

Recruitment and Selection Process in Human Resource Management — A Case Study of Bangladesh Open University

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Abstract: *With the passage of time, the importance of human factor in the accomplishment of organisational objectives has increased considerably because of increasing competition and globalisation of management. Now a days, the people at work are considered the most important factor of production and services in organisation from the point of view of management.*

In the rapidly changing management scenario, HRM has an important role to play. The success of HRM is dependent on proper recruitment and selection of employees and executives of an organisation. If an organisation fails to select the right person in right place, it suffers as long as those persons stay in an organisation. Moreover, the quality of service is strongly influenced by the R&S process of the concerned organisation. The present study attempts to review the value-added and non-value added activities within the recruitment and selection process. It also highlights the strategic manpower planning of an organisation, training and development programme, performance appraisal, compensation and reward system and industrial relations etc. that interfaces with R&S process. Finally this paper suggests some policy measures for improving as well as long term success of the R&S process in HRM through initiating necessary changes of the concerned organisation.

Prelude

Every organisation has to perform a variety of function in order to attain its objectives. To perform those functions the organisation needs to recruit and select employees with varied skills and quantities. The policies that deal with these human aspects of organisation are known as personnel policies. Improvement in productivity in manufacturing organisations and efficiency in service organisations requires personnel policies based on latest principles and techniques of Human Resource management (HRM). In spite of modern highly developed technology, *people* still remain the most important factor in modern organisations. In fact, it is the human factor that keeps the organisation in constant motion. Without support of the people, machines remain idle, raw materials lie stacked, money tied up and above all, objectives of the organisation can't be achieved.

Recruitment and Selection (R&S) constitute the most important aspects of HRM.

Because the cost of poor R&S is tremendously high. If an organisation fails to select right person, it has to suffer as long as those persons stay in the organisation. Moreover, the quality of service is strongly influenced by the R&S process of the organisation concerned. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is not an exception to this truth. It recruits different categories of academic staff, officer and employee who do influence the university's academic and research programmes.

R&S are the two important aspects of its overall manpower planning of BOU. Generally manpower planning is the process by which an organisation ensures that it has the right number of people with right skills at the right time. The objectives of manpower planning are to ensure the optimum use of human resources currently employed and to provide for future manpower needs of the organisation in terms of skills, numbers and ages.

The development of an organisation and its ability to respond positively to news opportunities depends on it having knowledge of employee performance in present and past jobs, and their range of skills and abilities. Thus, HRM is one of the intangible resources that needs to be processed in efficient manner (Lundy and Cowling, 1996). Even a small number of poor staffing decisions can have a significant impact upon the goals of the organisation (Clark, 1992) hence, the R & S process in the HRM should be efficient.

A Brief Profile of BOU

An open university is an alternative educational system designed to provide learners with access to an extensive area of academic and non-academic subjects. It offers a wide variety of formal as well as non-formal programmes and courses through telecommunication media, postal services, and electro-mechanical devices, such as radio, television and audio and video cassettes. It also offers tutorial services to the students/learners. Thus open university is a system of distance teaching which makes it possible for those who were otherwise deprived of formal learning to study at home for a certificate, diploma or degree or to follow non-formal programmes of general nature.

Distance education is a popular concept now and some reputed open university (like British Open University; Open University of SriLanka; Allama Iqbal Open University of Pakistan; Indira Gandhi National Open University of India, Thamathirat Open University of Thailand; Fernuniversitat, Germany; University of New England, Australia; Free University of Iran; Tele University of USA; TV University of China, etc.) that have made remarkable contribution to education around the world.

Established in 1992 by an act of the Parliament, BOU has also opened up a new vista in the field of distance education of the country. Based on national priorities it launched several programmes both formal and non-formal in the fields of science, education, social science, agriculture, technology and business. The prime objective of BOU is to transform the country's vast human resources into an educated and trained workforce by extending to them a wide range of academic programme both formal and non-formal. BOU's programmes are aimed at every one, particularly working people and women and those socially disadvantaged groups who cannot enrol in traditional universities.

BOU has so far opened six schools, name (i) School of Business; (ii) School of Education; (iii) Open School; (iv) School of Science and Technology; (v) School of Social Science, Humanities and Language and (vi) School of Agriculture and Rural development. Each school is headed by a Dean. Educational programmes are designed and curricula are developed by the schools. On the side of management there are 10 divisions (e.g (i) Administration; (ii) Finance and Accounts; (iii) Planning and Development; (iv) Publishing, Printing and Distribution; (v) Computer, (vi) Media; (vii) Information and Public Relations; (viii) Library and Documentation (ix) Examination, and (x) Students Support Services) besides the Vice-Chancellor, Secretariat, to look after administrative and other activities of the university. Each of these divisions, except the one for administration, is headed by a Director. The Registrar looks after the administration.

There are twelve Regional Resource Centres (RRCs) and Eighty Local study Centre (LSCs) spread all over the country. The RRCs disseminate information about the academic programmes of BOU, liaise with the universities, colleges, schools and NGOs and supervise and co-ordinate the work of the LSCs. It also look after the admission of students, the appointment of part-time teachers and the maintenance of resource, including the library, reading room, audio, video, radio and TV facilities. Above all, these centres work as the nerve centres of BOU, because maximum interaction with the learners have been take place these centres.

The Board of Governors is the apex body of BOU which takes policy decisions on all administrative and financial matters. It is composed of Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Treasurer, two Deans of School of BOU, two teachers of BOU, Secretaries of education and information ministries and four eminent people nominated by the Chancellor. The Academic Council constituted mostly of educationists from within and outside BOU, takes policy decisions on all academic matters. The Registrar functions as Secretary to both the bodies.

Rational and Objectives of the Study

A survey of the existing literature reveals that no empirical research has yet been made exactly on the same topic. This research gap induced the authors to undertake the present study. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be useful for policy makers and concerned govt. agencies. It will also add to new knowledge in the field of R&S process in HRM. The main objective of the study is to examine the present R&S process of BOU. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To highlight the value-added and non-value added activities within the R & S process;
- To identify the other processes that interface with R&S process; and
- To suggest measures for improving the R&S process in HRM through initiating necessary changes of the organisation concerned.

Method

The main feature of the present study is the extensive use of secondary data. In order to substantiate the secondary data, primary data were also collected. For this purpose, a questionnaire was prepared in the light of the objective of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting sample respondents.

The data and information thus collected were analysed and processed in such a manner as to make the study more valuable, weighted and interesting to the concerned groups.

Findings

The analysis of the findings are made under the following main heads keeping in view of the objectives of the study.

Value-Added and Non-Value Added Activities Within the R&S Process

An organisation is efficient when the value it commands exceeds the cost involved in creating the process of decision making or product (Lundy and Cowling, 1996). Value-added and non-value added activities which are associated with BOU's R&S process affect its role in creating a skilled and motivated workforce in the country. Therefore, in the R&S process, the *waiting time, inspection time and filing process* were identified as non-value added activities and the *cost of advertisement* was the only value-added activity in the process.

Non-Value Added Activities

When the R&S section of BOU receives a recruitment request of new employees from other departments, they cannot immediately advertise the post in different media. They have to follow some longest sequential steps before doing so. Therefore, the R & S section asks the accounting department to prepare a R&S budget (Fig. 1). However, the accounting department prepares the budget which is finally approved by the registrar's office of BOU. After that a public advertisement for the post is made (Fig. 2) *bureaucratic complexities* and formalities as well as inspection and supervision by the two departments causes *unnecessary waiting* in the R & S process which ultimately increase the cost of recruitment and the cost to the organisation.

- Again, after receiving applications from applicant the R&S committee sends all the application, including the short listed ones, to the relevant department for final approval. Thus a repetition of the activity is taking place in this step. This is because, when the R&S committee sends all application forms to the specific department of final checking and approval, the department needs to do the same tasks that have already been done by the committee. This repetitive work engages unnecessary people for a single task, which causes *unnecessary delay* in the decision and unnecessary wastage of manpower.
- Under the existing system, after the tentative selection, the R&S section takes the step of psychological and/or medical testing of the selected candidate(s).

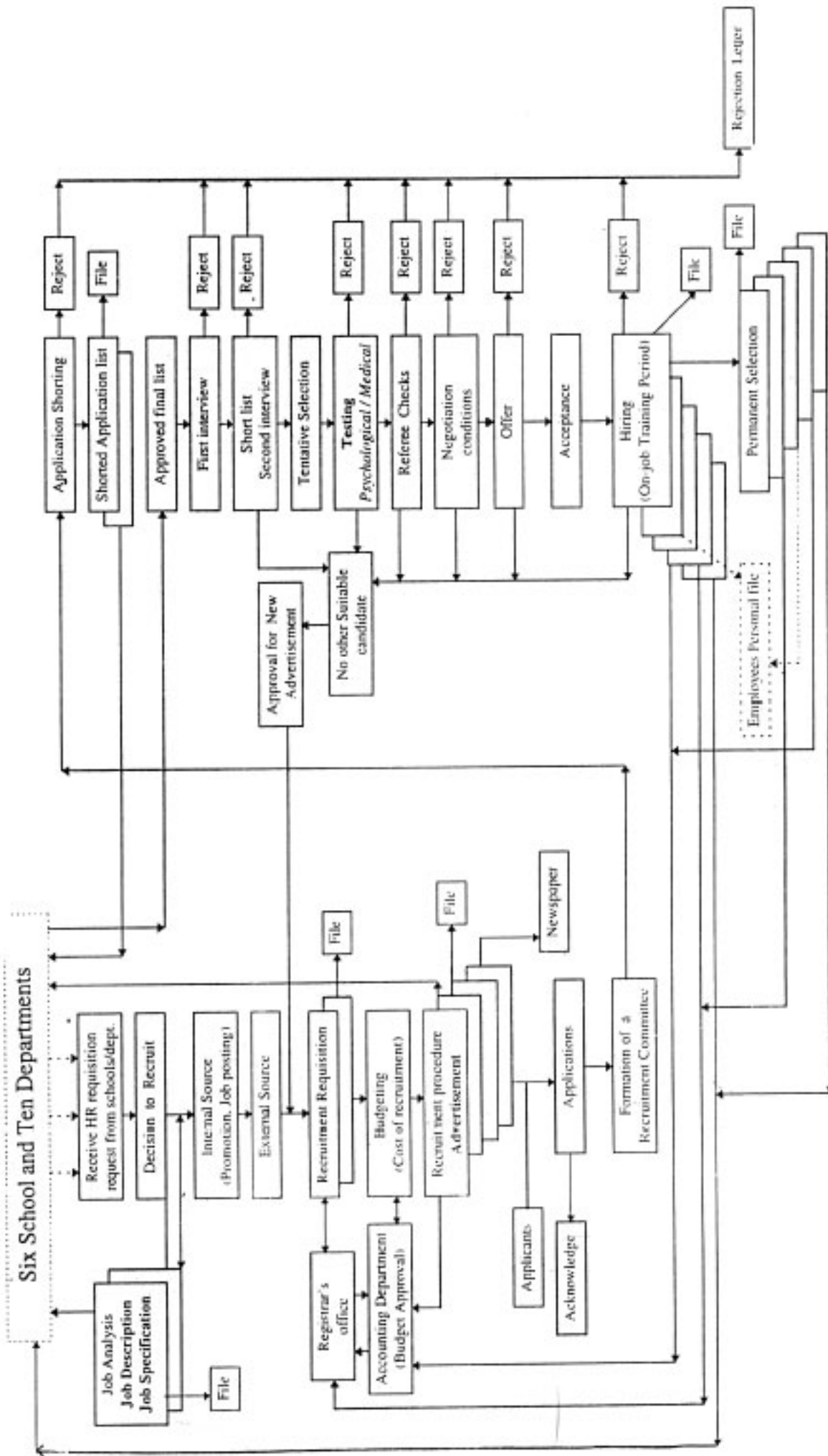
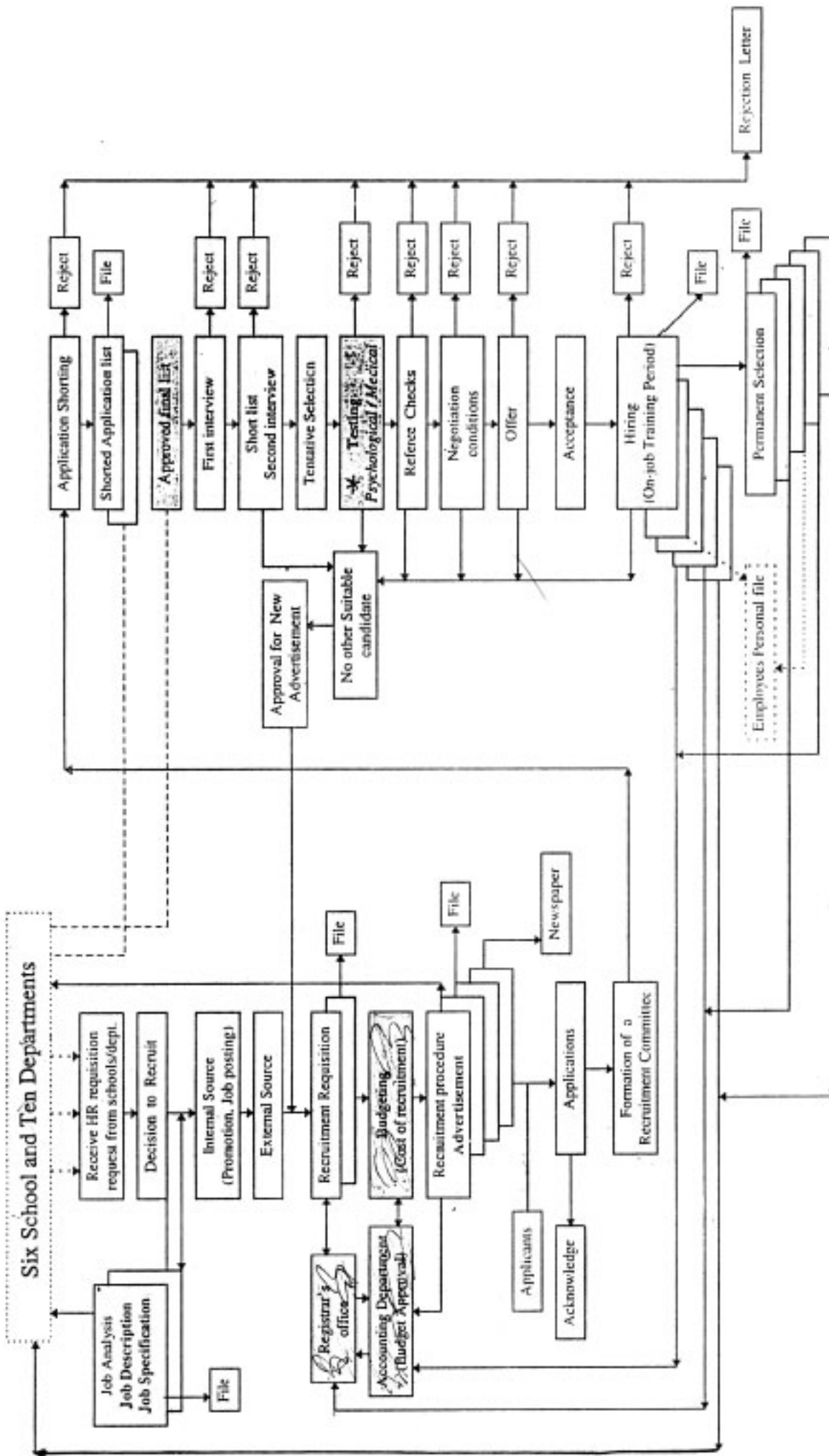


Fig. 1: Recruitment and selection activities



■ Non-value added activities; □ Value added activities; * Also needs policy changes

Fig. 2: R&S activities (value & non-value added, and policy changes)

Traditionally it is done by its own registered doctors. Thus after tentative selection every candidate is sent to the specific doctor to undergo the medical test. This traditional process stands against effective decision making of R&S.

Value-Added Activity

Once a decision has been made to recruit a new employee, advertising is one of the main means of attracting potential applicants. The aim of the advertisement is not only to make the potential candidates aware of, but also to act as a publicity campaign for the organisation and to create an organisational image (Compton and Nankervis, 1991). Therefore, to attract the best possible candidates BOU uses the traditional (“hard”) media (newspapers and professional journals) and also electronic (“soft”) media (television). Recently, the organisation has started using computer technology (net-scape and news group) to inform potential overseas native citizen about the post. Therefore, advertisement in different media for the R&S was identified as a value-added cost for the organisation (Fig. 2)

Other Processes that Interface with R&S Process

The number of applicants for a position will affect the selectivity available in filling a position. If the criterion used in recruiting is narrow and specific, then the pool of qualified applicants will be smaller. The reverse scenario also holds true. Further, it was found that five other processes of the organisation have interface with the R&S process. The ways they interface are:

- *R&S— Planning:* R&S process develops around three components of BOU’s planning— strategic planning (determining BOU’s goals, future products and services, location, legal environment and structure); job/role planning (follows on from strategic planning and specifies what needs to be done at all levels in order to meet the strategic plan); and human resource planning (determines what types of jobs needs and will need to fill, and thus skills, knowledge, and abilities needed by job applicants) (Schuler et. al, 1988). The linkage role of R&S process is shown in Fig. 3.

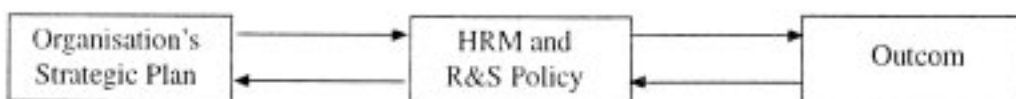


Fig. 3: Linkage role of R&S process

[Source: Schuler R.S., Dowling, P.J. & Smart, J.P. (1998) *Personnel Management in Australia*, John Wiley & Sons, Brisbane.]

- *R&S— Training and Development:* The qualifications of job applicants recruited or selected affect training needs or the training requirements. Thus, if BOU attempts to attract quality applicants for a position and fails to attract qualified person, it may need to select a person who is not qualified upto the mark, and subsequently provides training to them. Sometimes there is not a sufficient supply of an occupational group. The BOU faces the problems by growing their own faculty through providing the training in-house or by sending an employee elsewhere to be

trained. The interface between R&S process with other HRM functions and organisational plan is shown in Fig. 4.

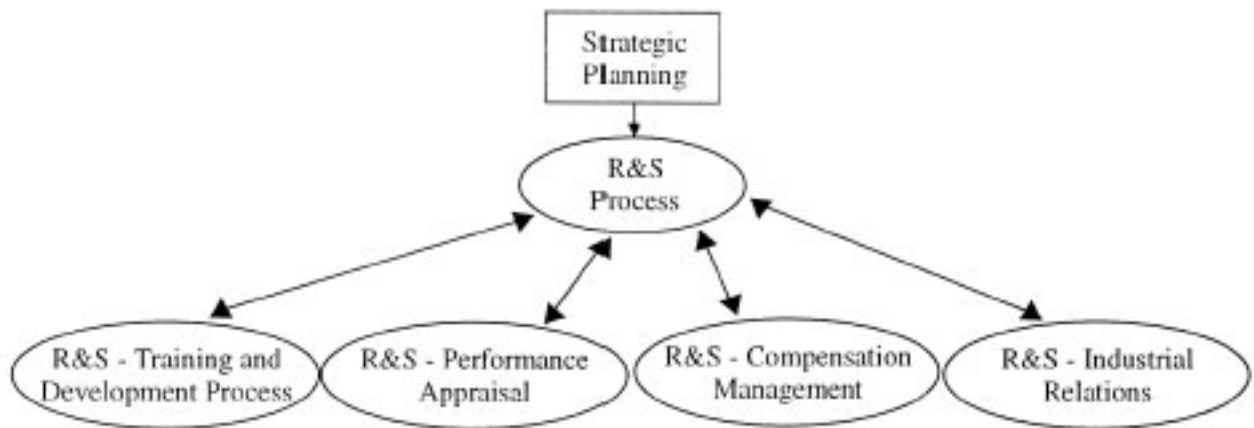


Fig. 4: Interface between R&S Process and HRM functions

[Source: T. Waters-Marsh (1996) *Study Guide: Human Resource Management*, 21680, CQU, Rockampton.]

- *R&S - Performance Appraisal*: If BOU is able to attract good quality job applicants, the standard of performance of those persons is likely to be high. However, if the organisation makes poor staffing decisions, the performance of the organisation can take a significant downward spiral. On the other hand, if BOU has a wide range of training facilities, then it can take the risk of selecting poor staff and train them. The relationship between R&S process, performance appraisal, rewards and development are shown in Fig. 5.

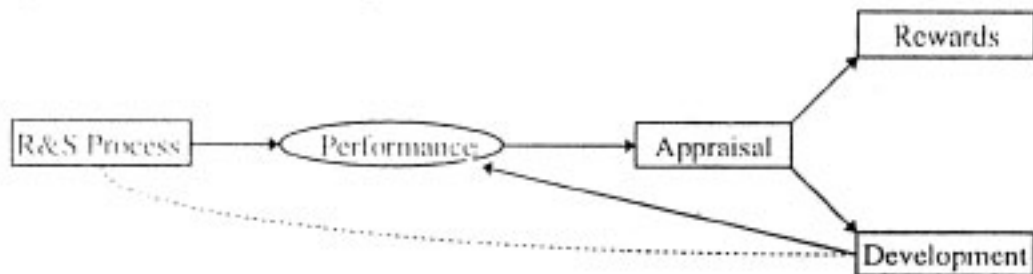


Fig. 5: Relationship between R&S process and performance

[Source: Torrington, D. and Hall, L. (1995) *Personnel Management: Human Resource Management in Action*, 3ed, Prentice Hall, London)

- *R&S Compensation Management*: The availability of applicants or selection standards may affect wage rates and the budget of the organisation. Thus, if the supply of qualified applicants is limited BOU may have to increase the salary it is willing to offer in order to attract potential applicants. Similarly, if selection standards are high, it may need to offer sufficient inducement to attract persons who can meet the standards.
- *R&S - Industrial Relations*: Unions and the employers' association also affect the R&S process of BOU. There is no hard and fast rule in the BOU that one must join the union or officer's association. However, it is reported that association members enjoy some benefits compared with non-member employees. Thus, these employees' or officers' associations influence the R & S process to select employees who are

of like - minded. Therefore, BOU cannot afford to make poor R&S decisions. Thus, the R&S process is an integral part of the overall organisation. Hence, this process is involved in recruitment, selection, training, developing and rewarding all those who are associated with BOU that also affects its role in determining the skills of the workforce and the motivation of the employees.

Recommendation for Changing the Process

HRM is a resource centre directed mainly at management needs for HRs to be provided and deployed (Torrington and Hall, 1995). Effective HR planning flows naturally into employee recruitment and selection (Nankervis, and et al, 1993). Thus, demand rather than supply should be the focus of the R & S process and there should be greater emphasis on planning, monitoring and control rather than mediation. Therefore, the recommendation for changing R & S process of BOU includes:

- *Design and establish a HRM department and HR plan* for the organisation. Thus, when R&S section receives a request from any department, it does not need to seek permission from the registrar's office or the accounting department. Therefore, after the job analysis and searching internal and external sources the HR department can advertise directly for the post with their own responsibility (Vide diagram 3). This will *eliminate the non-value added activity* and the cost and time of the R&S decision making process.
- When any department sends a request for new recruits it should *inform the HRM department about the specific qualification(s) to the candidates*. This will help the R&S committee to shortlist the applicants themselves. Thus, through the *elimination of non-value added activity*, the committee needs not to send the short-listed applications for final approval to the related department. Further, a 'system' could be introduced that if the respective department wants to check the list of the short listed candidates, it can do it only with the request of the HR department.
- BOU sought medical advice about the physical, and sometimes mental, abilities of applicants for job function and their workers compensation and risk. However, a procedure needs to be in place regarding the *privacy and confidentiality* of medical reports and questionnaires. The selected applicants should not be required to disclose any illness or injury or condition not relevant to the workplace or the demands of the job (Compton and Nankervis, 1991). Therefore, this confidentiality and *reduction of non-value added activity* of the medical test could be maintained efficiently by examining the candidate(s) through contracted medial specialists or by the applicant's own physician, rather than in-house doctors.
- To reduce the waiting time, immediately after the successful check of reference and recommendation BOU should *send the negotiation conditions* and a '*job offer letter*' together. In this letter Bou should inform the applicants that if they agree with the terms and conditions of the job, they should sign the offer letter and send it back to the HR department within a specific number of days. If fail to post it within the time limit, automatically their appointment will be rejected by the organisation. This will help the R&S section to share the two acclivities (Vide diagram-3)

- Finally BOU can use *computer based HR system*. Thus the organisation can develop a computerized data base of its work force. This will help the organisation to find out easily the shortage of employees and lack of effective human power in different departments of BOU and requirements of HR. Thus the pool of information will help the organisation to take Just-In-Time (JIT) HR R&S decision.

The recruitment strategy of the organisation should attempt to create a pool of appropriately qualified and experienced people so that selection strategies and decisions can be initiated. Thus, the potential applicants are motivated to apply for the positions that are open and also the related departments can recruit the best candidates for upgrading the department's performance. The utilisation of the above recommendations and activities can help the organisation to increase job satisfaction and organisational commitment through ensuring the quality of its workforce.

Suggested Implementation Process

- **Why need redesign?:** Within the existing organisation structure there is no special department of HRM or specialised group of people, who take the responsibility for overall HRM process. Now, the existing section called 'R&S section' under the department of Administration is working for the R&S process. However, the staff in this section are not 'professional' and they do not have any academic background, training and/or previous working experience on HRM. Thus, their planning and controlling systems are not structured and upto the satisfactory level. Therefore, the organisation needs to redesign the existing system.
- **HR planning:** BOU should formulate and implement a strategic plan of HRM where the R&S process will receive additional weight to reduce future complexity and cost, and create a public image.
- **Who should be involved?:** *Senior management and the decision making body* of BOU should be committed, involved and allocate resource that will establish the HRM department and ensure the quality of the R&S process. Thus, the senior management should be clear about what is involved, the time and resources necessary and the benefits from R&S process-both tangible and intangible, and design the entire process that can help to achieve the target.
- **Time involved:** It is necessary to understand the core set of quality of R&S improvement concept and continuously review existing practice and policies. Therefore the BOU should take short term (0-1 year), intermediate term (1-3 year) and long term (3-years) HRM' plan. At present, changes will take some time to show improvement, and benefits do not come immediately. Initially it is not unlikely that the existing people could be against the new policy and they might resist changes. Therefore, the HRM group must take a long-term perspective and decisions to introduce, establish and improve HRM concepts, and methods must be a gradual movement towards comprehensive change.
- **Appointment of HR personnel:** A long term appointment of an educated, trained and experienced human resource manager and R&S personnel is important. This

R&S personnel should be able to provide detailed policy guidance about the R&S process to the HR group, and oversee the development of inter-departmental communication and a reporting system throughout the organisation.

- **Introduction IT technology:** Using user friendly computer software can make the R&S process easier and efficient. Thus in order to 'gear up' the decision making system and reduce the filling activities, BOU can introduce computer— based technology depending on their available resources.
- **Routine inspection system may be introduced:** For the longer term a monitoring system must be established so that the deviations from the standardised R&S procedures can be recorded and an appropriate action taken to correct any unwanted errors.
- **Resources needed:** One problem identified with the R&S is that costs *associated with the process are not well understood* (Lundy and Cowling, 1996). However, the allocation of adequate resources in-terms of efficient people and finance in the HRM, as well as R&S process, could be improved. The *allocation of people as resources is represented by the appointment of the R&S specialist, consultant and facilitators*. When a long term perspective it is important to allocate sufficient finance *to establish and maintain the computer—based information system for the HRM process*.

The plan and resource needed to designing and implementing the new process are shown in Fig. 6.

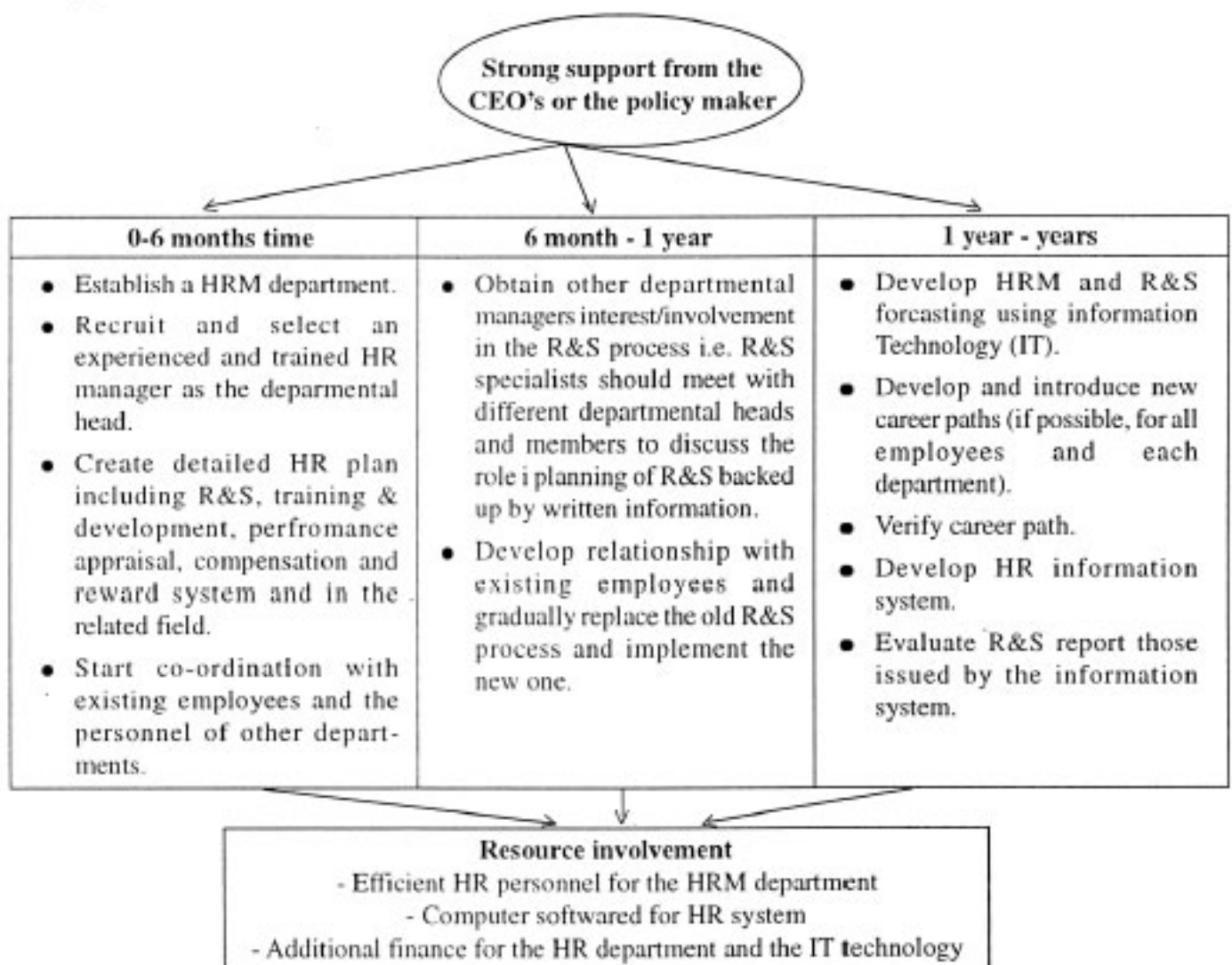


Fig. 6: The plan and needed resources

Conclusion

The R&S process interfaces with other processes including strategic plan of the organisation, training and development programme, compensation and reward system, performance appraisal and industrial relations. Thus the value added and non-value added activities associated with the R&S process hinder its competitive advantages. Therefore, to improve the present process, recommendations of activity elimination, activity reduction and activity sharing are suggested. Further, support from the top executive management to create a special department and appointment of HR personnel, and to allocate resource is needed for the efficient implementation and longterm success of the new R&S process.

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