



Case Study 2

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Strengthening CSC Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM) - The Audit/Assessment Phase

Quality Recruits, Quality Public Servants

Public sector human resource practitioners used to think that their role is limited to compliance – filling in positions, receiving documents to meet requirements, completing paperwork, records keeping, and processing of benefits. With the Civil Service Commission’s (CSC) vision

“to be Asia’s leading centre for human resource and organisation development excellence in 2030,” this view is starting to change in the Philippines.

The CSC’s leadership is committed to empower its staff to achieve this vision. As Director Jocelyn “Jing” Deco of the CSC Field Office in charge of Quezon City and the University of the Philippines puts it, “From the onset, the Commissioners have been really pushing us to go through a scholarship so that we can help achieve CSC’s mandate. In my case, I finished a Masters in Human Resource Management at the University of Newcastle in 2013 through the Australia Awards Scholarships.” PAHRODF had been assisting the Commission with Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS) and other Human Resource and Organisational Development (HR/OD) interventions to help it achieve its vision to be Asia’s leading centre for strategic HR/OD.

Becoming a scholar

Director Deco applied for a scholarship because she wanted to find out if she will be selected. Further review of AAS made her realise that the degrees on offer are aligned with what she is doing and can help her further boost her role at the Commission.

What Director Deco did not anticipate was the challenge that living in a foreign land and away from her family for a whole year would entail. She shares that “there were times when I faced difficult moments, especially with regard to adjusting to a different culture and a new country.” PAHRODF supported her during the adjustment period and throughout her entire stay in Australia. “I really felt PAHRODF’s presence throughout the application process and

until we left for Australia. Representatives from the Facility visited us to check on how we were. The support they provided meant a lot. It helped keep my eyes on the goal.”

Director Deco only has praises for the University and her mentors. “I am happy that I went to the University of Newcastle. Our mentors practised an open door policy for scholars. There were also staff assigned to assist scholars who had any questions or needed anything,” she relates.

Bringing back the learnings

After the scholarship, Director Deco felt she was all the more equipped to contribute to the implementation of the Commission’s strategic plans. She also became an active player in managing programs of the Commission that are already in place. “It was not difficult to adjust and bring back what I have learned because the programs of the Commission reflect what we learned in Australia,” she adds.

After finishing their studies, Director Deco along with several scholars from other CSC Field Offices implemented a joint REAP to apply their newly acquired knowledge. A joint REAP means increased geographical coverage as members come from different CSC Field Offices. It is also seen to create the desired change in a more concerted way. “Our Re-Entry Action Plan covers the PRIME HRM, a flagship program of the Commission. PAHRODF asked us scholars to use our knowledge to help several agencies and pursue reforms that will benefit the Philippine public sector.”

PRIME HRM or the Program to Institutionalise Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management touches on four important areas of human resource management, namely,

recruitment and selection, performance management, rewards and recognition, and learning and development.

Facing challenges

She admits that rolling out the program with the Department of Education (DepEd) as the pilot agency had not been that easy. She narrates, “We have an assessment scheme that will generate a score or rating for each HR system. As with other new programs there was challenge with the pilot agencies because it tends to put them on the defensive. Once they see that we are here to help them achieve stronger HR systems, that is when they become more cooperative and supportive.” The challenge, according to Director Deco, was making them understand that the purpose of PRIME HRM is to improve their HR systems.

Getting DepEd’s buy-in meant a lot of interaction. Director Deco and her team had to re-introduce the PRIME HRM, acquaint DepEd with its merits, and address concerns. A launching activity allowed DepEd officials to have a firsthand look at the actual materials to be used and address their concerns. Meetings with the different DepEd division offices also allowed the CSC to make concerned DepEd personnel more familiar with the assessment process. “I guess that prepared them for the assessment,” she explains.

During the process, Director Deco touched base with her mentor from the University of Newcastle to help her deal with implementation challenges. “I sent her e-mails. Sometimes I chatted with her. We got to discuss concerns like resistance of stakeholders to change related to programs of the Commission. She steered me back to problem-based learning that I had learned from her class.”

Translating to better HRM

The exposure of Director Deco and other CSC staff to global good practice is now starting to bear fruit. She is no longer content with programs that are merely concerned with compliance and now sees the importance of transforming HR business processes for a better bureaucracy. She points out, “We are trying to rid ourselves of the compliance approach. We should be working more closely with agencies so that they will fully embrace what we are offering to them.”

She happily notes that she now senses a shifting view among HR practitioners. She adds, “I believe that we are not alone in gaining knowledge from the scholarship. I can see everyone is really making an effort to make a difference.” In her opinion, public sector Human Resource Managers are slowly gearing up for their more active role, shedding the long-held belief that their role is limited to managing documents or processing employee benefits.

The ultimate goal of the CSC is to see these HR systems of public sector agencies become strategic. Director Deco sees that strategic HR systems will eventually redound to better services. “When you do top-quality recruitment and performance management, you can expect to see this translated to better delivery of services to the public,” she confidently declares.

Jocelyn Deco finished her Masters in Human Resource Management at the University of Newcastle in 2013. Her REAP was all about process review & improvement, capacity building and institutionalization of PRIME HRM in five DEPED agencies.