

Talent Acquisition and Management in the Middle East : A look into new Policies and Practices in PSUs

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Abstract . In the rising world economy, the contribution made by the public sector institutions to this relentless growth has been phenomenal. The administrative vision, organizational goals and leadership practices, establishment and effective management differentiates the public sector undertakings in the Middle East from the rest of the world. In the global scenario of competition, the industries in the public and private sector give emphasis on acquiring the right talent, developing the HR practices, and in maintaining innovative and creative techniques in talent identification and management. It has proved over a period of time that for the public organizations to keep pace with the private initiatives, best of the talent is the first and foremost need. This paper study looks into a means, methods and importance of the talent acquisition and management in public sector undertakings to address the challenges pertaining to public sectors. Further the paper reviews the impact on talent attraction retention. The paper is developed mainly into two parts - first part will make a literature analysis of the topics for discussion on the talent management practices. In the second part, we try to make an understanding of the diversified elements of the talent acquisition and management and its better utilization in organizational development. Talent acquisition and management will be explained by describing its reflection in the organizational competency and industrial impact. The paper will address the recruiter competency and the organization's position in the employment scenario as factors directly or indirectly connected to talent management practices both in the public and in the private sector. The final part of the paper will make review of the contribution of the best talent management practices to the HR policies and practices amongst private and public sector industries across the Middle East.

Key Words: Talent Acquisition, Talent management, Talent Retention, Human Resources Management, Public Sector Unidertaking, Organisational Development, Man-power Planning

INTRODUCTION

Industries need resources to perform and the resources for industries are many. The major and main resource that is needed is the talented manpower. Obtaining or searching for best of the talent is the challenge among industries. Over a period of time the talent acquisition has emerged as a separate special area attached to the HR Department with additional tasks and responsibilities. In this emerging scenario, talent acquisition practices have emerged into the area of talent management and maintenance to ensure that new joiners are well accustomed to the organization's environment, enabling the organization to rapidly and fully utilise the employee capability and capacity. TA is considered as a part of the human capital expansion process. Usually TA is identified with the functions such as talent recruitment, assessment, selection (hiring) as well as on boarding. The role of Talent Acquisition has become more strategic over a period where organizations started encom-

pass workforce planning in Talent Acquisition. In the present scenario, workforce planning is considered as a dependent process of talent acquisition. Every organization can utilise their human capital activities in any manner they needed while we have to develop a framework for measuring the talents. Every key process including TA always contributes to the organizational achievements (for eg, a 18% increase in marketing or a 12% discount in costs) as well as talent outcomes (for example, a 5 point increase in employee utilisation or a 2 point increase in the employee retention rate).

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TALENT ACQUISITION MEASURES :-

Talent Acquisition is always a measure for organisations to achieve major human resources objectives – mainly in talent management. In the global industrial scenario, it is observed that the TM practices were categorized in few subheadings as follows:-

- a. **Talent Requisitions** – examines the number of requisitions for usually attained from the recruiter point of view. This is usually termed as the Total Requisitions per Recruiter, Average Filled Requisitions per Recruiter, Requisition Rate, and Job-Posting Factor etc.
- b. **Applicants & Interviews** – clearly defines the requirement to evaluate the sourcing for and the interview for qualified candidates. This is mainly explained as Average Interviews per Hire, Hire Rate, Referral Rate, and Interview Rate.
- c. **Hiring activity** – defines the method to assess the volume, types, and sources of hires made, explored in terms of Recruitment Rate, Percent of Hires Referred, Rehires Percent of Total Hires, Net Hire Ratio, Recruiting Source Distribution
- d. **Hiring cost** – is the expenses incurred in taking people on board. This is explained in terms of Cost-per-Hire, Recruiting Cost Ratio, Sign-on Bonus Factor, and Source Cost per Hire etc.

- e. **Hiring process**: the activity is measuring the quality and value of hiring process evaluated on the basis of Recruiter Response Time, Time-to-Fill, Time to Start, 90-Day Separation Rate etc.
- f. **Quality of hire**: examines the standard measure to evaluate quality of hires made explained in terms of Hire Index, New Hire High-Performer Rate, First Year Separation Rate, and Hiring Manager Quality of Hire Satisfaction

The TM and its outcomes were grouped on divergent levels, based on the activity classification namely Level 1, 2 and 3 which is explained as follows:-

1. **Level 1**: diversified classifications namely Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of a given Talent Process. These indicators usually from organisations to organisations. The usual measure that are considered are : Quality of Hire Index, Offer Acceptance Rate, Cost-per-Hire, Time-to-Fill, 90-Day Separation Rate
2. **Level 2**: measures typically metrics for a given Talent Process. This is the measure which one might look to in order to determine the noticeable changes or trends if any in KPIs that might be occurring. The measures to be considered are Recruitment Rate, Rehires Percent of Total Hires, Recruiter Response Time, Average Interviews per Hire, Referral Rate, Recruiting Source Distribution, Average Filled Requisitions per Recruiter
3. **Level 3**: mainly the raw data that are used with another variable to develop the Tier 1 "KPIs" and Tier 2 "metrics." Measures that are mainly considered includes, Total Number of Requisitions Opened, Total Number of Positions Filled, Total Open Requisitions, Total Applicants, Total Qualified Applicants and Total Offers Accepted.

The origin of talent acquisition (TA) can be traced back to 1865 (Simomton, 2011), which later emerged as a specialized discipline and getting extended to all fields of professionalism may it be arts, science, management, sports and entertainment, literature, education, marketing and sales, advertisement, public sector offices and every related fields of activity. Talent Management emerged as a specialized area in Business Management activity even much later. Much before its emergence as a specialized area, talent management was in existence and continued as a generalized area of Hu-

man Resources Management. The inclusion of the topic as a specialized area in HR in business contexts came into acceptance during 1990s through the study entitled "The War of the Talent," by (Michaels et. al, 2001). This study took place during the boom time period of technological talents, suggested that the demand exceeded the supply developing a shortage of talented employees either naturally or artificially. Realizing the importance of technically qualified and trained man-power need in the employment scenario, studies started coming-up from HR consultants to analyze the shortages (Tarique& Schuler 2010). Later more studies in this area were conducted, which gave different dynamic interpretations to global talent management (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Hackman, 2006; Tarique& Schuler, 2013).

Lewis and Heckman, 2011 explained talent management (as it is more future oriented) defined in terms of human resource planning and projecting employee / staffing needs. Here the focus is on the types of individual level capabilities needed in the future. Staffing can be divided into recruitment and selection according to Dowling et al., (1994). The study gave emphasis to recruitment and defined it as a search for and obtaining of potential candidates for specific jobs in sufficient "quantity and of quality". This study emphasized that this will help organization to search for most appropriate people to fill the job vacancies. In this context selection was referred to as a process of gathering information for the purposes of evaluating and deciding who should be employed in a particular job. The public sector initiatives world over really keep the value and culture of the nation as well it is all set to provide the proper assistance and support to the people in the country. The specific difference of the public sector initiatives in United Arab Emirates as well with so called merging countries like India, Pakistan etc. is that the sector really works for the people through diversified methods and means. Thus the biggest boom of the country is that the public sector is controlled and managed by the National Government (Hajimirab, 2011). Hence lot of trust and belief gets developed in the system and its efficiency. The best of the public sector undertakings have copied the work systems from the most developed nations like US, UK, Germany etc. These sectors really work for the purpose they are established with strict monitoring and control for providing better services.

The PSUs in Dubai consists of Road and Transport Authority (RTA), Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), TECOM investments, Dubai Metro, General Directorate of Residency and Foreign Affairs, Emirates Post, Etisalat, etc. There is a policy framework for these

institutions to make the job more customer friendly. At the same time, more and more projects or services are being added on to the departments to deliver more services (Cornwell, 2013). There exists no compromise on the services provided by the Public sector institutions in Dubai. The policy is to keep high standards of performance from the governmental manpower to keep the customer always at the best. The governmental mechanism is always to update the hiring sources and hiring list to get the best of the people on board to execute the better services to the customers. (Zenger, 2013). The government is providing excellent on-job trainings to its employees to update themselves and with their jobs and services. There is an absolute need to develop a research framework to study TA frame work.

The objective of the study was to investigate into the current TA framework that public sectors in Dubai and further to find out the weak areas to suggest some improvement in the TM scheme. Customer benefit enquiries have explained that the service quality of Dubai public sector and the employees' performance are of good standard. At the same time there are ongoing efforts to acquire the best talent to provide much better customer care with technical expertise.

The latest process of TA practices in public sectors is needed to address the advanced job settings. It is a must to search for talents with capability of meeting the current job requirements. Thus over a period of time, it can be seen that the TA and TM practices have advanced much from the earlier practices of GK tests, job interviews, skill tests etc. to advanced job performance measures.

- How talent can be expressed: Expressed as gaining knowledge and understanding in any specialized area of activity or is related to acquiring new skills and knowledge in any specific area of domain.
- Is there any significant influence of nationality and / or the cultural and social background of people in the organization which express any direct influence in better organizational performance?
- Is it possible to substitute talent practices of similar organizations in different cultural settings?

- Influence of academic qualifications and social and cultural setting of the employees and its reflection performance in organizations?
- Does the new HR practices bring any additional benefit in performance effectiveness as well as the efficiency in employee performance in PSU for delivering better tasks?
- Is there any positive response / reaction on employee feedback from the organizations
- The HR strategies has to be of some benefit for the excellent workforce management in the new industrial practices and in retention of employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TA and TM is has become an Industry driven phenomena over more than two decades. From a personal managerial level, organizations later shifted the people scenario in a much wider and larger frame with more talent search activities, taking it to the level of Human Resources Management. Later over a period of time, the concept of industries even changed from the mere production centers to multidimensional product and design centers. The most advanced employment selection process other than sourcing, recruitment, selection, training and development and retention practices emerged. Now the whole process is discussed as Talent acquisition and management.

Recruitment and Selection Policies in PSUs. The TA and TM were given a wider priority for well-established organizations. Over a period of time recruitment process gained importance due to the need for technically competent and professional equipped man power. Even the recruitment programs had to become technically competent one with more advanced approach is selecting the right candidates to the job. Fisher et al., (2008) conducting a study in this direction emphasized the need for a "Recruitment Process Evaluation" which included cost of hire, total eligible candidates, number of candidates and / or qualified pool of candidates generated, recruitment image and other related components.

Human Resources Management Policies and Practices. Yu-Ru Hsu et

al., (2000) feels that firms that are small in volume of business or value of business, mostly don't need much of a formalized as well as detailed HRM policies. In bigger organizations where the top management structure is more complex with more activities, it is very much needed to have a very formal and specific HRM policies and practices. This can very well be communicated to employees at all levels, helping them to meet the expected outcomes as desired by the organization.

Employee Selection Processes . Yu-Ru Hsu et al.,(2000) further in his studies reflects that both medium-sized and large firms appear to use 'aptitude tests', 'psychometric tests' and 'skill or knowledge tests' more frequently than small firms. Bigger firms mainly depend on 'panel interviews', 'assessment centers' and 'medical examinations' quite often, for the selection of potential applicants at various levels than the small firms. In addition to this, the company size has a major effects upon many of the recruitment and selection techniques utilized.

Employer and Employee Branding. Employer Branding (EB) explains an organization's value and their worth to potential as well as existing employees. In addition to this, there needs to have excellent communication, maintain loyalty, promote employee welfare, with a clear view of the considerations that makes a firm different from other firms as well best describe as an employer (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004). According to the TM studies conducted by Jenner and Taylor (2009), the basic interest of HRM in EB is mainly because of the power of brands. In the present scenario, HR is still continuing to search for credibility as well to increase interest in employee engagement coincided with tight labor market conditions.

Human Resources practices. From the research done by Weng, (2008) it was discussed that that compensation is the basic guarantee for employees' living and development. There were earlier studies in the area of employee performance, with a distinction between typical and maximum job performance, as explained in his studies by Sackett et al., (1988). Supporting to the observations, in this regard as made by Pallavi, et.al (2008) it is felt that it is better is the recruitment-culture-need fit, there will be a higher engagement, with a lesser rate of attrition.

Talent Acquisition and Talent Management. Talent Acquisition and Talent Management as a practice has emerged as a separate and specific discipline over a period of time. Now it has become one of the elaborate areas in HR practices as understood from the research studies carried out by researchers across the nations. Some of the

studies were researched for our study in TA and TM.

Conceptual Framework

During the last decade, numerous studies have been conducted from all corners of the industrial scenario to describe and discuss the man power planning, recruitment process, people engagement and all related TM activities. These studies conducted were either experimental or analytical research aimed at understanding the TM skills, practices, measures that need to be utilized for industrial improvement. The industrial culture gained momentum in the UAE and in Middle East in the last three decades. This was the time when the more industries were established with the help and support of industries from abroad. Thus the new industries had the culture from their parent companies. Later over a period of time the UAE government started working from various dimensions to improve the work culture in industries in UAE and Dubai. These improvements were aimed at improving the productivity without disturbing the work culture based on the nations' work environment.

Talent Acquisition Frame work consists of the following core dimensions: planning for the work force, recruitment, selection and training of the staff, commitment from the top management, employee responses, organizational characteristics etc. These were considered as independent variables. Major dependent variables measured for the study were employee sourcing attraction outcomes, retention of employees, as well as organizational improvement through employee performance. Recruiter competency as well as organizational reputation was considered as the frame work to mediate with the dependent variables (attraction outcomes, employee retention) and independent variables.

Workforce planning. – is a regular process basically utilized to align the requirements as well as the priorities of the organization with those of its employees to make sure it meets its judicial, regulatory, service as well as production requirements and achieve the organizational objectives. In the last few years, workforce planning emerged from a homogeneous activity. It is engulfed by a wide range of activities basically from individual level to a much higher national and international level. Generally work force plan has to include clear statements of what needs to achieve and how best the same can be achieved, with the expected benefits and risks. Further it is important to explain the worth of the human capital in monetary and fiscal terms. (Wilson and Briscoe, 2001).



Figure 1 : A Framework for Attracting and retaining talent

Cost of Hiring, involves dimensions explained and expressed on the basis of time effort and time value. According to Dowling and Welch (1988) and Tung (1984) the costs of hiring of employees fluctuates based on direct and indirect expenses. Direct expenses is inclusive of salary and benefits, training and development costs, travel, relocation expenses etc. The indirect costs are at times unquantifiable. Every nation has their own hiring policies to the government departments or at the public sector.

Recruitment Policy and Practices.– Much of the studies have been done in this area related to the recruitment policies which in fact govern the recruitment activities. A well-developed recruitment policy must consist at least few of the following measures.

- The focus must be on recruiting the best performers
- Ensure dignity and respect to fellow applicants and employees.
- Clear cut policies and practices.
- Encourage employees to utilize their competency.
- Selection process needs to be transparent, consistent, systematic and considerate.

- There needs to be an optimization of manpower during the selection process.
- Each election process needs to be governed by competent authority.
- Employee needs must be matching to organizational needs.

Based on the policies developed and implemented, we could found that few concerns emerged which were either directly or indirectly affecting the recruitment policies related to various organizations. The policies which developed few concerns to institutions can be listed as follows:-

- Based on the objectives of the organization
- Organizational policies and its competitor's performance.
- Recruitment sources and its preference.
- Organizational need and benefits.
- Cost of recruitment and its financial implications.

It is always important to maintain a recruitment policy at all levels of hierarchy say whether it is the top or lower level positions in the employment positions, regardless of the administrative functions either is a private or a public sector initiatives.

Job Offer is always a commitment to from the job provider with the details regarding job title, grade and rank, salary and other details, leave and allowances, work timings etc. based on which the admission to the job is permitted to employment. The job offer includes basically the reference related to the employment terms and conditions of employment. HRM needs to conduct employee engagement session providing brief overview of the organizational structure, objectives and activities of the Department and its divisions, as well as provide him with a copy of "employee handbook" contained a summary of the regulations and conditions of employment and the rights and responsibilities of the employee is a general guide. It oversees human resources management in coordination with the concerned department to develop a detailed definition of a structured program for jobs that require it.

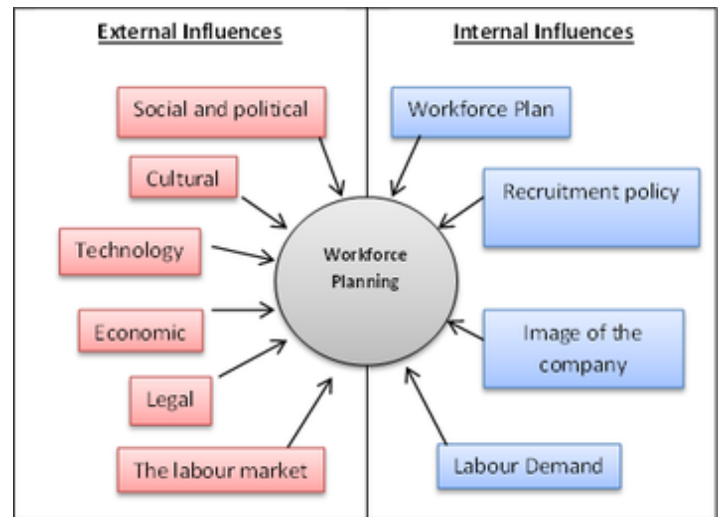


Figure 2 . Talent Management – Sources of Influences

Employee Feedback. – is considered in different ways by organisations. Sometimes it is formal or otherwise it is informal. Employee feedback always provides the employer with much better information, helping employers to find out employee concerns and to resolve the same. Based on this meaning, employee opinion survey results contains various employee responses to enquiry at workplace, or even an employee opinion survey which can focus on any specific concerns which needs further answers. It is a regular practice for the supervisors and managers to provide employee feedback on a continuous and regular basis. It usually help employees to understand their job duties for improvement in their work skills. Ruth Mayhew (2007).

Entire scenario is changing now. Industries are evaluating the employee performance from day one. The HR department is making practices to evaluate the job and industrial concept the employee has as a pre-employment survey and a post-orientation survey. The changes in the mindset of the employees are assessed and analyzed to understand their opinion they had about the job scenario before and after a certain period of time.

Talent Acquisition Budgets.-

In the current scenario, the HR department is engaging most of its time in searching for the best talent pool. Companies has to plan the recruitment process, based on process with a specific task and job characteristics. Currently the talent acquisition budget functions as:

- A specific standard for evaluating the performance against any expectations.

- An investment already expended in terms of time and effort for acquiring the best potential to the industry.
- A resource base for meeting immediate or intermediate financial requirements in case of talent search and identification.

employee leave the job, the organization needs to conduct the same exercise another time bringing in double the expenses to the industry for no benefit.

FIGURE 6 to be added here

Talent Management includes planning for the workforce, effective recruitments, planning strategies, setting talent management goals, executive team management, development of leadership team, employee recognition Programs, Diversity/ Inclusion, Engagement and Retention.

Top Management Commitment : According to Shen et al.,(2004) the top management recruitment teams are usually under great pressure. Usually in the case of expatriate / overseas job appointment to assign employees who with better relationship with top management. Existence and emergence of organizations depends basically on the support and co-operation exhibited by the top management. Thus commitment by the top management always explained as direct participation from the highest level of executives in a specific and critically important activity of the organization.

Organizational Characteristics.

The main characteristics can be explained as follows:-

- **Creating Authority Relationship.** There needs to develop an authority relationship among the top management and the new hires. This clearly decides the hierarchy in jobs and positions.
- **Defining and Granting the Authority.** The authority and responsibility needs to be clearly explained and needs to be communicated. It needs to establish a very close relationship between authority and responsibility.
- **Assigning the Duties.** Within the department, the functional duties should be allotted to particular individuals. When activities are grouped based on



Figure 3: Employee Responses

It was mainly observed by researchers in this area of talent management (Janssens et al., (2006) that the organization's overall business strategy might affect cost-per-hire. By make the cost-cutting in diversified areas namely cost-per-hire, organizations make sure to gain better profitability. The recruiting expenses has become very over a period of time with organizations seeking to be highly creative and innovative in talent management practices. It need to develop the sourcing strategies and costs to search across the overall talent pool.

It is very evident that the talent acquisition budget seems to depend on diversified factors. This includes the expenses from the time a vacancy is materialized to the time the hiring process is completed by the organizations.

In addition to this, confirmation to the job is another important aspect pertaining to the budget. If at any point of time the hired

the similarities and common purposes, it needs to be organized as a particular department.

- **Outlining the Objectives.** Objectives must be established by the administration from time to time to aid and support this main objective.
- **Identifying and Enumerating the Activities.** It is the responsibility of the management to identify total activities and break-up closely related component activities that are to be performed by an individual or division or a department.

Discussion. The public sector undertakings globally exhibited a single phenomenon for TM which makes it responsible for the organizations to follow the policy of the ruling government of the nation. As a regular custom, government sector organizations initiate recruitment process only at the time of the arrival of a vacancy either due to the retirement or death or the incapacity of any people to perform his duties and responsibilities. Regular policies as per the rules of any country is to consider the nationality of the applicant and to categorize the people into minorities, handicapped, widow, under-privileged, women etc and then to rank from the category list, which in other ways have no better chance to get any job. The common policies created a wider gap in the present HR policies, when compared to the practices followed in the private sector. It was always an understanding for the top management for instigating better hiring practices to be in relation with private sector initiative. In PSUs, job vacancies are announced due to concerns like retirement, resignation, death etc. in the organization. The recruitment programs in the industrial sector faced problems as the companies search for replacement starts only after the vacancy is created. The delay in recruitment created concerns to the institutions. Further the top management is always keep regular plan for the more organized expansion programs, diversification plans as well as globalization programs in the organization. Based on this need too, organizations started the hiring policies. The TA team in consultation with the Strategic HR Department always finalize the career options as well as the recruitment plan. The recruitment practices make it easy for hiring.

TA in Public Sector. The hiring pattern in government is almost similar across the nations, with some cultural differences. The or-

ganizations usually hire people only when need arises. At times these practice leads to urgency or even make the office vacant for a long time. When the need becomes urgent, competency needs to be at times compromised. In case of not following a right approach, leads to placement of a wrong person at the wrong position leading to the industrial disaster. By opening the economy to the large scale players, not only the quality and standards of product increased, it increased the overall competition, bringing much better resources and climate to the market. To meet with the challenges, the public sector undertakings had to enhance the present TM activities with the gap to improve the performance.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The study on talent management practice is inspired by the competition in the business environment between the private and public sector initiatives and the diversified approaches industries has to follow to obtain the best talent in the market. This work pioneers the effort to study strategic HR management in talent management in public sector institutions in the country. The research inquisitiveness is aimed at theoretical and practical interest to justify the concern for the present talent management practices, selection and training and recruitment and retention of talent for the success of PSUs.

9 The major focus of the study is aimed to improve the TM practices which have either a direct or even indirect impact on talent attraction outcomes based on institutional requirements. The main factors that contribute to talent acquisition predictors are mainly the hiring attraction outcomes and performance in organizations. The study seems as the pilot attempt in this area related to organizational performance and its implications in improving government sector and reflects the efforts to search and place the right talent for the jobs in designed for public sector organizations. The study was aimed to understand the talent acquisition practices in the public sector institutions organizations specifically in Middle East. The study tried to explain the details related to the various circumstances as well as the conditions that make the PSUs to hire excellent talent from the hiring scenario. The main area of discussions were based on work force planning, attraction, selection, and recruitment and retaining process. Further the study concentrated on commitments of the top management in delivering support in making hiring or TA one of the best practices in public sectors. The employee hiring and engagement is best reviewed through a well-developed talent acquisition practice, feedback mechanism, and organizational characteristics. The major focus were on organizational need in public sector undertakings in the Middle East.

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