HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SLN

INTRODUCTION

1.   Navy is the most vital defence force of an Island Nation. The Sri Lanka Navy needs to maintain a well-balanced and cohesive force, capable of operating in waters around Sri Lanka to safeguard our national interests effectively. After the war against terrorism extended for 30 years, Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) is in the need of developing its capacity to ensure the demand of national security which is extended beyond the responding to terrorism and insurgence. SLN expects to transform its capability from brown water to blue water, since it is vital in protecting and exploiting the ocean resources within EEZ for development of the country.

2.   The importance of the human resource in having a credible navy is paramount above its all assets. In order to give justice to the use of the equipment, the personnel are to be motivated and are to have a high morale. In addition, they are to be functionally well-trained and are to have good leadership and managerial qualities when in those positions. Therefore, the Navy must be committed to the focused training and development of its members pursuing World Class Performance standards. A focused approach is necessary to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities members require to achieve the Navy's mission.

3.   Since the SLN is in a paramount period of transition, it is essential to consider that, how effective the human resource management system in SLN in developing and managing talents required to achieve its strategic objectives. And a well-defined concentration on the key areas needed to be developed in order to support the overall strategic objectives is vital within this transition period.

AIM

4.   The aim of this paper is to examine ways of improving the realism and challenges of Human Resource Management in Sri Lanka Navy.

CONCEPT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

5.   Human Resource Management is the effective and efficient utilization of Human Resource to achieve goals of the organization.[1] It is not an exaggeration that HR is the most significant resource concerned with other resources such as financial resources, physical resources etc.

Historical Evolution of HRM

6.   The historical analysis will show how the role of HRM has changed over time from primarily being concerned with routine transactional and traditional HR activities to dealing with complex transformational one.

7.   In the early 20th century and prior to World War II, the personal function (the precursor of Human Resource Management) was primarily involved in clerical record keeping of employee information; in other words, it fulfilled caretaker function. Mobilization and utilization of personnel and labor during the World War II had a great impact on the development of personnel function. Lessons learnt at war utilized in the industrial sectors in post-world war II period and managers realized that employee productivity and motivation had a significant impact of profitability of the firm.

8.   Due to the need for classification of large numbers of individuals in military service during war, systematic efforts began to classify workers around occupational categories in order to improve recruitment and selection procedures. The central aspects of these classification systems were the job description, which listed the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of any individual who held the job in question.

9.   In some cases in the defence, job analysis and classification data were inputted to computers to better understand, plan and use employee skills against needs. For example, the

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[1] Henarath H.N.D.P. Opatha. Human Resource Management. Colombo, 2012, pp 7.

US Air Force conducted a thorough and systematic job analysis and classification through its Human Resources Laboratory (AFHRL), which resulted in a comprehensive occupational structure.[2]

10.   Personnel department had to establish separate specialist divisions such as, recruitment, labor relations, and training and government relations. With this expanding role, personnel department started keeping increasing numbers and types of records, and computer technology began to emerge as possible solution to keep records and to retrieve with regard to large numbers of records.

11.   With the development concerns on social issues (1963 to 1980) and cost effectiveness (1980 to early 1990s) personnel management transformed in to Human resource management, transforming role from 'caretaker' towards 'strategic partner'.[3]

12.   The radical changes of economic environment throughout the 1990s with increasing globalization and technological breakthrough (particularly internet enabled web services). With the growing importance and recognition of HRM in contemporary organizations, 'Strategic Human Resource Management' has become critically important in management thinking and practice. Strategic HRM treats human capital as a strategic asset in improving organizational performance.[4]

HR Activities in Contemporary Organizational Environment

13.   Presently, typical HR programs involve multiple activities and can be classified in to three broad categories:

    a.   **Transactional activities**.   Day-to-day activities that have to deal with record keeping mostly.

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[2] Micheal J. Kavanagh, Mohan Thite and Richard D. Johnson. Human Resource Information Systems. Delhi: Sage Puplications, 2012, pp 25.
[3] Ibid, pp 26.
[4] Brian E.Becker and Mark A. Huselid, 'Strategic Human Resources Management: Where Do We Go From Here', Journal of Management, 2006. pp 898-922.

b. **Traditional activities.** HR programs such as planning, recruiting, selection, training, compensation etc.

c. **Transformational activities.** That add value to the organization, such as cultural or organizational change, structural realignment, strategic redirection and innovation.[5]

14. According to researches, most of HR departments spend approximately 65% - 75% on transactional activities, 15% - 30% on traditional activities and 5%-15% on transformational activities.[6]

15. This is common to the SLN too. Not even HR department at headquarters, even first line management positions and middle level management positions are commonly seen engaging in more time on transactional and traditional activities, without concerning how the can be utilized for HR transformational activities which can result process improvements as well as strategical / innovative developments of the organization in the cause of sailing beyond the brown water.

Strategic Human Resources Management

16. Human resources alignment means integrating decisions about people with decisions about the results an organization is trying to obtain. By integrating human resources management (HRM) into the strategic planning process, emphasizing human resources (HR) activities that support broad organization mission goals, and building a strong relationship between HR and management, organizations are able to ensure that the management of human resources contributes to mission accomplishment.

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[5] Patrick M.Wright, Gary C. McMahan, Scott A. Snell and Barry A. Gerhart, Comparing Line and HR Executives' Perceptions of HR Effectiveness: Services, Roles, and Contributions , CAHRS Working Paper Series 11-1-1998.
[6] Ibid.

17.   Prioritizing on objectives as per the organization strategic plans rather than routine relocating is important. The relationship between HR and management is becoming more collaborative. HR offices are becoming more consultative and HR is to become a strategic partner at all levels. To do so, HR needs to build its own internal competencies to deal with organizational issues, educate itself on organizational environment and program missions, and find ways to offer creative and innovative solutions to organization wide issues.

ICT Intervention to HRM

18.   Designing, development and implementation of Technologically-Driven Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS) were developed to reduce of HR department staff's and line managers' time spending on transactional activities, allowing the staff to spend more time on traditional and transformational activities. Technology-driven automation and redesigning of work processes certainly help reduce costs and cycle times as well as improve quality. It can be further use to support in making and implementing strategic decisions. Through these changes, the role of HRM is redefined and transformed through value-added, strategic initiatives and interventions.[7]

HRM IN SRI LANKA NAVY

19.   In Sri Lanka Navy, different functions of HRM is carrying out through number of directorates. The recruitment, selection, employee placement and movement, performance evaluation are carried out by 'directorate of personnel' while training is carried out by separate training directorate. While compensation is done through 'pay and pension' directorate, welfare issues are taken care by 'directorate of welfare'. Since the overall mechanism is bonded with centralized control this, division of work process is highly effective for delivery of HRM function through more dedicated activities by each directorate.

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[7]   Micheal J. Kavanagh, Mohan Thite and Richard D. Johnson. Human Resource Information Systems. Delhi: Sage Puplications, 2012, pp 30.

To achieve expected outcome of HR programs, the close collaboration, necessary information sharing, collective planning and individual unit planning which are in-lined with organizational mission and objectives are highly important.

20.   Although the contribution of each small unit or individual member of the organization in the overall mission accomplishment and strategic development is highly important, commonly individuals and first-line managers (junior officers) and sometimes middle level managers also, are not aware on contribution can be made by them, importance of their works and how it affect overall accomplishment etc. This issue should be addressed by providing necessary information relevant to their spectrum to contribute the overall objectives in different management levels. This will facilitate the better achievement of objectives more swiftly and by providing all members of the organization, the feeling of responsibility.

Future Needs of HR

21.   Future needs of HR to be forecasted through comprehensive Human Resource Planning programs which are in-lined with future operational and strategic objectives, plans and projects. HR activities are to be a part of developing and maintaining optimum workforce need to execute future mission and objectives. And it should be a part of overall organizational plan which prepare workforce for future assignments; rather than managing strength and composition along with routinely arising personnel requirements.

Operational Personnel

22.   The personnel and recruitment patterns would have to plan and implement as per future needs. For an example, taking on technical responsibilities that it is currently incapable of, will be a one issue; new emphasis on qualification in electronic warfare may be an area need attention in this concern.

Specialised Personnel

23.   Rapid advancements in technology makes it is necessary for technical personnel to be vertically specialised in a specific field; be it missiles, gunnery, anti-submarine warfare, navaids, communications, software or hardware development, system interfacing. Sailors to be trained and utilized in professions; especially seaman sailors with different specializations, possess only nominal specialization without require skills and knowledge level. They are more often utilized in non-professional activities. Technically non-proficient sailors should have no place in professional working environment.

24.   Similarly, officers are generally engaged in routine administrative aspects rather than professional activities. Since the organization climate not demanding professional outcome from them, natural tendency is to spend time on these line. This condition can be identified as a result of 30 years focus on defeating an in-land terrorist group. But it is high time to formulate policies and re-engineer the work environment to direct organizational HR in appropriate direction. Human resource is an intangible factor, which, if harnessed, has the potential of a force multiplier; Careful thought must, therefore go into cultivating it, for optimum results.

25.   Specialized and professional personnel can be pooled and maintained in an optimum strength (not in excess) if there is an inability to bear the cost for their training and development in making them professionally competent. However, these specially trained men not to be utilized for manpower requirements in ordinary assignments given to the navy such as working party support to construction / developments in public organizations. Separately recruited workforce can be used to cater such unskilled manpower requirements and projects exposed to general public, which will support to keep up the moral, spirit, competency and recognition of SLN personnel as a competent fighting force.

Recruitment Philosophy

26.   In order to progress along the transition more successfully, SLN required skilful and motivated cadre rather than passengers on-board. Therefore, recruiting employees with knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes which SLN need is more important rather than trying to maintain cadre requirement.

27.   Along with the war extended for 30 years, younger population of the country is used to try all available options for employment and finally look toward a career in military at the end; when no other better option is available. Recruitment philosophy must be focussed on absorbing personnel from resource pools who has 'organization fit' and 'job fit' attitudes, skills and knowledge, eliminating personnel join due to no other option. Recruiting would have to be more aggressive and may have to tap people in the personnel pool, such as college graduates or individuals in mid-career, before they are recruited by the civilian market.

28.   Research confirms that people feel more satisfied with their lives if they are satisfied with their jobs, and that good matching of 'people to jobs' leads to better job performance and greater job satisfaction.

Training Philosophy

29.   The future navy would comprise personnel, who come from a variety of cultural and education backgrounds to which the training systems would have to be sensitive and adaptive. All major navies are being designed to operate with fewer people who have more technical capability at their disposal. Technology, in the form of elaborate, networked instrumentation, automated machinery controls, and integrated information and communication systems that can generate fast responses. Personnel would have to be considered as integral parts of the overall system.

30.   More emphasis would have to be laid on simulators to speed up training and improve job performance, thereby shortening the time required for more expensive training with

actual systems and forces in their real environment. Vertically specialised training would be essential to ensure in depth knowledge of systems for optimum exploitation, up to junior officer level.

31.   Continuous learning is extremely important that individuals be made to undergo regular training updates to keep abreast with the rapid changes in technology. Training and development policies should include career planning component and to be in-lined with overall HRP(Human Resource Planning) and organization's strategic plan.

32.   All training and development activities are directed by a systematic needs analysis and are aimed at the improvement of performance towards clearly defined competency standards.

    a.   Talent is systematically identified, developed and mentored in accordance with individual and organisational needs.

    b.   Leadership and employee development must be cost-effective. The most effective way to co-ordinate the provision of development opportunities needs to be identified and established.

Quality of Life

33.   Well qualified and trained personnel are the wealth of any organisation and therefore would have to be retained for maximum period thereafter to enable obtain optimum returns. In terms of both economics and force effectiveness, it would be important to keep personnel in the forces longer. Maintaining competent and contented workforce is a key to performance as well as attracting talents to the organization.

34.   Military careers would find it increasingly difficult to compete with civil careers in terms of pay packets. However, quality of life would have to be maintained by way of improvements in services offered. Employee quality of life need more attention to ensure, they are respected and valued by society in terms of economic and social aspects.

a.   Policies of the navy that value and support their personnel should be seriously and effective implemented.

b.   Special attention would have to be paid to promotion prospects to ensure that stagnation and consequent frustration does not take place. Comprehensive human resource planning is key component to serve this purpose.

c.   Technology can also improve the work environment in many ways, from enhancing comport to providing adequate and suitable tools and machinery to get jobs done.

d.   Personnel at sea, perform better if the security of their families is ensured. Personalised attention would have to be given to the quality of housing, education, medical care, work opportunities for spouses and elder children, and all the other tangible and intangible factors that lead families to feel satisfied or dissatisfied with their daily lives.

e.   Furthermore, personnel feel benefited if they can use their spare time to advance their education and technical skills, leading either to better promotion prospects or better job prospect on leaving the navy.

Performance Management

35.   Performance Management is a key area of managing talent in any organization. When applying the generally accepted concepts to military organizations (or any organization), attention must be paid to organizational environment, routine operational requirements, vision, mission and long term objectives of the organization.

36.   Evaluation of the impact of performance management system of the organization need to be carried out to ensure high performance of day-to-day operations as well as alignment of organizational activities with long term strategic objectives of the organization.

37. It is important to identify the impact of existing Performance Management system on individuals and organization with related to attainment of routine and operational responsibilities as well as achievement of long term strategic objectives of the organization. Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of existing Performance Management System in term of tools utilizing as well as process perspective will be beneficial for improvement of the whole PM system.

EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF SRI LANKA NAVY'S HRMS

Human Resource Information System

38. HR Information System is an information system, which is basically to acquire, store, manipulate, analyze, retrieve and distribute pertinent information about an organization's human resources. It is one of the Management Information Systems. It integrates information like employee details, pay roll, benefits, performance tracking and appraisal etc.

39. HRIS provide human resource professionals with opportunities to enhance their contribution to the strategic direction of the firm, First by automating and devolving many routine human resource task to the line management, HRIS provides human resource professionals with the time needed to direct their attention towards more operational and strategic level tasks, such as leadership development and talent management.

40. Other advantages of HRIS implementation can be mentioned as follows.

    a.   **Benefits for Management**.
        (1)   Increase of overall decision making efficiency.
        (2)   Cost reducing and better control of budget.
        (3)   A clear vision of overall process including transparency.
        (4)   Sharp insight into the HR processes at the aggregate level.

b.   **Benefits for Human Resource Department**.

(1)   Possession of single data base of all employees in the company with all necessary information and opportunities of different reports.

(2)   Elimination of paper forms that are much slower and with higher probability of errors.

(3)   The ability to update data bases in real time, on the basis of all changes, which is of extreme importance to regionally diversified organizations.

(4)   Minimize errors that are caused by human factor.

(5)   Improved management system in accordance with the legislation.

(6)   Elimination or reduction of redundancy in the system.

(7)   Standardization of operating processes.

c.   **Benefits for Employees.**

(1)   Saves time (Time management)

(2)   The possibility of independent access to data, which often means working in one software window.

(3)   24/7 data availability.

(4)   Increasing staff morale.

(5)   Automatic tracking and reminder to obligations and events.

(6)   Encouraging employees to make decisions and initiatives on the basis of information obtained in the HRIS system.

(7)   The ability to attend training courses and the development of personal skills and knowledge.

Human Resource Management System of SLN

41.   SL Navy Human resource information system is named as "Human Resource Management System (HRMS)". Secretary to the Commander of the Navy and DNP are directly responsible for maintaining database for officers and sailors of the HRMS

respectively. DNA, DNW, DNT and DNMS are responsible for maintaining the database of their respective areas. IT directorate will assist wherever required on above functions.[8]

42.   Maintaining an updated database of personnel records of workforce approximately 55,000 is a rather difficult work process. And the complexity and the difficulty of accurate database maintenance are increased with following processes which is the nature of Naval Force.

    a.   Personnel are located all around the island in different areas with different infrastructure facilities.

    b.   Personals are varied in job specifications and specialization, rank, rate and other biographic factors.

    c.   Almost each person is getting a change of workplace (establishment or ship) annually (At least bi-annually).

    d.   Different foreign and local training programs are conducted throughout the year.

    e.   Different career specialized personals are to go through different type of examinations and training.

    f.   Promotion and other career management criteria are different for differently specialized personals.

43.   Therefore, there is highly prominent need of managing personal records of naval personals in organized manner and in the way it can be updated regularly and retrieved whenever required.

44.   When the system design is in progress, analyzing and creating logical design is more important to achieve the objectives and expected outcome of the process of automation. In SLN, systematic administration procedures were available which were taken place manually,

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[8] Naha.5 Memorandum dated 21st April 2005.

since many years. Process of automation of HRMS is started in year 2005 and still the complete automation not being completed in areas such as performance management.

CONCLUSION

45.   Better employment of human resource management policies will ensure the Human Resource component of the SLN will be trained and skilled to be capable of operating equipment in the SLN's inventory in an efficient manner in order to provide combat ready and supported to Force Structure Elements for employment in pursuit of achieving the strategic objectives and in performing the role of the Navy.

46.   In addition, the use of good management principles will ensure that the morale of the SLN remains high and further achieve;

   a.   Adequate resourcing and utilisation of the Regular, Volunteer and Reserve Force.

   b.   Improved Human Resource service delivery.

   c.   The retention of the required operational and functional expertise.

47.   Automated Human Resource Management System ensure accurate and efficient transactional activities, support improved implementation of traditional HR activities as well as assist in achieving organization's strategic objectives through facilitating transformational activities.

Recommendations

48.   It is vital that the human resources in the SLN be capacitated through a well-co-ordinated continuous learning process that allows for professional and personal development, rooted in professional military education and leadership. HR policies need to be formulated with concern to;

  a. Assess how well human resources management is linked to SLN's mission accomplishment.

  b. Explore the role played by the HR staff in organizational strategic planning.

  c. Determine how the HR service providers work with line managers to carry out SLN strategic goals.

  d. Identify best practices aligning HRM with the SLN strategic plan and goals.

49. Recruitment policy must be re-evaluated with concern to strategic objectives of SLN in expected vital transition and resourcing must be carried out based on comprehensively formulated Human Resource Plan.

50. Training and development as well as performance management policies and programs must be re-evaluated and aligned with strategic direction to develop and maintain competent workforce.

51. Sufficient attention on quality of life is the key of attracting potential personnel and maintaining competent and contented workforce. Therefore, focused and collaborative contribution from directorate of personnel, administration, welfare and health service must be drawn to serve for the purpose.

52. Developing and utilizing the automated HRMS in full potential adding value and supporting SLN activities, without making it additional burden to workforce. Following recommendations are made in this concern:

  a. Automation must be extended to complete performance management function, to assist traditional and transformational HR activities and to provide assistance for decision making process rather than utilization for administration purpose.

b.   Infrastructure facilities (physical requirements) must be extended to remote naval bases which are located away from facilitated locations. Otherwise it is impossible to move in to complete automation covering all naval personnel.

c.   It is required to conduct periodic evaluation on the implementation to identify gaps of the system and to take necessary action for corrective, adaptive, perfective and preventive maintenance to ensure high performance for the purpose.

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