curriculum vitae and one-off panel interviews. Interviews and referee checks range in terms of the degree of structure within them, with some divisions using very unstructured interviews and others using more formal interview strategies.

Recruiters perceive themselves to be reasonably successful in making selection decisions. Whilst they generally see their current selection practices as effective, they see a need for, and have a desire to learn more about, other selection methods.

Some differences were apparent when comparing recruiters' responses to applicants' responses. Most noticeable was the discrepancy between recruiters who perceived that they conveyed realistic information about the job and applicants, many of whom felt they did not receive an accurate picture of the job and were subsequently disillusioned. The use of realistic job previews was highlighted, by applicants, as a desirable tool to be added to the selection process.

The relatively high dropout rate of successful applicants indicates that the recruitment and selection process is not entirely successful. Exit interview information revealed several key reasons why individual applicants subsequently left the Ministry. Restricted career development prospects and under-utilisation of skills were two key reasons given.

The results highlight the need for a better fit between the organisation and the expectations of applicants, which will aid in the retention of successful appointees. This thesis concludes by highlighting areas in which improvements could be made to enhance the recruitment and selection process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS   PAGE

LIST OF TABLES

FIGURE