

A Need for Paradigm Shift in Human Resource Practices in Higher Education

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Abstract: Around two decades earlier, education was looked upon as a service rendered for a noble cause. But today, education is very much considered as a part of business world globally including India whereby competition is getting tougher day by day. In the present competitive scenario, human resource management in educational institutes is just as complex and challenging as it is in any other business organization. Almost all universities and affiliated institutions offer courses in human resource management that aim at training their students to manage human resources effectively. However they are unable to manage their own human resources in an appropriate manner. Most Indian universities, especially those which are managed and controlled by the public sector, do not have a separate department dedicated towards performing the HR functions. This paper aims at highlighting the evolution of HRM in the Indian higher education system and puts special emphasis on the fact that a separate department dedicated towards selecting, managing and controlling human resources in educational institutes is the need of hour. It brings out the need for an overall restructuring of HR functions viz. recruitment, placement, training, appraisal, compensation and employee relations in the government funded universities so as to create a battalion of full-time specialized tutors who are experts in their own field and very much capable in the function of imparting knowledge and creating rightful understanding about the concerned subject and training the pupils who will be part of future workforce.

Keywords: Higher education, Strategic Human Resource Management, public sector, state-funded educational institutes, Competitive advantage

Introduction:

Globalization has changed the concept of work place drastically world over owing to information and communication technology (ITC) and human resource diversity. Educational institutions, being very much cannot stay aloof from the changes happening in the dynamic business environment. As such, educational institutions cannot remain unaffected by the changes taking place world over. Managing human resources in the education sector is a very cumbersome and complex function. There are a number of people involved at every level of personnel structure in an educational institute. The personnel structure in an educational organization depends upon the courses offered, grade levels and extracurricular activities. As such, there is a need to recruit qualified tutors and auxiliary staff to provide quality educational services which is at the heart of 'education for all' initiative.

However, the most important aspect of managing human resources in educational sector is compensating the teachers for their services. Human Resource Management ensures that the human skills, abilities and talents is used effectively and efficiently to accomplish organizational goals. Effective management of human resources in educational institutes can contribute towards attainment of the basic economic objectives viz. profit maximization, providing quality service, satisfaction of student and parent community which in turn results in providing a sustainable competitive advantage to the organization.

Objectives:-

1. To understand the role of Human Resource Management in higher education.
2. To examine the important strategic Human resource management in Higher education.
3. To understand the role of teaching training & career advancement.
4. To examine the prevailing system of faculty performance appraisal.
5. To develop an appropriate mechanism for faculty comprehension.

Working Definitions:

The principal working definitions in the paper are as follows:

1. **Higher Education** – The term higher education means an input every kind of formal education leading to degree or post graduate degree or advanced studies through a formal system.
2. **Strategic Human Resource Management**- Strategic Human Resource Management means a systematic and plan approach to develop human resources for advancement of educational system.

Relevance of the paper:

Present paper highlights a few important points related with higher education.

1. The paper emphasizes on growing role of higher education in the present context.
2. The paper underlines the importance of improved and systematic approach towards faculty development.
3. The paper emphasizes on developing a strategic approach for enriching faculty and other human resources related with higher education system.

Discussion:-**1. Role of Human Resource Management in Higher Education:**

Operation of higher-education institutions in India is managed, governed and regulated mainly by public sector owing to the below mentioned facts:

- In the private sphere, providing quality educational services is very costly due to high infrastructural and maintenance cost; remuneration of the specialized teaching staff and limited paying capacity (in terms of fees) of the masses.
- Private universities and institutions take time to create market reputation.

In India, government established and state funded universities and affiliated aided colleges and institutes have always been recognized as brands in the field of higher education. Furthermore, policies of government regulatory bodies and very often deter the growth of private players in the higher education segment.

However, these conditions have started to change slowly. Government funded universities have started to feel the pressure of reduced government funding and radically changing environment. The higher education system in India is seeing a gradual preference shift from state funded and regulated institutions to privately established and managed institutes owing to the following points:

- A general rise in income levels will increase in the paying capacity of the middle classes.
- The masses have started to show a preference towards specialised courses offered by private institutions with critically articulated syllabi.
- Tie-ups with leading entrepreneurs and provision for campus recruitment selection
- Selection of quality staff on the basis of qualification and expertise rather than on the basis of seniority and reservation quota.
- Liberal educational loans given to students for higher education have made education more affordable.

Private universities thus have started to make a name for them, create market reputation and goodwill and in turn have begun to establish themselves as a brand.

As such, the government funded higher educational institutes, in order to survive and sustain in the competitive environment need to manage their human resources in an efficient manner. Human Resources Management thus an important requisite to improve the commitment of individuals who in turn contribute to institutional growth. The primary objective of Human Resources Management in higher education is:

- To maximize the return on investment from the organization's human capital.
- To minimize financial risk involved in selection, training and replacement of teaching staff.
- To create a work environment conducive to employee growth and satisfaction. Empirical research evidence shows that institutional variables like:

- Leaders' commitment to the policy implementation process,
- Involvement of external consultants,
- Organizational reputation
- Bureaucratic and political decision-making processes; have a strong impact on the implementation of quality management in educational institutions.¹

Research also shows that there is a positive relationship between compensation and, promotion practices and employee perceived performance.

2. Strategic Human Resource Management in Higher education system:

Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on organizational performance is significant. Strategic Human Resource Management directly and positively influences individual performance, job efficiency, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Human resource Management in higher education system involves application of HR functions, consciously modified to suit the demands of this sector.

Some of the core HR functions in the sphere of higher education that are discussed here:

a) Recruitment and Selection:

This HR function ensures that the organization has an adequate supply of efficient human resources at all levels and in all positions at the right time, in the right place having the right skills and qualifications. Strategies must be devised for recruitment of efficient and adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff keeping in mind the current needs as well as the future expansion plans. The number and type of staff members depends upon estimated number of student enrolment in different courses offered by the institute. There is a dearth of a right and practical approach towards recruitment and selection procedure in higher education organizations. Very often, in government aided institutions, teaching posts lie vacant for months together or else they are simply filled up from term to term on an ad-hoc basis. This happens mainly due to the following reasons:

- Recruitment procedure in government aided organizations is lengthy, complicated and time consuming.
- It involves a lot of clearances from various government departments.
- Various restrictions sue to quotas and reservations
- Subject to system rigidity and underlying corruption.

In order to gain a competitive edge in the staff recruitment process, it is important to ease the staff selection process from the shackles of bureaucracy. In today's rapidly changing environment, it is crucial for higher educational institutes to absorb talented staff in order to enhance the quality of educational services which in turn would help in creating qualified and skilled work force who will be future contributors towards national income.

b) Faculty Performance Appraisal-

The performance appraisal function of HRM refers to assessment of employees' job performance level. A good and effective performance appraisal will help to direct the behaviour human resources towards the goals of the organization and it will also help to monitor extent of goal achievement. A bureaucratic approach performance appraisal prevails in state-funded higher education institutes which consist of a cumbersome stereotyped procedure. The state-funded higher education institutes need to act beyond the mandatory appraisal systems laid down by regulatory bodies and develop their own performance appraisal systems which shall help them:

- In deciding the level of performance
- Identifying the star performers and differentiating them from the weak ones. Performance appraisal in higher education institutes may be done by considering certain parameters like:
 - Timely completion of syllabi

- Performance of students.
- Extracurricular activities initiated during the term
- Review of teachers by the students.
- Evaluating students' subject knowledge and understanding by conducting tests of varied nature periodically.
- Timely evaluation of test papers and declaration of students' progress report/mark sheet.

c) Faculty compensation mechanism:

In the area of higher education, teachers being the key employee group, have to be compensated in the rightful manner so as to positively bring out their potentials, retain qualified faculty members, and provide them with job satisfaction without overlooking the fact that excessive monetary terms adds in to the operating costs of the institute. Owing to significant reduction in state funding and increasing costs, it has become difficult for educational institutions to retain faculty members thus posing a threat to their survival and sustenance. Moreover, in institutions that are partly privately funded and partly funded by the government, differences in compensation packages arises which in turn add to internal inequity. This is not conducive to organizational health. A carefully designed faculty compensation and incentive package is an important pre-requisite for development of motivated teaching staff.

3. Teachers' Training, Development and Career Advancement:

This function is important to create an interface between teaching staff and the organization. This function helps both- the higher education institute and staff members in the following ways:

- Helps the teachers to sharpen their skills and reach their optimum potential.
 - Helps in growth and development of teaching staff.
 - Enables the teaching staff to take on additional responsibilities which in turn helps in career advancement.
 - Delivering quality teaching services to the key-stakeholder group viz. students.
 - Motivates them to carry on research in their respective fields
- Presently, faculty training and development includes:

- Post appointment orientation.
- Refresher courses.

Very few organizations initiate a strategically designed faculty development programme (FDP) to develop the skills and potentials of the teaching staff. Also, there is a need for conducting specialized programmes for teaching faculty so as to:

- Impart information on latest updates in respective field of interest/ area of expertise
- Soft skills
- Technological innovations in sphere of education.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is clear that importance of Higher Education is rightly understood and accepted by the planners of new education system in India. It has been considered as an essential input for the development of the educational system, economic & the society. Advancement of education needs right type of people, properly enriched, trained & compensative. Without developing a strategic and forward looking approach towards higher education system neither the society nor the economy will be rightly benefited. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an appropriate system of Human Resource Development in Higher Education.

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