INVITED PAPER

Assessment of Strategic Human Resource Interventions in Select Government Departments in West Bengal, India: Conceiving a Measurement Scale

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Abstract

With a prelude of literature on strategic human resource management, this paper highlights a research design for creating a measurement scale that can be used to understand the extent of applicability of HR interventions in the Government departments in West Bengal, an eastern state in India. Literature on the study hovers round on the key areas of strategic HR viz. applicability of strategic HR at work, leadership practices, relevance of business ethics, the optimistic flavor of motivational drives, the identifiable areas of employee engagement, elements of job satisfaction, and spirit of restructuring organizations. On this backdrop, four departments primarily allocated for service sector of the state economy namely Labour department; Commerce & Industries department; Health & Family Welfare department; Technical Education & Training department of the state of West Bengal have been considered for the present study. The research scale is formulated in the name of "Potential Assessment of Human Resource Interventions in Public Departments" i.e. "PAHRI – PD" scale has been initiated on the lines of five broad areas of strategic human resource interventions viz., employment, management and development, measurement and acknowledgement, building departmental culture and environment and nurturing of human resource in this paper. The study makes an attempt to conceive a measurement scale to measure applicability of strategic HR interventions in government departments of West Bengal in eastern India.

Keywords: strategic, interventions, HR, scale, assessment, government, West Bengal

1. Introduction

Organizations thrive on people. The image of an organization is reflected through goodwill and trustworthiness upheld by its human force. International competition and global competitiveness have brought in the need for laying much importance and relevance of people factor at work-domain (Monappa, 1997). The inclination towards strategic human resource interventions at the organizational terrain has revolutionized the pathway for success and sustenance for today's business houses in the long run. Strategic HRM gives the direction on how to build the foundation for strategic advantage by creating an effective organizational structure and design, culture, employee, value proposition, systems thinking, an appropriate communication strategy and preparing an organization for a changing landscape (Ray Chaudhuri & Basu, 1997). The essence of the working paper is oriented towards exploration of SHRM and essentiality of human resource interface in the public domain. The scope of the paper revolves around with the potential of strategic human resource interventions in the specified government departments in the state of West Bengal.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 HR at Work Place

A good work environment is one that brings out the best in people. The epicenter of any productive functions is ensured through the linkage of desirable working conditions and workers attributes inducing potential output (Valle, 2005). The employer-employee relation is the vital backbone for successful accomplishment of any organizational activity at work front. People work best in a setting marked by mutual respect, personal dignity and support which utilizes one's skills and abilities with cooperation, coordination and integration at the functional platform. A safe workspace eliminates workplace aggression and thus boosting workers' performance (Flanagan, Strauss & Ullman, 1974). The gift of safe and civil atmosphere, the climate free from threats and violence with the existing policy for equity and justice against all odds in the name of harassment, bullying- all induces a positive feeling, a sense of belongingness and motivation among the workforce.

2.2 HR & Leadership

A common consensus has evolved in leading business houses emphasizing the need and necessity of leadership amidst increasingly turbulent and complex organizational environment (Schein, 1992). The reelection of guiding thoughts with a mission designed through universal vision is the essence of new millennium leadership. To combat the storms of organizational catastrophe a leader should adhere to the directives of crisis management in the sphere of over-viewing the actual situation with prompt action compounded through management of expectations and assuming control action supplemented by a liberal outlook (Kragnes, 1994). The conglomeration of a host of varied attributes of way of life in the form of language, race gender, ethnicity, experience, knowledge and other allied elements characterizes effectiveness of future leaders across the globe. The potentials of strategic leadership pave the way towards global leadership characterized with visionary outlook, assembling core competencies, human capital component, new technology spectrum, commitment in important strategies, structuring an ideal organizational culture, implementation of balanced controls and engagement in ethical 3 activities (Gouldner, 1950).

2.3 HR & Ethics

In the last two decades the waves of several visible trends and attitudinal changes have been reflected in the management of thoughts emphasizing on eternal human values (Gentile, 1998). With the flow of time the essence of human values seem to be nurtured within the shell of Human Resource Management synthesizing a holistic view of life, touching the spiritual heights with material attainment. The nucleus of Business-Government-society is the core of every ethical structure prevailing across boundaries (Miceli, Near, 2001). Strategic Human Resource Management has evolved as the backbone to regain from illusionary ethical values and exaggerated misconceptions through interactive video, ethical games, moral dilemma discussions and imparting training at various levels of ethical misapprehension. The essentials of ethical mission, in the framework of international human resource management throw light on creation, nurture, communication and efficacy in relation to ethical values in the organizational hemisphere (Brenner, 1992).

2.4 HR & Motivation

The spotlight focusing the zenith of sustainable organizational development can be vested on the stimuli of human force at the organizational platform. Organizations become successful when employees are enriched with abilities and designed with desire to accomplish given tasks (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003). The zeal and enthusiasm of the workforce induces for employee commitment which is blended with certain or critical motivational elements viz. synergy- the existing force of living being and cause of any activity, the individual behavior- leading towards goal centric function, the behavioral determination- to act appropriately on nay organizational upheaval (Latham & Steele, 1983). A close connectivity with attachment and attraction towards job can be witnessed where involvement induces employees to achieve superior results which in turn encircle the process of commitment and continuity and constancy. Amidst recycling effect of environmental sphere the harmony between environmental morale and corporate environmental responsibility is of utmost relevance in the new millennium encyclopedia (Miner, 2006).

2.5 HR & Employee Engagement

The epicenter of organizational excellence revolves around to the degree and extent human involvement at work. To have a committed workforce ensures satisfaction, consummation and fulfillment in the minds of employee (Petri, Bryson, IImakunnas, 2012). The essentiality of conveying the real meaning and rationale of the need for employee engagement creates the path for drafting the right decision which ultimately induces an employee to get a positive inclination to the job assigned. A growing body of literature on 'happiness' has become an important focus in aspect of human life. Happier employees are more easily to 'broaden-and-build' themselves, more creative (Cohen, 1991). Resilient, socially connected, physically and mentally healthy and more productive. Subjective well being and welfare is the core of happiness projecting equilibrium between personal life and social life, enjoyable work terrain, sound health and energy, democratic style of management keep employees happy (Robertson & Cooper, 2011).

2.6 HR & Job Satisfaction

People today are largely acknowledged as key resources and valuable asset at work. A good beginning with the right intention, enthusiasm and the desire towards accomplishment of job is the way towards enhancing human capacities at work in the real sense of the term. A resourceful worker creates a concrete foundation in building the process of job satisfaction through job performance (Locke, 1970). Literature suggests that performance based pay, job rotation and empowerment are higher levels of HR initiatives that influence job satisfaction. Blending of engagement of man-power, evaluation of human abilities and enhancement of job opportunities are keys to ensuring job satisfaction and contentment among employees (Schmidt, 2007). Quite apparently it can be cited that the '4P's i.e. working location referred to as 'place', remuneration defined as 'perks', upliftment termed as 'promises' and working duration quoted as 'presence' all combined pave the doorway to job satisfaction (Ganzack, 1998).

2.7 HR & Organizational Development

As we step forward in the new millennium organizational survival and endurance ties knot with challenges-competitions-changes. Organizational development is an ongoing advancement process of human values with a focus on productivity designed with promises and programmed for performances (Beeson & Davis, 2000). The siblings of effective organizational renovation are embedded within the layers of the social spheres coupled with realistic aspect of good governance. The journey towards organizational development movement witnessed the intervention of cultural components with change agents viz. power haring, collaboration, teamwork, autonomy all contributing to the cultural values in which the organization operates (Cumming & Huse, 1989). The notion of organizational development has gained prominence as a tool towards innovation, creativity, novelty and escalation in the corporate hemisphere. Organizational development is not an 'end' but a 'means' in generating enormous opportunities and potential in the search of the 'good' and 'goodness' for making organizations more successful and satisfying (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

3.   Research Objective

Although quite some amount of research has been done in the field of Human Resource Interventions in management literature, there are hardly a handful of studies on strategic HR interventions and their applicability in the workplace in the Indian context. More-so nothing much has been studied on application of SHRIs in the public sector in the Indian context. No apt measurement scale for measuring the reality application of strategic human resource interventions in the government departments of West Bengal has been conceived so far. Considering this phenomenon as a research gap, the key objective of this paper is to highlight a research design for conceiving a measurement scale to identify and assess the applicability of HR interventions in the Government of West Bengal, in the light of some select government departments viz.: the public departments of Labour; Commerce & Industry; Health & Family Welfare; and Technical Education & Training in the Government of West Bengal.

A brief detail of the four departments considered for development of scale are enumerated as:

✓ i. <u>Labour Department</u>: This department is chiefly concerned with the administration of the enactments and to promote harmonious industrial relations. Labour department, Government of West Bengal is devoted to the cause of the toiling masses comprising the underprivileged, deprived and poor inhabitants of the state.(www.westbengal.gov.in).

✓ ii. <u>Commerce and Industries Department</u>: This department is mainly responsible for promotion and regulation of large and medium scale industries and trade and commerce in the state. Commerce and Industries department is assigned with the tasks of formulating and implementing industrial policies and strategies required for the development of state economy.(www.westbengal.gov.in).

✓ iii. <u>Health and Family Welfare Department</u>: Vested with the responsibility of maintaining and developing the health care system in the state of West Bengal through its Health & Family Welfare Department which provides financial and managerial support for the improvement basic health care facilities at the rural level.(www.westbengal.gov.in).

✓ iv. <u>Technical Education and Training Department</u>: The state of West Bengal has vested the responsibility to Technical Education & Training department to provide technical know-how among the students of economically backward areas of the state with subsidised fee structure. The core areas of this department include promotion and encouragement in the growth and development of skill development programmes throughout the state. (www.westbengal.gov.in).

The authors of this paper have proposed a structured research design for creation of the "***Potential Assessment of Human Resource Interventions in Public Departments***" i.e. "**PAHRI – PD**" scale. The nomenclature of this measurement scale has been coined by the authors themselves.

4. **The Research Design for Conceiving the PAHRI-PD scale**

The Research Design for preparation of the PAHRI-PD scale has been envisaged in terms of a handful of steps.

<u>Step – I</u>

<u>Defining the domains on the basis of literature review & experts/judges opinion</u>

A detailed study of literature coupled with interactions and discussions with experts in the Human Resource functional area have been taken up for identifying the broad domains of the study.

The broad domains referred to the functional areas of HRM in the staffing of man power, supervision and improvement of human resource, estimation and recognition of personnel, enhancing departmental cultural spirit and taking care of man power at work place.

The five major domains of the scale have be identified as

> Dom A   Employment of Human Resource
>
> Dom B : Management & Development of Human Resource
>
> Dom C : Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource
>
> Dom D : Building Departmental Culture & Environment of Human Resource
>
> Dom E : Nurturing Human Resource at work

Step- II

Defining the Sub domains/Subscales under each domain & defining the items relating to the Sub domains

On the basis of further literature review an understanding of the problem to be investigated, the sub domains have been identified under each domain and multiple items of study have been identified relating to the sub domains

The following table (Table 1) shows the number of sub domains or sub scales items at this stage.

Table 1

Domain	Sub Domain or Sub Scale	Items
[A] Employment of Human Resource	A.1 Manpower Planning A.2 Job Analysis and Job Design A.3 Recruitment and Selection A.4 Placement and Induction	43
[B] Management & Development of Human Resource	B.1 Employee Training and Development B.2 Career Planning activities of Employees B.3 Performance Management	37
[C] Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource	C.1 Job Evaluation C.2 Compensation, Administration and Employee Benefit Programme	26
[D] Building Departmental Culture & Environment of Human Resource	D.1 Well Managed Departmental Structure D.2 Clear Departmental Communication D.3 Clean & Consistent Departmental Culture D.4 Planned Change and Departmental Development	62
[E] Nurturing Human Resource at work	E.1 Grievance and Discipline Management E.2 Collective Bargaining E.3 Participation & Empowerment E.4 Trade Unionism E.5 Industrial Relations	50

Total number of items at this stage has been 218 in all.

Step- III

Expert/Judges opinion and Item Language Construction

The scale has been then circulated among 25 experts/judges in the field of HRM comprising of both academicians and practicing managers in the industry in Kolkata as well as across the country for their opinions about the appropriation of the sub-domain and the items in relation to the purpose of the study. The experts have been chosen indentifying their considerable experience in the field of Human Resource Management as an academician or as an industry practitioner.

With the incorporation of the views and opinions of experts/judges some of the sub domains/sub scales have been restructured, certain sub domains have been merged with other sub domains or sub scales while certain sub domains have been totally deleted. Some items too have been deleted in the process.

The scale has been further improved upon and developed in accordance with the 14 Classical Rules stated by Edwards, 1957 for a clear and discrete language construction of the items in the scale.

These steps have initiated the basic layout of the "Potential Assessment of Human Resource Interventions in Public Departments" i.e. "PAHRI–PD" scale, considered in this paper.

The following table (Table 2) shows the Domain, Sub Domains/ Sub –Scales and also the number of items associated with each Sub Domain/Sub Scale .

Table 2

Domain	Sub Domain or Sub Scale	Items
Dom A. Employment of Human Resource	i. Manpower Planning ii. Job Analysis and Job Design iii. Recruitment and Selection iv. Placement and Induction	40
Dom B. Management & Development of Human Resource	i. Training and Development ii. Career Planning activities of iii. Employees iv. Performance Management	35
Dom C. Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource	i. Job Evaluation ii. Compensation, Administration and Employee Benefit Programme	25
Dom D. Building Departmental Culture & Environment of Human Resource	i. i.Well Managed Departmental ii. Structure iii. ii.Clear Departmental iv. Communication v. Clean & Consistent Departmental Culture vi. Planned Change and vii. Departmental Development	60
Dom E. Nurturing Human Resource at work	i. Grievance and Discipline i. Management ii. Collective Bargaining iii. Participation & Empowerment iv. Trade Unionism v. v. Industrial Relations	50

Total number of items at this stage has been 210 in all.

Thus this paper has revealed five specific Domains with a range of Sub Domains/Sub-Scales along with it. All these have been done through literature review, experts/judges opinion and incorporation of the 14 Classical Rules by Edwards 1957.

Step- IV

Assessing the applicability of the items

To assess the applicability of 210 items in the scale two techniques were adopted. One was through rating by experts and the other by statistical technique of item analysis.

    (i)   Rating by Experts

The scale so far developed has been then further circulated to 10 experts/judges, who were selected at random from among the previously considered 25 experts.

Thereafter a mathematical exercise has been taken up to eliminate items which do not seem to be much of relevance in the context of the present study as per opinions of the 10 experts to whom the scale as in was circulated.

The exercise has been as follows:-

    a) Considering each item under each sub domain the following calculation was done:
        Sum of scale responses of all 10 respondents
                              10
    b) If quotient is less than or equal to 3.0, the item is rejected and if quotient is greater than 3.0, the item may be considered for acceptance- accepted.

The following table (Table 3) shows the number of sub-domains or subscales and items at this stage.

Table 3

Domain	Sub Domain or Sub Scale	Items
Employment of Human Resource [A]	4 (A.1, A.2, A.3 & A.4)	8+11+7+10=36
Management & Development of Human Resource [B]	3 (B.1, B.2 & B.3)	15+8+10=33
Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource [C]	2 (C.1 & C.2)	11+11=22
Building Departmental Culture & Environment of Human Resource [D]	4 (D.1, D.2, D.3 & D.4)	14+14+11+17=56
Nurturing Human Resource at Work [E]	5 (E.1, E.2, E.3, E.4 & E.5)	7+8+10+11+10=46

The total number of items at this stage has been 193 in all.

    (ii)   Item Analysis

Before finalizing the scale, the item subtotal correlations had to be computed between each item and their respective sub-domains. Only those items that correlated quite significantly ($P<0.05$) with their respective sub-domain were decided to be considered for inclusion. For this purpose the draft scale was administered to the Pilot sample .

Step – V

Pilot Study: Preliminary administration and Item analysis

The scale thus set up has been put forward for a test run towards a Pilot Study .

Sample for Pilot Study: The sample for pilot study consisted of 112 samples of four select departments under

Government of West Bengal viz. Commerce and Industries Department, Labour Department, Technical Education & Training Department and Health & Family Welfare Department.

The sample of respondents was asked to respond on their perception of the critically of each sub-domain (SHRIs) in relation to each of the items mentioned. The response has been made on the basis of five-point scale.

The procedure for data collection has been considered in terms of:-

i. Primary face to face interaction with the individual respondents in selected organization and departments with the sealed questionnaire discussed and explained to them in person.
ii. Face to face interaction with specific contact persons in the selected organizations and departments with the scaled questionnaire discussed and explained to them and later distributing the same to the rest of the others considered as sample respondents for their feedback.
iii. Telephonic interaction with the contact person and / or respondents with the questionnaire discussed and explained to them.
iv. E-mail communication with the contact persons and the respondents of the selected organization and departments with the scaled questionnaire being discussed and explained to them.
v. A combination of sum or all of the above four approaches as was felt suitable in specified cases.

Step-VI

Questionnaire Construction & Testing

Based on the responses of the Pilot Study an attempt has been made to create the final scale. The final questionnaire consisted of basic demographic information about the respondents and the responses from the total sample for all the items following a rating scale 1-5, 1 meaning 'not at all applied' & 5 meaning 'extremely applied'.

The Reliability Test has been conducted for five domains viz. Domain A i.e. Employment of Human Resources, Domain B i.e. Management and Development of Human Resources, Domain C i.e. Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource , Domain D i.e. Building Departmental Culture and Environment and Domain E i.e. Nurturing Human Resource at work.

In all cases the value of Cronch Back Alpha appeared to be greater than 0.70, thus showing all the constructs in the scale as reliable.

5. **Results**

The Domains and Sub Domains/Sub Scales of "*Public Department Human Resource Intervention Potential Assessment Scale*" - **"PAHRI-PD"** scale thus created are:

Dom A. Employment of Human Resource

A.1 Manpower Planning (8 Items)

A.2 Job Analysis and Job Design (11 Items)

A.3 Recruitment and Selection (7 Items)

A.4 Placement and Induction (10 Items)

Dom B. Management and Development of Human Resource

B.1 Employee Training & Development (15 Items)

B.2 Career Planning (8Items)

B.3 Performance Management (10 Items)

Dom C. Measurement & Acknowledgement of Human Resource

C.1 Job Evaluation (11 Items)

C.2 Compensation, Administration & Employee Benefit Program (11 Items)

Dom D. Building Departmental Culture and Environment

D.1 Well managed Departmental Structure (14 Items)

D.2 Clear Departmental Communication (14 Items)

D.3 Clean & Consistent Departmental Culture (11 Items)

D.4 Planned Change and Departmental Development (17 Items)

Dom E. Nurturing Human Resource at Work

E.1 Grievance and Discipline Management (7 Items)

E.2 Collective Bargaining (9 Items)

E.3 Participation & Empowerment (10 Items)

E.4 Trade Unionism (10 Items)

6. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The endeavor in this paper to create a standardized measurement scale to identify and understanding the extent of real life application of typical HR intervention in the government departments in West Bengal Government is an enabling step forward in gauging the applicability of HR interventions in the Government departments. The implication of this study is the conception of the 'PAHRI-PD' scale to measure the application of HR intervention in the public work setting in the Government of West Bengal. Authorities and senior managerial officials in the Government of West Bengal can use this scale to understand the core areas where improvement is necessary in the application of HR interventions, considering the public departments in the West Bengal Government. Accordingly authorities in the Government may revisit their drive towards initiating HR practices in the workplace and improve upon the necessary deficiencies in the application of HR intervention in the West Bengal Government.

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