
Recruitment – A Major Challenge in Indian Higher Educational Institutions

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***Abstract**— the study aimed to determine the procedure to be followed with respect to recruitment of faculty in Higher Educational Institutions. It was found out that there exists a set of sound policies and procedures in the recruitment and selection of faculty as per the guidelines provided by the UGC/AICTE, the policies are implemented to a certain extent and apart from these policies and guidelines, there are other factors that influence the recruitment and selection process. The factors are; special talents, skills and qualifications of the faculty applicants, their socio-economic status and the cultural values.*

***Keywords :** recruitment, policies, qualifications, skills*

Introduction

Despite multiple institutions monitoring the quality of higher education in India, universities are working with half the capacity of the faculty required. This results in dilution of quality. The statistical details on the number of universities and colleges present quite a satisfactory picture of higher education in India. However, when one looks at the quality, the scenario is quite disappointing. Even the highly rated Government and Private institutions in India do not figure in the top 200 universities in the world by any of the ranking agencies. There are many reasons for such dismal performance even after 70 years of independence. One of the important reasons may be attributed to low and quality of faculty. The present Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in higher education (universities and colleges) is around 1:23 whereas the recommended values as per University Grants Commission guidelines is 1:12 for postgraduate students and 1:15 for undergraduates.

Today most of the educational institutions in the country are facing a serious faculty crunch. Many graduate and post graduate departments in colleges and universities are functioning with less than 30 per cent of the total sanctioned faculty strength. Even institutions of international repute like IITs are working with more than 30 per cent faculty positions lying vacant in most of the departments. The recruiters cite lack of competent candidates as the main reason for such a large scale vacancy of faculty members in the country. However, one needs to look at this problem more objectively.

Temporary relief measures

In recent years, the governments have tried to address the problem of faculty crunch by increasing the retirement age of college and university teachers from 60 to 65. IITs and Central Universities have even made the provisions of extending the services of their faculty members up to 70 years. But is this enough to solve this problem? Unless colleges and universities have sufficient qualified and competent teachers on their

regular rolls and PTR is sufficiently and suitably brought down, it is hard to think that quality of higher education in India would match with the good institutions of the world.

The University Grants Commission through the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducts National Eligibility Test (NET) for prospective college and university teachers every year. On the similar line various state governments also conduct their State-Level Eligibility Test (SLET). Moreover, the question of not getting sufficient qualified and competent people for faculty positions also needs a serious scrutiny. Even though central and state agencies through their NET and SLET certify candidates' qualification for the job, colleges and universities look for candidates with Ph.D. degrees.

While it is generally not that difficult to get well qualified candidates with Ph.Ds. in sciences and humanities, the real challenge is to recruit faculty in engineering disciplines as the number of suitable applicants is abnormally low. The major reason is that with professional degrees, it is relatively easy to get a decent job for the students graduating from well-recognized institutions. The initial salary is so high compared to the scholarships offered for doing Masters or Doctoral programs that even the motivated students cannot resist the temptation of taking up a job.

One of the solutions, especially for Engineering institutions, could be to recruit bright young postgraduates as Teaching Assistants and Lecturers with a good initial package and other benefits. While working, they would work for their Doctoral degree and also do some undergraduate teaching. This will reduce the load on the existing faculty members and they would be able to concentrate on their research as more time will be available with them. Thus it offers a win-win situation for the institute and the faculty. The institute will be able to partially handle its scarcity of faculty and ultimately help in creating a pool of qualified and competent teachers.

Recruitment Process to be followed to create best talent pool

1. Recruitment Planning

The first step involved in the recruitment process is planning. Here, planning involves to draft a comprehensive job specification about the skills, experience and qualifications needed; grade and level of pay etc..The major issues arise during the initial step is manpower planning. Generally, the information is taken from the Heads of Departments about the future requirement of manpower and the information received may not be accurate if the size of the institution is very large. The head- administration must look in to this aspect very closely by scrutinizing the records thoroughly and discuss the future requirement of manpower in a planned meeting and consider the suggestions made by the members in order to keep the expenditure on faculty salaries to the minimum. All the departments should be asked to project the manpower requirement at once in a general meeting, where the comparison of each department is possible according to the guidelines given by the UGC with Pupil – Teacher ratio.

2. Strategy Development

Once it is known how many with what qualifications of candidates are required, the next step involved in this regard is to devise a suitable strategy for recruiting the candidates in the organization.

The strategic considerations to be taken in to account may include what type of recruitment method to be used, what geographical area be considered for searching the candidates, which source of recruitment to be practiced, and what sequence of activities to be followed in recruiting candidates in the organization.

Another step involved is selecting panel members for conducting interviews. It is always better to invite subject experts from reputed institutions like IIT, NIT, IIIT etc... to be a member of interview panel to ensure transparency in the recruitment system and the ratification of faculty also can be done at the same time which would be beneficial to the institution and to the candidates as well. The composition of interview panel should include a member from the management and the administrative head of the institution.

3. Searching

This step involves attracting job seekers to the organization. There are broadly two sources used to attract candidates.

These are:

a. Internal Sources: If the requirement is for an administrative position where teaching experience is also mandatory, internal scanning (within the organization) can be done to identify a suitable candidate which would be more useful rather than going for a new recruitment. This would certainly save the time of sensitization process of new entrant.

b. External Sources: The suitable candidates can be searched through online portals or advertising on a reputed news papers and free websites. Basically, the size of the advertisement with respect to print media is very important as the experienced and talented candidates will be looking at the size of the advertisement to assess the institution before applying for a job. Hence, the institutions should look at the cost of the advertisement as an investment rather than expenditure. The size of the advertisement has become more important factor in the present competitive world to attract talented people. Sufficient time also should be given to the candidates to apply for positions advertised and at the same time, the duration between the advertisement and the last date to apply should not be so long that the date runs out of memory of the candidates. It would be more useful if, the job description is mentioned briefly in the advertisement to ensure only suitable candidates apply for the position mentioned. If the job specification cannot be mentioned in the advertisement, the same can be intimated to the shortlisted candidates at a later date.

4. Screening

Though some view screening as the starting point of selection, it can be considered as an integral part of recruitment. The reason being the selection process starts only after the applications have been screened and shortlisted and a very important and mostly neglected aspect in present scenario by most of the higher educational institutions. Generally, one or two committees are formed with in the institutions to scrutinize the applications received for a particular position. In order to avoid precious time of candidates and the dignitaries of institutions, the applications must be scrutinized carefully as per the pre-determined parameters. The committees constituted to perform the above task may go for two or three rounds of scrutiny before making the final list of candidates who can be called for interview. It is highly recommended to conduct a telephonic round of interview to assess a candidate's communication skills. The telephonic interview helps in judging a candidate's way of talking and basic knowledge on English language which is highly desirable in Higher Educational Institutions. This would certainly help in keeping the expenditure to minimum in conduction of interviews in terms of travelling allowance paid to the candidates attending interview.

5. Treatment of candidates attending interview

It's an ongoing phenomenon of the higher educational institutions in India that the treatment given to the candidates who are attending an interview is not up to the mark or not even meeting 50% of the expectations of the candidates. If the faculty members or the non-teaching staff attending interview are not treated properly, then there are chances that the institution is likely to lose the opportunity of recruiting talented candidates. The medium and small size higher educational institutions are lacking well qualified and well experienced faculty members because of ill treatment of candidates during the interview process. Recruitment process can be helpful to a great extent in building the brand image as well. The recruitment process should not leave any room for the candidates to pass any kind of adverse comments either on the interview process or on the institutional processes. There should be laid down procedure right from receiving the candidates at the entrance of the institution and until completion of interview. In many of the institutions, refreshments like tea, snacks are also not provided to the candidates attending the interview which is a disappointing factor for the enthusiastic job seekers. Sufficient manpower should be deployed to cater for the needs of the candidates attending interview and make them comfortable at the venue of interview to bring the best out of them.

The detailed procedure to be followed by the institution for effective recruitment:

a) Preliminary screening of resumes received should be done by the committee constituted for the purpose. Day wise screening should be done to avoid last minute overlook.

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- b) A courtesy “Thank You” mail should be sent to all the candidates applied for various positions and intimate them about the process of short listing.
- c) Intimation to the short listed candidates about the date of interview, documents to be carried etc. at least 15 days in advance. Do not ask the candidates to bring the original documents for the interview at this point of time which is done by most of the organizations. The organization cannot expect a candidate to bring the original certificates for the interview due to regulations followed by many of the Higher Educational Institutions in present scenario.
- d) Conduct a written technical test for the position of Assistant Professor Cadre only. Many of the Higher Educational Institutions ask the experienced candidates also to appear for written test along with fresh candidates which would certainly de-motivate the senior faculty members.
- e) Provide the candidates with refreshments and lunch at free of cost and reimburse the Travelling Expenditure incurred to attend the interview.
- f) As a part of corporate interview process, the candidates should be given a chance to pose questions at the end of personal interview.
- g) It is the moral responsibility of the organization conducting the interview to intimate the candidate about his result even it is negative in order to make them free to apply for other opportunities. This would certainly leave a positive impact on the candidates attended the interview.

5. Recruitment

The management members of many of the Higher Educational Institutions in India opine that, the availability of qualified manpower is more than required and a great pool of talent will appear for interviews whenever an advertisement is published. But, the management members should also understand that the necessity is mutual. If the interviews are conducted with this attitude, there will be fruitful outcome for that interview. Interviewers should never think low of the candidates who are attending interview and treat them like prospective employees of the organization. Many of the interview board members show reluctance in asking valuable questions to the tail end candidates as the process goes on from morning to evening or till night which is not a right strategy to be followed and the last candidates are not even given a few minutes to answer the questions. The interview members should be energetic all the time during the entire process of interview. Two or three intervals may be given during the whole interview process to maintain pleasant atmosphere. However, this kind of exercise seems to be rarely carried out by the higher educational institutions in India.

Use of psychological test in recruitment: With the advent of latest techniques on training, candidates perform very well in the interview and fetch a suitable job with suitable salary and are likely to change their jobs within a short period. To avoid this phenomenon, the institutions may conduct a psychological test to check the nature of stability of the candidates. It is believed that, a candidate having medium knowledge with stable nature is more worth than a candidate having superior knowledge without stable mind. Though, this procedure is strictly followed in the Indian Armed Forces to enroll the candidates from different parts of country in order to select “stable minded” candidates, the same process can be adopted by Higher Educational Institutions as well.

"If you're recruiting for senior people these days, you will usually do something called an assessment centre – this will involve an interview, a work sampling and a psychometric test," says Cary Cooper, professor of organizational psychology and health at Lancaster University. "An interview on its own is a very poor predictor of ultimate success."

So too are the other elements, when taken alone. For example, looking at the quality of someone's work, without knowing how they cope with decision-making, makes it hard to know if they will be able to work in an environment where speed is of the essence. At times, the faculty members may have to teach the students of two categories i.e fast grasping and slow grasping students. Interaction of a psychologist during interview would be of great help in selection of right candidates to teach both categories of students.

Conclusion :

In the fast changing environment, Higher Educational Institutions need to cope up with the technological, social, cultural and economical changes which play a vital role in survival and growth of institutions. In order to fulfill the above objective, the organizations must improve the present system of recruitment to gain the confidence of potential candidates available in the market. As it is well understood that, Brand Image cannot be built over night and it takes much longer time and continuous efforts of dedicated and experienced people who have zeal to inject professionalism in to the system. It is recommended that, the top brass of Higher Educational Institutions should not only look in to the academic aspects that are followed by successful organizations during their visits to those institutions, but also should look in to the process of recruitment and learn to introduce and evolve effective system of recruitment.

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