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Strategies of Human Resource Management in University Libraries

Devendra Kumar

Abstract

The present article describes strategies of human resource management in university libraries to explore the extent of Human Resource Management (HRM) usually practiced by them. University libraries are currently facing their greatest challenge. For more than a decade, university libraries have been under the pressure to change its way of HRM. Discusses conceptual framework of the human resource management, human resources management in libraries, problems facing university libraries these days, human resource management & organisational development, job analysis, work redesign, team-building, change management, changing roles in libraries

Keywords: Library Management; Human Resources Management; University Libraries.

Introduction

Human resource management is a major consideration in today's competitive knowledge based enterprises including library and information industries. No resource in the world, even in this age of microchips and globalization, is more important than human resource. Human resource is essentially the most important resource in the library. Human resources play a prominent role for the successful management of any library. If the library personnel are rightly motivated, adequately qualified, sincere in their work, serious to achieve the result-oriented targets and feel a sense of belonging to the organization, they can be regarded as the best resources of the library in comparison to all overcome the constraints and limitations of other physical resources. For these reasons the selection and appointment of library personnel should be in accordance with the jobs and responsibilities required in the library. The right person should be in the right situation for the right job requirement. The person must be trained properly for the situations as and when required.

Author's Affiliation: Assistant Professor, Dept. of Library, Government Post Graduate College, Sector-39, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303.

Reprint's Request: Devendra Kumar, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Library, Government Post Graduate College, Sector-39, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303.
E-mail: dkdeobhu@gmail.com

One of the first questions any one might be tempted to ask is why 'human resource management' rather than 'personnel management'? Is there a difference and, if so, what is it? There are a number of different perceptions of what the two terms mean, with human resource management often being perceived as related more to the strategic management of the oganisation's people to achieve business objectives, while personnel management is seen as placing greater emphasis on the management of personnel systems and procedures. HRM is often viewed as a mechanism for integrating human resource policies and practices into the organisation's business strategy; and also as a more up-to-date description, emphasizing as it does that people are a resource to be managed just as much as any of the organisation's other resources and that they are as asset rather than a cost.

With the rapid technological advances and new freedoms, the workplace presents a dynamic and challenging environment. It is just because of these advances that necessitate a workforce relying on its versatility and adaptability knowing that life–long full–time jobs are a thing of the past. Work is being contracted out, de-structured organizations are emerging and different skills and approaches are required from 'brain-workers' who must solve new and changing problems. All works must become self-motivated, multi-skilled and constantly learning.

For the information professional, the key to success in this potentially destabilizing context is to develop the new skills the workplace demands. Above all, the LIS professional must actively prioritize a

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commitment to continuous professional development. The information industry is growing fast and the LIS Profession is experiencing very rapid change.

Conceptual Framework of the Human Resource Management

The modern view of HRM was first gained prominence in 1980 with its introduction on the prestigious MBA course at Harvard Business School (Price, 2004). The term human resources, in its simplest sense, refer to manpower or people resources, who are engaged in any organizational settings to meet institutional goals by virtue of their physical and intellectual capacity. Sarkhel (2003) defines manpower as 'power available from or supplied by the physical as well as intellectual efforts of man.' According to him manpower becomes human resources when these people are competent to be regarded as the strength of a nation and are fitted against opportunities.

Successful planning and management of human resource is critical for over all organizational effectiveness. It is a complex process that ensures the staff are given the opportunity to develop both their personal and professional competencies and maximize their output (Bryson, 1996). Like other organizations, libraries of all types have traditional HRM activities such as recruitment and selection, compensation, benefits, training and development health and safety, employee and labor relations, and in some libraries, student employment or volunteer management (Hawthorne, 2004).

A university library should have planned programmes for the recruitment, orientation and development of the professional staff. According to Wilson & Tauber (1966), some of the considerations are nature and size of the staff, training of the staff, selection of staff members, measurement of staff effectiveness, salaries, hours of service, professional development of staff members, and staff relation. Nasiruddin Ahmad (1994) mentions the necessity of personnel in the libraries of Bangladesh with special reference to education and training of libraries, professionals, sub professionals, and in-service training. deSilva (1997) emphasizes training and development of employees that must be viewed as an integral part of an employee's overall human resource management strategy. The strategy should be one which links selection, recruitment, training, career planning and development, performance appraisal, pay for performance and skills, and employment security. According to him, human resource development includes three basic strategies: developing human resources through education and training, deploying human resources, and providing the incentives to ensure that they are productively deployed. Simmons-Welburn & McNeil (2004) provide comprehensive issues that shape the nature of human resources in academic libraries. They observed that the significant changes in the rule and definition of professionalism, along with demographic and technological challenges had direct impact on the recruitment and retention of staff.

Effectiveness of library and information services depends upon the effectiveness of personnel deployed to perform library functions. Systematic planning for the development of manpower, therefore, constitutes an integral part of the University Administrative program. In fact, human resource management planning in libraries can facilitate the required manpower with requisite capabilities, skills, attitudes, aptitudes, qualifications and work experience in accordance with the changing requirement of the library.

Human Resources Management in Libraries

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), human resources management is "the design of formal system in an organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of human talent to accomplish the organizational goals" (SHRM, 2002a, p. 2). Like other organizations, libraries of all type have traditional HRM activities such as recruitment and selection, compensation, benefits, training and development, health and safety, employee and labor relations, and, in some libraries, student employment or volunteer management.

Whatever structure exists to support the human resources management needs of the library, many human resources departments and professional in libraries - like their HR counterparts in other organizations are playing increasingly strategic roles within library organizations by redesigning jobs and work, developing performance management system, managing change, and designing and restructuring organizations. Such a shift from administrative and operational activities like approving job requisitions, reviewing job description, and processing employee requests to these more strategic functions is most evident by the nature of the work of library HR professionals, work that increasingly reflects organizational development activities. In other cases, libraries of all types are working with organizational development consultant who provides services that may not be available in-house.

The shift to more strategic roles means that library

HR practitioners on different kinds of activities and responsibilities. Using job analysis and work redesign tools and method to determine the organization's needs for job and what type of jobs and how to organise the work has taken a higher priority. Developing individual skills in all level of employees to work efficiently and effectively in team structures has become more critical as libraries face the reality of smaller workforces, hiring freezes, pending retirement, and labor shortage. And managing the ongoing, relentless change-the permanent whitewater of the library and information profession-has become the skill most needed and valued. Many organizational development (OD) initiatives within libraries grow out the change management efforts when libraries seek to restructure seek to restructure organization, redesign jobs and work, improve processes and workflow, and increase performance capabilities in order to enhance the organization's ability to survive and thrive in a world of change.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (2002b, pp. 126-127), the primary intent Organizational Development (OD) is to strengthen the organization. OD strategies fall into three categories: interpersonal, technological, and structural, Interpersonal strategies focus on work relationship between and among individuals and groups and touch on such topics as communication. Technological strategies focus on process and include activities such as job design and analyzing workflow and human factors to achieve coordination and communication among departments. Structural strategies examine how the organization's structures help or hinder the organization in achieving its goals and may examine such issue as span of control and reporting relationships.

Problems Facing University Libraries these Days

Today University Libraries are facing many problems in bringing the change in their systems for satisfying their customers. Some of the problems which are identified are :

1. Lack of IT knowing library staff ;
2. Shortage of IT equipments ;
3. Customers are not aware about new ICT applied in libraries for information transfer ;
4. Limited funds ;
5. Library professionals are not ready to accept the challenge of IT revolution, they prefer traditional system ;
6. Proper training to customers is not provided to access library resources ; and
7. Remuneration to library staff for doing additional work.

HRM & Organisational Development

The basic objectives of management are the maximisation of productivity, the stimulation of creative problem solving, the promotion of morale and satisfaction and the attainment of the parent organisation's goals if these are evident. These objectives express the general purpose and guide the activities of the organisation. The general goals of a University, for example, are teaching, research and public service. The library's objectives in meeting these goals are to provide:

- Materials for undergraduate teaching, term papers, assignments, and general reading;
- Materials for faculty research and postgraduate work;
- Materials for personal self-development;
- A network of academic library resources that will be at the disposal of all users;
- Specialised information on the locality within which the university and its library are situated (Ifidon, 1998).

One of the most important factors that contribute to the realisation of these objectives is human resources. Their management is based on behavioural science and management principles. But in practice the library manager is often confronted with unique situations with which she/he has to deal. Some situations are different in simple and recognisable ways, while others are different in complex ways that are difficult to understand and interpret, and even more difficult to manage.

Human resource management is a strategic approach to the structure, motivation, development and management of an organization's employees, based on four fundamental principles:

- Effective management of human resources is the key to success;
- Success is most easily achieved if personnel policies are closely linked with the objective;
- Managerial behaviour and organizational climate exert a major influence on the achievement of excellence; and
- Total integration of manpower is essential to success.

Human Resource Management is thus concerned with integration: getting all the members of the

organization involved and working together with a sense of common purpose.

According to Peters, Tom (1985), "Trust people and treat them like adults, enthuse them by lively and imaginative leadership, develop and demonstrate an obsession for quality, make them feel they own the business, and your work force will respond with total commitment.

The same view was made by McGregor (1960), who defined his principle of integration as: "The creation of conditions such that the members of organization can achieve their goals best by directing their efforts towards the success of the enterprise."

Beer (1980) defines Organizational Development (OD) as a process that includes data collection, diagnosis, action Paining, intervention and intervention, and change and views the purpose of OD as culture. When defined as such, OD activities can and should be integrated into the HRM activities that support the organization's strategic plan and goals (Medelow & Liebowitz, 1989).

In this new strategic role, developing the ability to capitalize on the strengths of employees and make the workforce and asset to the organization has become a critical focus for HR professionals. The shift in focus has increased the demand for human resources initiatives, strategies, and programs that enhance an organization's ability to recruit and retain highly skilled employees capable of ongoing innovation and able to effectively deal with constant change.

Four strategies created out of the intersection of traditional functions of human resources management and concepts of organizational development reflect selected examples of when HR initiatives support overall organizational goals. The four strategies discussed here—job analysis, work redesign, team building, and change management provide libraries with methods for enhancing the performance and capacity of the organization and its workforce.

Job Analysis

Libraries are among many organizations where jobs have undergone enormous us change. Labor market shifts, budget constraints, enhanced technology, introduction of new library services and elimination of other services and demands of customers require library HR practitioners to continuously use their expertise to examine the work performed by individuals in liberates to determine if the organizational and individual needs are being met.

Job analysis has long been one of the most basic activities of HRM and is a "systematic way to gather and analyze information about the content and the human requirements of jobs, and the context in which jobs are performed" (Mathis & Jackson, 1997, p. 190).

Job analysis informs recruitment and selection, affects compensation decisions, outlines performance goals, identifies training and development needs, and influences organizational structure (Lynch & Robles-Smith, 2001). The benefits of effective job analysis, according to Mathis & Jackson (1997, pp. 198-200) are the following:

- Knowing what jobs exist, how many jobs exist, and what is being done, as well as what needs to be done, helps to inform HR planning. Jobs can be designed and redesigned to eliminate unnecessary tasks and duties or to combine responsibilities into logical job groups that meet needs and priorities.
- Job analysis ensures that recruitment and selection are based on valid criteria by linking knowledge, skills, and abilities required to the tasks, duties, and responsibilities in the job description. Such information can also help to identify where to recruit for potential employees.
- Job analysis information is often the basis for determining compensation and can help to prevent inconsistencies and inequalities in compensation. In addition, job analysis information is used to help classify positions (exempt vs. nonexempt, represented or not represented, etc.).
- Effective job analysis helps to create job descriptions and performance standards that are useful tools for both training and development and for performance management.
- Information identified in job analysis helps to identify health and safety hazards and working conditions that require special training or accommodation.

Job analysis involves collecting information about the characteristics of a job using one of several methods: observation, interviewing, questionnaires, or more specialized job analysis methods such as position or functional analysis. Organizations sometimes use a combination of job analysis methods (Mathis & Jackson, 1997; McDermott, 1987).

Using systematic job analysis to determine the extract job is far more strategic than simply writing or updating existing job descriptions. Performing systematic job analysis on a regular or periodic basis or under special conditions helps managers ensure that

the jobs being done are the jobs that need to be done.

Work Redesign

While job analysis often focuses on an individual job or job families, work redesign is a broader analytical process that examines work done throughout a department or unit or within the organization at all levels.

An excellent example of work redesign in a library setting was the work redesign project of the North Suburban Library System (NSLS) in Illinois. In the late 1990s the NSLS, an organization of 680 academic, pubic, school, and special libraries in northern Illinois, received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant for redesigning work in NSLS libraries.

Working with Organizational Development Consultant Maureen Sullivan, NSLS director Sarah Long and four library directors spearheaded an eight month project that guided work redesign at four different libraries. The ultimate goal was to analyze work and put new structures in place to positively affect member services in the library system and to "build the capacity of the organization" (Hayes & Sullivan, 2003, p. 87). "The work redesign process provides an opportunity for today's library to stop and analyze how time and effort are currently applied in the organization," write Hayes & Sullivan (2003, p. 88).

One major goal of the NSLS project was to be able to recruit and retain the best employees. Analyzing the work performed by staff identified ways to redesign work processes to create a more positive work environment.

Among the benefits evident, according to Hayes & Sullivan (2003, pp. 90-91), "

- Participants demonstrated a new sense of collaboration and cooperative learning that enabled them to learn critical skills and master new processes.
- Trained staff was able to identify key competencies for key programs and services.
- Staff shifted their focus to the big picture.
- Staff re-examined traditional jobs and practices and created new approaches and practices and new jobs.

While the NSLS work redesign project was conceived with a purpose to create a work environment that would attract and retain top-notch talent, work redesign in libraries can occur for a wide variety of reasons. Work redesign can also be used in libraries when units or libraries are merged, when new services are initiated by a unit or library, or when costs need to be reduced.

Team-Building

Teams emerged in libraries several years ago and have rapidly become a key work unit in libraries of all types and sizes. Among Fortune 1,000 companies, the use of Self-Managed Work Teams (SMWTs) grew from 28 percent in 1989 to 72 percent in 1999, (Yandrick, 2001, p. 138). Such a significant change in corporations reflects substantially changed views about hierarchy, management, and employee involvement and contributions and the impact these have on the bottom line, in addition to reflecting a willingness to invest in making major changes in the ways in which work is organised and accomplished within the organization. In corporations SMWTs have become the stuff of legend in areas such as quality improvement, resulting in "production increases, waste reduction and accelerated product-development cycles" (Yandrick, 2001 p.138).

While team contributions can have dramatic positive effects there are also instances where teams sometimes fail to accomplish their objective or to master the process to work together effectively. In addition to organizational support, both Joinson (1999) & Yandrick (2001) emphasize that what can make a difference between success and failure of a team is adequate training for team members in interpersonal skills, effective communications, active listening, problem-solving, and conflict resolution.

Many fail to understand how and why teams are different from other work units such as a department or committee. Teams revolve around six basic concepts as outlined by Katzenbach & Smith (1999). Generally small in number (less than twelve members), "no team performs without the complementary skills required for success. Teams must have a common purpose, common set of specific performance goals, and a commonly agreed upon working approach. Finally, teams must hold one another mutually accountable for their performance" (Katzenbach & Smith, 1999, pp. xix-xx).

As in other organizations using teams, libraries and library workers sometimes struggle with making the transition to teams. Making the successful transition from committees, the most common type of group structure other than departmental work groups in libraries, to teams varies from library to library and with type of library and is dependent on the individuals involved and their receptiveness and willingness to learn new skills. Libraries vary in terms

of how much they use teams and for what purposes. In some cases, the library may have only one team working on a functional area such as collection development or instruction or programming. In other cases, teams may exist within departments. Developing team skills and supporting team building activities within the library requires support from HR in the area of training and development. Using teams capitalize on individual knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies while building organizational capacity and flexibility to solve problems in creative and innovative ways.

Change Management

For more than a decade, libraries have faced new challenges and dilemmas, opportunities and threats, and rapidly changing environments. The response from academic, public, school, and special libraries has led to substantive changes in how libraries deliver services to users and develop collections, manage operations, approach strategic planning, and view organizational structure and culture.

Change management initiatives first introduced organizational development concepts into the organization. Such change increased the demand for HRM activities in the area of training and development as the need for new skills emerged; HR professionals responded by providing such training either directly themselves or by bringing in OD consultants and trainers as needed. The role of the HR professional grew to become more consultative as the demand for managing change effectively across the organization grew.

As a result, HR professionals assisted library administrators and managers in planning and managing such "change initiative" in parts of the organization or for the overall organization, thus engaging in OD work. "OD is change management. Its goals are to improve: productivity (effectiveness and efficiency); people's satisfaction with the quality of their work life; the ability of the organization to revitalize and develop itself over time; and organizational processes and outputs," according to SHRM (2002b, p.121).

Thus change management initiatives in libraries were linked closely to HR and human resource development (HRD), one of the major functional areas of HRM. Such initiatives ran the gamut from merging or consolidating departments or libraries, modifying services and how they are delivered, or introducing new services as well as making changes in organization structure to create more flexible and responsive organizations and workforces.

Most library HR departments have traditionally focused their HRD efforts on providing training and development. More and more libraries of all types and many library HR professionals are enhancing the HRD function to include organizational development. Butteries (1998, p.9) identified seven key ways in which HR can help organizations cope with and manage change in the workplace:

1. Create a common organization-wide vision and value system.
2. Develop a competency-based personnel framework. Provide leadership assessment and development.
3. Move people within the organization for best advantage.
4. Guarantee workplace diversity to ensure success in a global world.
5. Handle the question of change.
6. Reengineer corporate HR functions to a more consultative model by having HR serve as a consultant to management on hiring, training, managing, paying, retaining, and developing the workforce.

The majority of these items reflect the various types of change management initiatives underway in libraries and in organizations today, and each of the seven can be linked to key human resources functions such as strategic planning employment and staffing, classification and compensation, and training and development.

The modern view of HRM is to introduce a new work culture in an organization to achieve desired goals and results, by motivating the staff and enabling them to acquire the necessary new and innovative, skills, giving recognition to best performance and appropriately rewarding such performance. In fact, human resource management planning in libraries can facilitate the required manpower with requisite capabilities, skills, attitudes, aptitudes, qualifications, and work experience in accordance with the changing requirement of the library.

Thus, there is now increasing attention to human resource management and in particular, the role of staff development and training as a means of improving service quality when funding levels are not to commensurate with growing demand.

Changing Roles in Libraries

Changes in the libraries have been consequence of significant societal, educational, and technological forces. Library users are becoming more diverse and

more decentralized. People have greater and more immediate information needs for teaching and learning. They expect more personalized library services to learn about and acquire information. Higher education is expanding its programs, makes new and significant demands on library staff and collections.

Despite increasing service expectations, economic and political realities suggest stronger fiscal support for libraries is unlikely. Libraries face declining or, at best, steady state budget while costs continue to rise. Libraries are experiencing increasing costs due to:

- Library materials costs,
- Need to invest in new technologies to organise and deliver information,
- Need to maintain services and collections in parallel environments (print and electronic); and
- Need to maintain and preserve existing collections.

Library expenses and user expectations increased while the resources to meet them shrink. Libraries cope through modifying services and changing how they are organised to provide these services. Libraries have adjusted and shifted responsibilities continually as they have tried to provide increased service to patrons in times of economics stringency. Unfortunately, this shifted in job responsibilities is due to more external forces than to administrative decisions resulting from serious research into the nature of work roles in libraries (Goud 1985, p. 236). Such terms as client-centered, service-oriented, and user-friendly usually describe a library that makes increasing demands on all staff members because there is no budget for additional personnel. As all staff members are accepted to do more, librarians have more clerical and support duties and library paraprofessionals take on additional level responsibilities.

Automation of library process has affected the type of tasks and level of responsibility assigned. Technology absorbs many routine tasks and causes previously non-routine tasks to become routine. As many clerical tasks are absorbed by computer systems, support positions at all levels assume greater job responsibilities. Increased educational and experience requirements are becoming the norm for staff.

The roles of library professionals have changed, too. They are holding an expanded role in the university teaching and research process and in information policy planning. Librarians are working on the development of strategic plans for the campus information environment, including the integration of communication and information system (Creth, 1991) and predicted both larger institutional and national roles for librarians. The activities of the professional staff has now diverse, focusing on policy development and program design, along with development and application of a variety of new information product and systems.

Conclusion

The success of any university library largely depends on the intellectual, physical and technical infrastructures for effectiveness of library systems. Beside, other factors of HRM issues in libraries including professional manpower, IT facilities, training opportunities and other HRD programmes, job evaluation and performance measurement techniques, etc., were found not at a satisfactory level. Provision should be made to appoint more professionals, trained staff on a regular basis, enhance IT facilities , adapt successful HRD programmes, apply appropriate techniques for ongoing or periodic job analysis and performance appraisal, and so on. Although human resources have been centrally managed by the universities, all libraries should have strong policies of HRM. Management policies regarding strategic planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and budgeting must be formulated and implemented with utmost care. The libraries under study must ensure that the skills, knowledge, abilities, and performance of the workforce to meet current and future organizational and individual needs. The proper management of library human resources leads to the effective and efficient library and information services to satisfy library customers. Therefore, the university library should have well equipped with up-to-date collection of information resources, IT facilities, handsome budget, and experience and expertise. Besides governmental assistance, as an autonomous body, a university should take as well as implement a real-life plan for manpower development within limited resources. The authorities should also take initiative to implement suggested measures on priority basis for common interest of better HRM in university libraries.

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