
CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT- BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

In the recent time, Human Resource Management (HRM) practices became so familiar and crucial in every business sector of Bangladesh. The focus of this study is to gain an insight into the present HRM practices, identifying problem areas and key future challenges in the context of Bangladesh. Based on secondary sources of data, the study reviews the practices of four major functions of HRM (Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Compensation and Benefit) in both private and public sector organizations in Bangladesh. The study also spotlight the shortcomings prevailing on the practice of the selective HRM functions and the challenges evolving with the changes in business scenario. The study will surely be beneficial for all concerned to understand the overall context of HRM practices in Bangladesh at present time.

Keywords: HRM Practice, Private Sector, Public Sector, Problems, Challenges

Introduction

Employees are one of the most important assets of an organization and human resource management is concerned with the efficient use and proper utilization of these workforce [25]. HRM involves the policies and practices in carrying out the human resources of an organization to achieve the organizational goal [21]. Some researchers identified the major HRM practices as recruitment and selection, training and development, orientation, participation, career planning and reward [19, 26]. Others emphasized on job analysis, team work, performance appraisal, compensation or incentives, human resources planning, labor relations and employment security [42]. Human resource management is also composed of the policies, practices and systems that influence employees' behavior, attitude and performance [30].

In Bangladesh, HRM applications are considered to be the blessing part of all companies [5]. Almost every organization in Bangladesh introduced Human Resource department at present time. In the past, Human Resource role was concentrated in hiring & firing in Bangladeshi organizations but recently it has initiated to perform more than that. So, the situation has been changed [14] Specific sections of human resource such as, employee motivation, employee development, employee retention etc. are also being focused now [37]. Many private as well as public organizations have developed well designed HRM practices and the present scenario is surely better than the past [43]. But in the context of a developing economy, Bangladeshi organizations still facing many problems in effective HR management. These may include lack of standardized procedure, HR expert or specialists, management support as well as the influence of the overall economic, political, legal, societal and cultural environment of the country [62]. Moreover, due to rapid changes in the business world such as, globalization, increased competition, change in customer preferences, new technologies, diversity, expectations of employees or pressure from labor unions etc., the HR managers in the organizations are now facing different kinds of problems and variety of issues [28]. As the factors contributing to HR managers' functions are constantly changing, it is also possessing future challenges for human resource management [46]. Thus, the HR managers as well as the HR department must be much more sophisticated and prepared to meet the future challenges [17].

The purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive review of the present HRM practices in Bangladeshi organizations as well as to address the major problems and key future challenges of selective functions of human resource management.

Methodology

This article is a narrative review of the existing literature on HRM practices in Bangladesh. Among so many functions of HRM, the present study focused on the practice of four major functions (Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Compensation and Benefit) of HRM. The article discussed the key issues across these four selective HR functions in both public and private sector organizations in Bangladesh. The information used in this study has been collected from

various secondary sources. The sources include published articles, peer-reviewed publications, case reports in peer-reviewed journals, published working papers etc. A search of electronic database has also been done to gather relevant information from reliable and professional websites or blogs. A careful review of the sources leads to the findings of this study.

Contemporary Practices of Human Resource Management in Bangladesh

Recruitment and Selection: Recruitments the practice carried on by organization for identifying and attracting potential employees so as to build a pool of job seekers [15, 16] and selection is the process of picking the right candidates from those pool of individuals [45].

In case of public sector organizations, The Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) and Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC) are involved in the recruitment and selection process. The MoPA determines the staffing needs and requests the PSC to conduct competitive examination for selecting eligible candidates based on merit [31]. Recruitment started with open advertisement on national dailies and own websites. Applications are sorted according to prescribe rules and regulation. The PSC, then conduct competitive examination and identify eligible candidates to face viva-voce. The proper authority forms the selection committee who takes viva-voce and add all marks of written exam, viva voce and academic education qualification to develop the merit list [34]. They also propose panel for candidates who are not selected for the first time. The confirmation of the recruited employee is done through the satisfactory medical and police verification report [31]. The recruitment and selection process strictly follow the rules and regulation of Labor law-2006 and government rules such as quotas for tribal, freedom fighter, women etc. [32]. As a large number of employees in government sector retired each year, to fill up the vacancy, the personnel department forecast the expected demand and supply of manpower for public sector organizations [40].

The private sector of Bangladesh is legally regulated by the state but are not bound by any legal requirements to advertise jobs or to maintain any formal recruitment and selection process [1, 34]. Formal recruitment in this sector include newspaper classified advertisements, network bulletins, posters, campus interview and human resource banks, while informal methods include personal connections and employee referrals [20]. Most of the private organizations follows some standard procedure for this purpose [55, 13]. The corporate HR department decide what positions to fill and how to fill the immediate as well as future requirements [52]. The HR department also decides the expansion process of their employment requirement, hiring, screening and firing procedure [44]. Almost all of the private organizations follow the steps as, completion of application form, employment test (CV scrutinize, written exam, case analysis etc.), comprehensive interview (simulation test, presentation, viva-voce etc.) for employee selection. Many private organizations also take help from recruitment agency for suitable candidates and approved institutions for conducting exams [61].

Training and Development: Training involves the use of formal processes to impart knowledge and help people acquire the skills necessary for them to improve their performance [7, 27]. On the other hand, development, prepares employees to face future challenges, increases their ability and makes them eligible for other positions in the organization [30, 48].

In case of public sector organizations, the government, through the Ministry of Establishment, selects the trainees, determines training programs and even decides the contents of the training courses [11, 44]. Though there are many training insinuations attached to different ministries, the two major training institutions are Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA). While BPATC is responsible for training of all the cadre officers, BCSAA is for the administration cadre service [33]. In public sector manufacturing organizations, employees have very few opportunities to undergo any training program and most training is conducted on an informal and on-the-job basis [43]. The public banks of the country arrange regular training and development program conducted and implemented by HRD's training section and headed by manager according to the consent of managing director [52, 59].

Training and development of human resources in private sector organizations has dramatically shifted from its neglected position to well-structured state in recent days [3]. The current status of training and development in private sector of Bangladesh are even in a better position than public sector. Profit seeking private organizations are very much concerned about improving employee productivity [44], thus, they are offering extensive training and development facilities by identifying the needs of the employees [10]. Most of the training programs focuses on career development, IT knowledge development, capacity and leadership ability building etc. [52]. The common off-the job training in this sector involves apprenticeship training, seminar, workshops, lecture sessions, group discussions, simulation exercise, vestibule training etc. [59]. On the job training of this sector is also very effective [52]. Private organizations are offering extensive formal orientation programs for all the entry level employees who are unfamiliar about different aspects of the organization. They also encouraging employees for further training and education and also keeping a budget for such programs [44].

Performance Appraisal: Performance appraisal is the assessment of an individual's performance against well-defined standards [8]. It highlights employee potential, their strengths and weaknesses as well as helps in determining the needs of training and development programs [17, 53]. Most importantly, an effective appraisal scheme can improve the future performance of staff and act as a basis for review of financial rewards and planned career progression [15].

Public sector organizations in Bangladesh uses Annual Confidential Report (ACR) for evaluating the performances of employees [53]. ACR is the only process through which a civil servant's ability and productivity is judged by their superiors. ACR also determines the merit standing of a candidate which is used throughout his or her career for posting, transfer, promotion, deputation and training [49]. The ACR contain the medical examination report, resume of the employee, personal characters and work

execution [52]. Currently, some public sectors institutions trying to improve the capacity of their employees through amalgamating some newly result and outcome-oriented processes such as Management by Objectives (MBO), Key Performance Indicators (KPI), Annual Performance Agreement (APA) etc. [8].

Performance appraisal in private sector is more organized than public organizations in Bangladesh. Most of the private organization conducts appraisal annually and a small portion of them conducts appraisal either bi-annually or quarterly [23]. The performance planning is formed on the basis of employee's competencies, behavior, output and developmental plan which acts as a basis of performance appraisal [53]. In terms of methods used, Management by Objectives (MBO) is practiced by most of the private companies. The supervisor sets realistic, relevant and achievable performance objective to achieve in a designated time period [23]. The employee regularly reports to the supervisor about their progress in achieving the targets [21]. Performance of employees are evaluated after the specified time by comparing actual with the predefined standard. The supervisor also shares appraisal feedback with the employees [9]. Many private organizations use different types of survey-based method through rating or ranking scale to measure employee performances. These may include graphic rating scale, behaviorally anchored rating scale, performance hierarchies, 360-degree performance appraisal system etc. [9, 23].

Compensation and Benefit: Compensation includes both financial and nonfinancial rewards employees receive in exchange for their contribution to the organization [7, 27]. It is composed of the base wage or salary and incentives or bonuses and benefits [18, 45].

The public sector organizations pay salaries and other benefits in accordance to the government pay scale [51, 24]. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has published its 8th national pay scale which is made up of 20 salary grades. The basic salary of different category officer or staffs range from Tk. 8250 to Tk. 78000 in the pay scale of Bangladesh. Festival bonuses 20% of basic salary for the Bangla New Year & Eid has been introduced in this scale. Every married employee also get minimum 50% to 65% of basic salary as home rent allowance [12]. Other benefits includes medical allowance, travel allowance, car benefits, tiffin allowance, education assistance allowance, fatigue and recreational allowance, costume facilities, bleaching allowance, workload allowance, hill and inaccessible allowances, housing construction loans, retirement allowance and pension facilities etc. [29]. Employees in the public sector are more likely to be offered insurance both while they work and after retirement. The cost of enrolling in these plans is also lower for public sector employees than those working in the private sector [50]. Union membership is also common in the public sector [4]. These unions also pressurize for their right, wages and benefits which influences the pay decisions [57].

The organizations in private sector are offering attractive compensation packages according to their financial capability to uphold the potential employees and increase productivity [18]. The compensation

package includes base pay, seniority pay, merit based pay, incentive pay, skilled or knowledge based pay, bonus etc. Several benefits are also being provided by the sector as a percentage of base pay like house rent, medical facilities, transportation allowances etc. [57]. According to the nature, different private organizations are offering different kinds of benefits as, health or life insurance, medical care facilities, accommodation facilities, child care or education facilities, paid time off, maternal leave facilities etc. [2]. Today, many organizations are extensively relying on incentive pay to control the payroll costs as well as to improve employee productivity. These payments are made on the basis of employees' attainment of specific targets [22]. Many private organizations specially banking sector also use profit and gain sharing plans to recognize employee contributions. Bonus or increment is often based on employee performances depending upon the rating of the employees' performance appraisal report [24]. Private sector jobs typically offer retirement plans as provident fund or gratuity where organization makes equal contribution as employee savings but not all private sector employers offer contributions to the plan [41]. The executive compensation is significantly higher than the benefits given to the middle level managers and operational staffs in this sector [56].

Key Problems and challenges of the selective HRM functions in Bangladesh:

- Recruitment and Selection procedure in both public and private sector organizations of Bangladesh are yet to follow integrated and modern planning [31]. Succession planning hardly exists, no sophisticated system of estimating manpower demand and also lack of frequent skill inventory [35, 39]. Public sector recruitment and selection has been influenced by political intervention and PSC has become an instrument of political patronage [52]. Most private organizations tend to recruit from own contacts, hence, fair recruitment and selection process hindered. Practices related to promotion, transfer and benefits are also manipulated due to nepotism [43]. Moreover, change in external market condition, customer demand and economic pressure also affects manpower demand [14, 28]. Thousands of candidates are competing for a single position which creating challenges for the organizations to pick suitable candidates for any post [63].
- Training and Development programs in most organizations are not well structured and there is no written or authentic policy of local as well as foreign training [22]. In many organizations, employees have very few opportunities to undergo any training program and most training is conducted on an informal and on-the-job basis [52]. The selection of employees for higher training is also defective and actually does not bring any benefit to young and fresh employees [37]. There is also no system of monitoring post-training assessment of the employees [59]. Moreover, change management possessing huge challenges for managers to focus on cross cultural, technology oriented, leadership development and diversity management training programs for their employees [33].

- Performance appraisal is not well designed in many organizations especially in case of public sector organizations. In most cases, appraise remain dark about the whole appraisal process. There is no consultation of supervisor with appraise about his\her problem, prospect, drawback and recovery of performance [34]. Supervisor often become reluctant to establish appropriate performance standards [43]. Sometimes biasness of supervisor in performance rating causes management to give promotion or incentives to fewer deserving people than efficient and skillful ones [38]. Thus, deserving people are deprived, become frustrated or demoralized and not motivated to give best efforts in future [36, 49].
- Compensation and Benefit package offered by Bangladeshi organizations are also not adequate in many cases [62]. In the formation of national pay scale, the lower-level employees being excluded from the decision-making body, therefore, they always have complained about the biasness of pay scale towards upper-level and demands for a reduction in the pay differentials between the highest and lowest grades [50]. Pay for each grade are also developed in accordance with the hierarchical ladder of national pay scale with government specified qualifications rather than on job evaluation or job specification. These classifications are so distinctive for the employees in different categories [23]. The centralized pay structure in public sector also makes it difficult to link pay with performance which in turn brings inefficiencies. As a result, organizations are losing competitiveness in the long run [24, 58]. On the other hand, most private organization design their own compensation package without following any established pay structure. Because of the absence of any legal obligations, the benefits package of most private companies does not consider long term employee perspective [6]. These making employee feel insecure about their benefit package as well as standard of living [60]. In many cases, employees are not getting appropriate recognition for their effort [57]. Thus, developing a pay structure that is equitable, competitive and well designed to attract and to retain qualified employee is a great challenge for any organization [46].

Conclusion

Employee is the most valuable resource for any organization whether it is private or public [2]. Thus, the management of every organization should be very much cautious to formulate and implement the HR policy that could satisfy and inspire their employees to meet the organizational goal [47, 54]. As a review paper, this study tried to present the current scenario of HRM practices in Bangladesh and the discussion suggests that, the development in HRM is obvious. Though, many organizations in Bangladesh have established satisfactory HRM practices, more attention and emphasis should be given on the field. The HRM practices in public sector organizations are still highly centralized with government directives [61]. On the other hand, private sector organizations are moving towards more strategic HRM practices which is a positive sign for the future economic development [28]. However, Bangladesh is standing at the threshold of socio-economic growth with increasing competition between

local as well as foreign organizations and that is why the performance pressure is increasing [43]. The market has become more competitive and the business environment more volatile [46]. At this situation, some changes or evolution of new HRM practices in both private and public sector organizations is the need of time. Both the sector should be much more concerned about resolving the current problems in their HRM practices and reforming the HRM department [2]. To sustain the industry growth, it is pertinent to develop proper, scientific and updated HRM policy [5]. The role of the HR professionals in Bangladesh must parallel the needs of the changing situation. They must learn how to design and execute innovative mechanisms to prepare their employees as well as the organization to accept and cope with the emerging challenges [14].

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