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Future Perspectives of Human Resource Development in the Army



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Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) has been recognised by the Army leadership long ago, and over time has been amalgamated into policy and doctrine, to define the functions of 'Personnel Management' and 'Personnel Administration'. Military HRM gradually evolved from a supporting role to being a strategic enabler for the military. There is a need to make up-to-date pronouncements with respect to force structure necessities, recruitment and retention drives, well-being curriculum, etc., in order to keep abreast with the present-day challenges. The aim of this paper is to try and decode the need for HR development in the Army.

HRM: A Necessity

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a 'system of systems' that performs specific functions. Although, some parallels may possibly be drawn between the corporate and the Army human resources management, however, there are also some obvious differences between them. Since, the military organisation

Key Points

- Human Resource management is the bedrock of policy, doctrine and functioning of the Indian Army.
- The purpose of HR comprises of recruiting, training, performance evaluation, effective communication and provisioning of a secured environment in the organisation.
- Sound decision making in a stipulated time frame, greater mental flexibility and adaptability— is the present norm.
- It is imperative that the defence forces grow with the changing times and maintain a level of preparedness in consonance with the country's stature in the world.
- There is a requirement to improve the potential of our soldiers so as to enable them to become Force Multipliers in service and contribute in Nation Building post- retirement.



looks more and more like a 'corporation' in case of an all-volunteer force, however, the application of the alternatives borrowed from the corporate world will most likely lead to developments in terms of rewards, flexibility and organisational culture. Simultaneously, there are some economising aspects that are mostly associated with the fading of the command relations and societal morals— specific to the army's ethos. Jobs within the military are supposedly more stable than within the so-called corporate Human Resource Management— the encouraging side of this clarity however, comes with a scarcity of flexibility. Second difference pertains to the future impact of the recruitment within the military organisation in contrast to non-military organisations. This is often because the military recruits for the entry-level only and thereafter trains one as per its requirement. After the recruitment, the military promotes from within— the promotions are associated with the years of commission, previous assignments, and knowledge. This points towards a strong requirement for the expansion of an elaborate and well-structured 'in-house training'.

From this view, a 'strategically associated' HRM System comprises three interconnected processes— Personnel Management; Compensation; and Organisational Structure. Hence, it is of immense importance for any organisation to employ a competent team in its HR Department, in order to enhance the organisation's standing. The main purpose of the Human Resources comprises staffing, training, performance evaluations, member impetus and effective communication in the place of work, security and much more. Human Resource Development (HRD) is an essential command- function and therefore, it must be understood that the soldier of tomorrow has got to be an innovator who can bring together resource and information with his action. A few features that are essential imperatives for future soldiers are: -

- Sound decision-making in the desired timeframe, greater mental flexibility and adaptability.
- Capacity to handle greater stress levels.
- Capability to handle independent tasks.
- Higher technical competency.
- Greater motivational levels and better standards of junior leadership.
- Improved administration expertise.
- Guide the juniors, when required.



Military HRM

HRM within the military encompasses a spread of activities, like preparing of human resource estimates, recruitment, screening of potential employees, the study of coaching needs, compensation systems, performance appraisal and rewards & recognition.

The military have reorganised its thought progression on human resource management and sporadically modernised in consonance with the varying socio-economic scenario, without compromising its core values and essential benefits. However, in the last few decades, changes at a rapid pace have posed some major challenges, which are unfavourably disturbing the enrolment process in the forces, particularly in the officer's cadre. Some of the major changes affecting HR in the Army are the shrinking of the recruitment base, early retirement, limited opportunities for promotion, lack of motivation— thanks to early non-empanelment, constantly changing principles and ethics, growing levels of stress and an outsized number of Short Service officers (SSC) not choosing permanent commission.

HRM within the army is particularly a vigorous matter because its assets have always been its officers. Out of the Army's authorised 47,700 officers, the holding strength is merely 36,790 officers. This deficiency isn't of the present day. The shortfall ranged from 12 to 15 per cent of the total strength between 1950s-1970s (Emergency and Short Service Commissions), incited by wars during that period. Subsequent three decades continued to witness an increase in shortage, to about 24-25 per cent.

Interestingly, there are no much shortages among the higher ranks i.e. the Colonel and above. The criticality is of the prescribed annual induction within the army of 2240 officers, where actual intake in 2009, 2010 and 2011 was 1,599, 1,892 and 2,275 officers respectively. This corresponds to 67, 72 and 102 per cent of the total strength.

The basic objective that one has, when commissioned into service, is to retain the human resource for the best period, while continuously striving to emphasise on their professional and individual growth, to ensure that the 1.2 million-strong Army remains highly motivated and committed.

Globalisation, economic dependence, transformation in military affairs, terrorism, progress in Information Technology, etc. have posed new challenges for many nations. Therefore, it is imperative that our Military grows with the changing times and maintains a level of preparedness in consonance with the country's stature as a dominant player in the region.



Stringent work conditions, disturbance in domestic life and stress due to lengthened deployment in field areas— are some of the reasons that leads officers to seek premature retirements. Although, Pay Commissions created from time to time have helped in improving the salaries, however, they still are low as compared to the packages and perks being offered in the corporate sector.. While efforts are being made recruit the best people in the military and improve their career prospects, but however, there still remains a requirement to initiate suitable measures to reinforce retention and employment of this limited manpower.

The primary goal of HRD Centre should be to support the organisation to thrive in its goals— it should be associated with the organisational strategy, and also with people's behaviour and characteristics. Depending on the plan and behaviour, specific HRM courses should be developed and implemented. In the present world order, the companies within the Private Sector are also facing a shortage of skilled and talented workforce. Therefore, every firm is trying to come up with innovative Human Resource practices to draw in the best talent and retain them by providing a conducive environment. These practices help to ensure that the efficiency of the workers increases manifold, which in turn would benefit the organisation per se.

Way Ahead

Reservations notwithstanding, an important facet for transition, is the ability of a soldier to qualify the various tests and achieve the required grade. If we 'prepare our soldiers to clear this hurdle of qualifying tests', then the problem will get addressed to a good extent. It's doable via the HRD Centres and therefore the following steps merit attention.

- The 'willing' soldiers should be given proper guidance, in case they want to take up jobs in the corporate sectors, post retirement. Necessary steps should be taken preferably 2-3 years before retirement.
- Planning at the macro- level must be done at service Headquarters. For the military, it can be under the overall directions/coordination of the Adjutant General Branch, with the Army Education Corps (AEC) as the nodal agency to organise a master plan. The AEC should look into educating trainers, forecast of exams in various categories (in synergy with the Director General Resettlement), planning syllabus and study material, preparing candidates and monitoring results. All this should be undertaken in sync with the education instructors, posted at each echelon. A comprehensive structured



study programme must be thought of and implemented, which also should be a part of the training calendar/curriculum.

- The responsibility of coaching should be with the formation (Divisional / Brigade HQ) under the overall coordination of the education staff, wherein a soldier prepares at a study centre—HRD Centre—and appear in mock tests on the lines of the qualifying exam. Alternately, till AEC is energised and co-opted, study material on the examinations and online sample question papers must be shared with various formations/units, to help the officer with the preparations.
- The General Staff should monitor the functioning of the study centres, including the availability of desirous candidates by units, till the systems development and positive results are noticeable. This will entail no new organisation / staff, but a touch of reorientation towards this important subject and a sustained focus. Education / library grants should be gainfully utilised to accrue material for libraries.
- A separate fund like the Provident Fund could be created, whereby, some portion from the officer's salary could be credited to this fund during his period of service, so that the money could be used by the officer if and when needed for his migration to the corporate sector.

Besides earmarked jobs, corporate jobs will be the best employers in years ahead, and their requirements are typically at variance with the skill sets of a soldier— thanks to the different job content/business models. The soldiers are however trainable, and with a touch of reorientation, are going to be an asset for any organisation. The courses within the Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) will assist the soldiers in migration. An urgent content and curriculum revision, in sync with current employment trends and norms accepted by various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) under the National Skill Development Centres (NSDC), is long overdue for valid certifications and placements.

Planning is the key to an efficacious profession and an estimate of vacancies by various industries will assist these HRDCs in better courses, address skill gaps and open viable career options for Ex- Serviceman (ESM). This will also motivate the young talents of the country choose military service as a career, thanks to an assured career post-transition and therefore the ability to serve until 60 years. Professionalism and performance during service will also improve as it would act as the foundation for selection of a post-retirement career. It



will be an excellent stimulus for enhancing educational qualifications/ technical certification/ skills, and will generate vigorous competition for promotion within the service and offer better-qualified soldiers as envisioned in the Indian Army Doctrine. Human Resource Development is a significant command function, and, in this background, it must be understood that the soldier of tomorrow has got to be an 'innovator who can combine imagination and knowledge with action'.

Human Resource Development Centres at each level are a step towards the right direction and therefore the same must be further enabled through focused approach and adequate directions from the military leadership to develop soldiers who are professionally and technically sound. While the civil world has understood the implications of Human Resource Development and is reaping its benefits, the Army is yet to implement it fully. Although we have already got a skeleton organisation for imparting training about Human Resource development, however, there is a requirement to improve upon them and remodel the courses to reinforce the potential of our soldiers, and making them force multipliers not only while serving but even after hanging their uniforms and contributing to the National development.

End Notes

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