

WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA



Addressing gender disparity and fostering equity in University Education

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SCIENCES

BSc HONOURS DEGREE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

MAIN PAPER

HRM 422 : ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

INTAKE 8 : FOURTH YEAR SECOND SEMESTER

TIME : 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Answer **Question 1** and any other **two**.

Question 1

THE CONCEPT OF MANAGERIAL MEDIOCRITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

There are many images of managerial mediocrity that include managers passing the buck, dodging responsibility, and artfully avoiding blame by hiding behind rules, policies, and perceived misunderstandings. Images also include managers exercising persistent misjudgement, such as those who implement the letter of the law but habitually misconstrue the big picture, thus causing problems and missed opportunities for the organization. In other instances, mediocre managers are seen as people-pleasers and compromisers with little task-orientation and few extraordinary accomplishments; they seldom take initiative, and they often drive outstanding employees away through their lack of support or understanding of outstanding performance. Finally, and curiously paradoxical given the above images, mediocre managers are often also seen as performing just well enough to be kept around, and occasionally even well enough to be promoted; they are exceedingly good at keeping their jobs, too (Ashworth, 2001; Cohen and Eimicke, 1995). These images of managerial mediocrity suggest that it has many manifestations, and that any definition of it must therefore be encompassing. In this study, managerial mediocrity is broadly defined as having only a modest commitment to the contemporary values and practices of public administration, such as having only a Berman, West modest commitment to serving the public interest, providing accountability, or achieving excellence, and doing so with only modest commitment to using contemporary practices. This section discusses three key elements of this definition, namely, "mediocrity," "commitment," and "contemporary values and practices of public administration."

First, the term mediocrity is used here consistent with its general definition; as having only a modest commitment to excellence or as being of middling quality. If having only a modest commitment to excellence or as being of middling quality. If we imagine a scale of commitment to public administration values and principles, mediocrity occupies a middle range of commitment, omitting both the higher reaches that exemplify an abundance of commitment to values and practices of public administration (for example, strongly supporting the use of best practices) and the lower reaches that indicate poor or execrable levels of commitment (being

indifferent or even opposing best practices). Mediocre commitment may involve, for example, managers who are somewhat interested in selected best practices, sometimes willing to undertake a limited application (perhaps when directed to do so), with just enough effort to ensure an occasionally positive result. This is a modest commitment indeed that shows the importance of moving beyond dichotomies in this discourse. This level of commitment is neither as good nor as bad as it could be; rather it is mediocre.

Second, the term commitment here refers to an individual's dedication or passion from which his or her actions follow. Modest levels of commitment spur modest levels of action and knowledge, and, hence, modest achievements. For example, a public manager who is only modestly committed (dedicated) to excellence might solicit some performance feedback but might not embrace open and constructive dialogue among stakeholders that could lead to new ideas for improvement or even process reengineering-an important outcome. Modest passions produce modest actions. Similarly, modest commitment to providing accountability may cause managers to provide financial disclosure that satisfies the letter of the law but not the spirit or intent. They may fail to seize the opportunity of providing information that could help stakeholders better evaluate the organization's performance, such as by incorporating performance measures. As noted in the opening paragraph of this section, mediocre managers are often associated with missed opportunities and with hiding behind rules and regulations to justify their actions. Undoubtedly, if confronted about such lost opportunities, mediocre managers would counter that they were complying with what was requested of them-no more, no less (Benveniste, 1977). The lack of strong commitment has an impact well beyond the realm of empirically observable actions. Mediocre managers may not be cognizant of lacunae, such as those above, until confronted by others. Lack of awareness (or a "blind spot") occurs when mediocre commitment includes rather modest mental efforts that fall short of what is needed to fully grasp or appreciate the rationale or purpose of actions, such as reasons for soliciting feedback or providing disclosure. Mediocre managers may fail to adequately or correctly analyze the matters at hand. The resulting lack of information about interconnected phenomena, values, and end goals increases the likelihood of errors when developing and implementing management actions. This is also ubiquitously called "poor judgment," which causes, among other things, those who evaluate such actions to ponder. By way of further elaboration, consider the following organizational "pathologies" that may result when managers with mediocre commitment are

challenged by goals that are ill defined, long term, lacking a certain road map, and characterized by a high failure risk. Many public goals have these features. One response by managers with mediocre commitments is to recast challenges in terms that are consistent with their preferences for modest levels of stamina, mental confusion, and uncertainty....

Berman E. M and West J. P. (2003), What Is Managerial Mediocrity? Definition, Prevalence, and Negative Impact (Part 1), Public Performance & Management Review, Vol. 27 No. 2, Taylor & Francis, Ltd (p10-11)

Required:-

- a) Explain the concept of managerial mediocrity. [20]
- b) Examine the dangers that managerial mediocrity poses to an organization's evolutionary endeavors. [20]

Question 2

Explain Kurt Lewin's change model phases and their relevancy to organization development. [20]

Question 3

Discuss the effect of organizational hubris on organization development . [20]

Question 4

Examine the utility of the concept of institutional isomorphism to the study of OD. [20]

Question 5

'Organizations are static systems in the organization development discourse'. Discuss. [20]

Question 6

Discuss the utility to organization development of the contention that the development of pure plans, untainted by practical concerns, is a mirage. [20]

END