

May 20, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMISSIONER KEPPEL

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE CONTINUING CAPABILITY OF
THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

A subgroup on personnel management, led by a representative of the Civil Service Commission's Bureau of Inspections, has completed its analysis of personnel operations under the guidance of Mr. Schulkind. Our memorandum of May 7 passed on to you the recommendations for immediate action growing out of their review. I have attached their report on the personnel program generally with recommendations for longer range action that needs to be taken to improve the regular personnel machinery of the Office. We also want to relieve operating people of detail, while freeing them to take a stronger role in personnel decisions. The recommendations cover the broad spectrum of personnel programs, but they do not repeat the immediate action items that were contained in our May 7 memorandum.

The attached report does not discuss effectiveness of individuals in the Personnel Management Branch. I am passing on to you, in this memorandum, for your information, our conclusions with regard to people directly concerned with the personnel program. We also point up very briefly the most significant findings in the attached report.

Effectiveness of People

John Elsbree is both young and new to the Office of Education. All of our feedback indicates, however, that he has made a fine impression on those he has dealt with. He is knowledgeable, intelligent, and motivated to do a good job. We considered very seriously whether we should recommend upgrading the position of Chief, Personnel Management Branch, and bringing in someone with greater maturity and experience. We believe, however, that with proper support and with your own or Henry Loomis' personal involvement in setting new policies and directions for the personnel program, he can provide the kind of leadership that is needed.

The rest of the professional staff in the Personnel Management Branch are technically competent, although adjustments in assignments may be desirable. It is important, however, that they be imbued with the concept that they exist to serve the over-all needs of the Office on a positive advice and assistance basis, rather than to interfere with the proper exercise of management discretion.

Effectiveness of Personnel Operations

Personnel programs in the Office have been completely inverted. Nothing starts until an office has settled on the person it wants. This is the key to the excessive delays that have been experienced. The report recommends a number of steps to change this picture.

Lack of Manpower Planning and Coordination

There has been a complete lack of meaningful manpower planning for the Office and no coordination of recruiting activity. The Office needs to establish clear guidance for program managers on how to structure their positions, the professional disciplines, including management, from which they should recruit, and the grade levels at which recruitment should be undertaken.

Lack of Career Development

Action must be taken to reverse the past tendency to bring in primarily educational specialists at advanced age levels whose reputations have already been formed. A beginning has been made by the current plans to recruit junior personnel. This needs to be continued on a planned basis and extended to persons at mid-career levels. Simultaneously, the Office must increase its capacity to provide career development opportunities, career ladders, training, career guidance and counseling, etc., to realize the full potential of this new intake. The Office has previously devoted practically none of its resources to this important area.

Failure to Evaluate Personnel

The new requirement that managers and supervisors evaluate their staffs is a good first step. Before this action was taken, there was nothing in the way of a true evaluation program. There has also been no effective program either to recognize the superior or to take proper action with the incompetent, including dismissal, if warranted. There is a reluctance throughout the organization to take an adverse action when warranted. This must be overcome. Better use can also be made of the authority to refuse to grant normal within-grade promotions to the mediocre.

Number of Professional and Clerical Personnel in the Personnel Management Branch

The recommendations contained in the report propose strengthening the Personnel Management Branch by taking the following actions:

1. Return to it the four classification positions now assigned to BEND and BEAP. There should be a total of at least eight technical people (one of whom may be a trainee) assigned to the Classification Section.

2. Add three professional people (one of whom may be a trainee) to the Recruitment and Placement Section.
3. Add a competent career development and training specialist on a full time basis.
4. Add a total of four clerical personnel.

These are brief highlights of the major findings. There is a fuller summary starting on page 4 in the attached report.

As the recommendations in the report and other personnel improvements are placed into effect, it is most important to keep in mind continuously the potential effect on morale of the professional staff. The fact that we propose changes in orientation, and recruitment from other disciplines than education, should not be presented in such a way that the field of education itself appears to be discredited. Obviously, the Office must continue to draw heavily from the professional fields of education and to rely on the professional educationists on its staff if it is to carry out its program obligations. You should make a special effort to keep employees fully posted on the objectives of the actions that will be taken and to make the entire staff feel that they are significant contributors to the national goals for which the Office has such a heavy responsibility.

(Signed) Dwight A. Ink

Dwight A. Ink, Chairman
White House Task Force on Education

Attachments

cc: Mr. Ink
Mr. Oganovic
Mr. Schulkind
Mr. Jasper

GASchulkind/tvf