

An Exploratory Study on the Experience Requirements of Key HR Jobs in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *There is an empirical gap in empirical knowledge with regards to the experience requirements of key HR jobs which consists with Director (HR), Head of Human Resources, Deputy General Manager (HR), Senior Manager (HR), HR Manager, Assistant HR Manager, Senior HR Executive & HR Executive in term of number of years required and the content of work experience in Human Resource Management. The research question of this exploratory study is how experience affects to Key HRM jobs in Sri Lanka? There are two research objectives in this current study, mainly; to understand the impact of experience for key HRM jobs; and to identify the importance of experience requirement in key HRM jobs. To achieve those two research objectives, researchers used HR job advertisements appeared in Sunday Observer Newspaper, Topjobs website, for the period of May, 2015 to December, 2015 of time. The current research was carried out in non-contrived setting and the time horizon of the study is longitudinal under minimal interference of the researchers'.*

The findings of this exploratory study proved that experience for key HR job is a vital role for career development of HR professionals and future HR job seekers. Researchers presented seven emerging dimensions of HRM Job Experience. The findings of this study is useful to current HR job holders, future HR job seekers and HR m

Key Words : *Key HRM Jobs, Experience Requirements, Exploratory study.*

I. Introduction

In today's globalized world, the key challenge to any organization is to attract the right talent for the organization and to retain them in the organization. Industries and sectors are always on the search of best candidates with relevant experiences and knowledge. Due to the very same reason job experience and knowledge have become a vital part in candidates lives (Shafique, 2012). Having work experience in the relevant field of the job enables an employee to perform efficiently and effectively in his job (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2012 ;Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 2001).

II. Research Problem

Many organizations operating in Sri Lanka anticipate experienced candidates for their human resource management department in order to manage the HR functions effectively and efficiently. It is found that there is very little research done with regard to this observable fact in Sri Lanka. Many industry practitioners always emphasize that it is difficult to find the candidates with relevant experience to their organizations and to retain knowledgeable workforce in the organization. On the other hand various organizations require different level of experience for HR jobs which is also confusing for the candidates as well as to the HR practitioners. Therefore; this research study was carried out to investigate the experience level required for the key HR jobs in Sri Lanka and to eradicate the empirical gap up to a certain extent.

The Research Questions

By analyzing the research problem research question has been constructed as follows;
How experience affect to Key HRM jobs in Sri Lanka?

Objectives of the study

- To understand the impact of experience for key HRM jobs; and
- To identify the importance of experience requirement in key HRM jobs.

Literature Review

Human resource management (HRM) can be defined as a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in organizations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). As cited by Watson (2010, p.219) HRM is the managerial utilization of the efforts, knowledge, capabilities and committed behaviors which people contribute to an authoritatively coordinated human

enterprise as part of an employment exchange (or more temporary contractual arrangement) to carry out work tasks in a way which enables the enterprise to continue into the future (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). As cited by Opatha (2009) work experience in the field of HRM is an indispensable factor for human resource Managers. Having an experience means that an individual has gained the adequate knowledge and developed his/her skills; by working in HRM for a considerable period of time (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2012). An individual is considered to be a competent and employable person if the person has knowledge, skills and right attitude. Many organizations hire experienced employees because they expect experienced employees to perform better than they expect inexperienced employees. Further, organizations expect experienced employees will bring knowledge that can be applied immediately to the working environment (Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2008).

Work experience can be defined as either the number of months spent in a particular job (job tenure), or the number of times a particular task has been performed. However, there is empirical evidence which suggests that two individuals with equal amounts of job tenure can differ drastically in the number and types of tasks they perform (Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 2001). Task-relevant knowledge can result from work experience, but it is not the only outcome. Prior work experience can also lead to habits, routines, and other cognitions and behaviors that may or may not be useful for performance when applied in a different context. Moreover, not all work experience generates equally useful knowledge and skill; jobs that involve similar work activities are more likely to provide opportunities to develop relevant knowledge and skill that can be applicable to performance in a new context than jobs with unrelated work activities (Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 2001; Shafique, 2012). Scholars have identified several factors that relates to experience such as breadth, the number of tasks performed, activity level, task types and difficulty of the tasks performed (Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 2001). According to Borman et al. (1993) and Schmidt et al. (1986) although the researchers tend to assume that experience operates through knowledge and skill development to influence performance, there are only a few studies that have empirically distinguished between work experience and job knowledge and their effect on performance (Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2008). In today's highly competitive and challenging market task performance has become one of the crucial element. If the overall performance of the organization hinder, then the chances of survival in the competitive business world be diminished and it would be disastrous for the organizations. As organizations invest more on developing human capital they always wanted employees with prior experience with the relatedness for the current position they have been recruited. Because organizations always consider that, those who have the prior related experience can transfer their knowledge easily and do the work activities more efficiently and effectively. While; on the other hand, organizations can expect an improvement of the productivity level of the new recruits in a shorter time-period as well (Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2008). According to Quinones, Ford, & Teachout (2001) individuals can experience differently in different organizations such as manufacturing, finance, consultation etc.

Many scholars have indicated the importance of prior work related experience at the recruitment and selection process for the organizations (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2012; Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2008; Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 2001; and Shafique, 2012). In Sri Lanka many organizations don't have a clear specification on the experience requirement in HRM jobs. Different organizations operating in different sectors and the similar industries stating different requirements in their vacancy advertisements (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2012).

III. Methodology

An exploratory study was conducted by analyzing HR job advertisements appeared in Sunday Observer Newspaper, Topjobs website, for the period of May, 2015 to December, 2015 of time. The current research was carried out in non contrived setting and the time horizon of the study is longitudinal under minimal interference of the researchers'.

IV. Findings & Discussions

Experience details of key HR jobs were collected from 150 HR vacancy advertisements which published on Sunday Observer and Topjobs web site. Those advertisements were published for organizations which are doing their operations in Sri Lanka. Experience requirements of Director HR, Head of Human Resources, Deputy General Manager (HRM), Senior Manager (Human Resources) , Manager (Human Resources), Assistant Manager (Human Resources), Senior Executive (HR) and HR Executive were studied under this research study.

Following Table provides number of job advertisements published for 08 key HR jobs for the study period. The highest number of HR job advertisements published for the study period is HR Executive and there were 42 vacancy advertisements for that position. The next highest number of job advertisements published for HR Manager vacancy and there were 34 job advertisements for that position. According to Opatha and Arulrajah (2012) the long term career goal for HR professional is HR Manager and the short term career goal for HR professional is HR Executive. These research finding is consistent with the results of current study as well.

The lowest number of HR vacancy advertisements published for the post of HR Director. Remaining tables provide information about the experience requirements in terms of years and contents for 10 key HR jobs.

Table 01 : Key HRM Jobs : Number of Job Advertisements /Vacancies

Selected Key HR Jobs	Number of Advertisements	%
Director HR	03	02%
Head of Human Resources	14	9.3%
Deputy General Manager (HR)	04	2.6%
Senior Manager (HR)	04	2.6%
Manager (HR)	34	22.6%
Assistant Manager (HR)	31	20.6%
Senior Executive (HR)	18	12%
Executive (HR)	42	28%
Total	150	100%

01 Director-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 02: Experience and Director-HR and Related Jobs in Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 18 years	01	33.4%
2	Minimum 8 years	02	66.6%
	Total	03	100%

Table 03: Experience and Director-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in managerial level / Experience in senior manager level	01	33.3%
2	Experience in hospitality industry	01	33.3%
3	Experience in the HR field /Management role and Experience in HR within software industry	01	33.3%
	Total	03	100%

02 Head-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 04: Experience and Head of HR and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 15 years	01	7.1%
2	Minimum 10 years	06	43.0%
3	Minimum 07 years	01	7.1%
4	Minimum 05 years	05	35.7%
5	Not Specified	01	7.1%
	Total	14	100%

Table 05: Experience and Head-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in Manufacturing Sector/Industry (Managerial Level Experience)	04	28.57%
2	Experience in a senior managerial level (working in a garment industry will be an added advantage)	01	7.14%
3	Experience in the field of HR in a managerial position	02	14.31%
4	experience in a senior managerial level	01	7.14%
5	experience at mid to senior management level in core HRM functions in a manufacturing environment	01	7.14%
6	experience at a senior level in most operational areas of diverse business	01	7.14%
7	post qualifying experience in similar position	01	7.14%
8	Experience at management level; previous experience in insurance industry	01	7.14%
9	experience in similar capacity in a fast food chain / hotel/retail	01	7.14%
10	Not Specified	01	7.14%
11	Total	14	100%

03. Deputy General Manager-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 06: Experience and Deputy General Manager-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 18 years	01	25%
2	Minimum 15 years	02	50%
3	Minimum 10 years	01	25%
	Total	04	100%

Table 07: Experience and DGM-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in the senior managerial level (Preferably in bank or finance company)	01	25%
2	Experience in should be at senior managerial level in government corporation , board or a reputed mercantile establishment	01	25%
3	Experience in managerial level post of a public institution/ corporation / board/ statutory board/ reputed mercantile establishment	02	50%
11	Total	04	100%

04. Senior Manager-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 08: Experience and Senior Manager-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 08 years	01	25%
2	Minimum 05 years	02	50%
3	Minimum 04 years	01	25%
	Total	04	100%

Table 09: Experience and Senior Manager-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in HR	01	25%
2	Experience with I/NGO in a similar capacity	01	25%
3	Relevant post qualifying experience in a MNC/Blue Chip Organization	01	25%
4	Experience in managerial capacity of learning and development	01	25%
	Total	04	100%

04. Manager-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 10: Experience and Manager-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 10 years	05	14.7%
2	Minimum 08 years	01	2.9%
3	Minimum 07 years	02	5.9%
4	Minimum 05 years	16	47%
5	Minimum 04 years	00	00%
6	Minimum 03 years	06	17.7%
7	Minimum 02 years	02	5.9%
8	Not Specified	02	5.9%
	Total	04	100%

Table 11: Experience and Manager-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in the HR field	05	14.7%
2	Experience in similar capacity/ role	10	29.4%
3	Experience in service sector	01	2.9%
4	Experience in compensation and performance management	01	2.9%
5	experience in HR duties in a reputed star class hotel	01	2.9%
6	experience in a managerial capacity	03	8.8%
7	Experience in apparel sector	02	5.8%
8	Experience in construction industry	03	8.8%
9	Experience in manufacturing industry in similar capacity	01	2.9%
10	Experience as an asst.manager / senior executive in the retail sector	01	2.9%

11	Experience in HR or administration field	01	2.9%
12	Experience in similar working environment	03	8.8%
13	Not specified	02	5.8%
14	Total		100%

05. Assistant Manager-Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 12: Experience and Assistant Manager-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Minimum 10 years	01	3.2%
2	Minimum 05 years	04	12.9%
3	Minimum 04 years	04	12.9%
4	Minimum 03 years	16	51.7%
5	Minimum 02 years	05	16.1%
6	Not Specified	01	3.2%
	Total	31	100%

Table 13: Experience and Asst.Manager-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in HR field	08	25.80%
2	Experience in similar capacity	08	25.80%
3	Experience in HR in manufacturing sector	02	6.44%
4	Experience in similar capacity in employee relations	01	3.23%
5	Executive experience in HR field	01	3.23%
6	Experience in payroll	01	3.23%
7	Experience in HR in apparel sector	02	6.44%
8	Experience in HR in senior level	01	3.23%
9	Experience in managerial capacity	01	3.23%
10	Experience in training & development in manufacturing sector	01	3.23%
11	Experience as an assistant manager or senior executive level	01	3.23%
12	Experience in recruitment, training & development & performance appraisal	01	3.23%
13	Not specified	03	9.66%
14	Total	31	100%

06.Senior Executive -Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 14: Experience and Assistant Manager-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
2	Minimum 05 years	06	33.33%
3	Minimum 04 years	02	11.11%
4	Minimum 03 years	05	27.78%
5	Minimum 02 years	05	27.78%
	Total	18	100%

Table 15: Experience and Senior Executive-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in HR field	05	27.78%
2	Experience in similar capacity	04	22.24%
3	Experience in HRD/ Training & Development/ Learning & Development	03	16.66%
4	Experience in a similar capacity specially in garment industry	01	5.55%
5	Experience in payroll/benefit administration	01	5.55%
6	Experience in employee relations	01	5.55%
7	Experience in performance evaluation	01	5.55%
8	Not specified	02	11.12%
	Total	18	

06. Executive -Human Resources and Related Jobs

Table 16: Experience and Executive-Human Resources and In Terms of Years

S/N	Experience in Years	Number of Advertisements	%
2	Minimum 05 years	03	7.14%
3	Minimum 04 years	00	00%
4	Minimum 03 years	11	26.19%
5	Minimum 02 years	18	42.86%
6	Minimum 01 year	03	7.14%
	Not specified	07	16.67%
	Total	42	100%

Table 17: Experience and Executive-HR In Terms of Contents

S/N	Contents	Number of Advertisements	%
1	Experience in HR field	13	31.00%
2	Experience in similar capacity	16	38.00%
3	Experience in manufacturing sector	02	4.72%
5	Experience in payroll	02	4.72%
6	Experience as a HR executive in the hotel sector	01	2.39%
7	Experience in the field in recruitment	01	2.39%
8	Experience including process/system implementations	01	2.39%
9	Experience in the field of HRIS	01	2.39%
10	Not specified	05	12.00%
11	Total	42	

V. Discussion

Researchers presented results of this exploratory study under two sections. First section discussed about year of experience of eight key HR jobs in Sri Lanka. Second section discussed about the contents of experience. The higher frequencies of number of years of experience is given under the table number 18.

Table 18: Key HRM Jobs and Mostly Frequently Required Years of experience

S/N	HRM Jobs	Frequency (Overall)	%	Minimum number of years
1	Director-HR	02 out of 3	66.66%	Minimum of 08 years' experience
2	Head of HR	06 out of 14	43.00%	Minimum of 15 years' experience
3	Deputy General Manager (HR)	02 out of 04	50.00%	Minimum of 15 years' experience
5	Senior Manager (HR)	02 out of 04	50.00%	Minimum of 05 years' experience
6	Manager (HR)	16 out of 34	47.00%	Minimum of 05 years' experience
7	Assistant Manager (HR)	16 out of 31	51.70%	Minimum of 03 years' experience
8	Senior Executive-HR	06 out of 18	33.33%	Minimum of 05 years' experience
9	Executive -HR	18 out of 42	42.86%	Minimum of 02 years' experience

According to Opatha (2010) minimum of 10 years' experience in a recognized establishment at Senior Executive level is required as the appropriate experience for the post of Human Resource Director/ Assistant General Manager-Human Resource/ Deputy General Manager-HRM/ Group Human Resources Manager and Group Director for Human Resources. Minimum of 10 years of accumulated experience required to become Director-HRM or similar senior position (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2012). This study also proved that minimum 10 years' experience is required to become Director-HRM or similar senior position in Sri Lanka. During the study period there was a less demand for vacancies for senior HR positions. It can be shown as follows.

Table 19: Senior HR Positions

	Selected Key HR Jobs	Number of Advertisements	%
	Director HR	03	02%
	Head of Human Resources	14	9.3%
	Deputy General Manager (HR)	04	2.6%
	Senior Manager (HR)	04	2.6%
	Manager (HR)	34	22.6%
	Assistant Manager (HR)	31	20.6%
	Senior Executive (HR)	18	12%
	Executive (HR)	42	28%
	Total	150	100%

Also Opatha (2010) and Opatha and Arulrajah (2012) emphasized that minimum 05 years' experience is needed for the post of Human Resources Manager. According to the findings of current study proved that minimum 05 years' experience should be acquired by HR professionals to become HR Manager. Second section of this study emphasized on the content of work experience of HR job vacancies. Under this study, researchers presented the content of work experience analysis for each HR job vacancy. There are seven dimensions of content experience identified under this study. The contents of HRM job experience and seven key dimensions can be shown as follows.

Table 20: Emerging Dimensions of HRM Job Experience

	Real world requirements of HRM Job experience	Emerging Perspectives/Dimensions
1	Over 8 years' experience in the HR field	HRM field related experience in General (Generalization)
2	Minimum 2 years' experience in the field in	Function within the field or specialized experience within

	recruitment	field
	Minimum 2 years' experience in Training & Development	
3	Minimum 5 years' experience of relevant post qualifying experience in MNC/ Blue chip organization.	Scope related experience (Local/National HRM or International HRM)
4	Minimum of 5 years of experience in HRM preferably in the service sector	Sector related experience
5	Minimum 10 years' of experience in a senior managerial level	Level/position related experience (Senior/Middle/Operational level)
	Minimum 5 years' experience in a senior managerial level	
6	Minimum 5 years' of relevant working experience in construction industry.	Industry related experience
	Minimum 5 years' experience in manufacturing industry in similar capacity.	
7	At least 1 year relevant experience including process/system implementation.	HR systems/process implementation

After conducting the content analysis of years of experience of HR job vacancies, it was possible to build seven dimensions that are identified as emerging dimensions or emerging perspectives of HRM job experience. Two dimensions are eliminated from the model which was developed by Opatha and Arulrajah in 2012 due to the poor demand for some HR job vacancies. One new dimension is inserted by researchers, which is HR systems/process implementation.

VI. Conclusions

After analyzing the content analysis of HR job vacancy advertisements, a minimum of 10 years' experience is required to become HR director and other senior HR positions in Sri Lanka. According to current research findings, there is a less demand for senior HR job vacancies. Future researchers will be able to find out the reasons for less demand from organizations for senior HR job vacancies. Suitable applicants should acquire at least minimum 05 years' experience in order to become HR Manager in Sri Lanka. The minimum 03 years' experience is frequently required for Assistant Manager-Human Resources by Sri Lankan Organizations. Minimum 05 years' experience is frequently required for Senior Executives-Human Resources by Sri Lankan Organizations and Minimum 05 years' experience is frequently required for Executives-Human Resources by Sri Lankan Organizations. With regard to content analysis experiences of HR job vacancies, seven emerging dimensions have been identified the researchers of current study consisting with HRM field related experience in general, Function within the field or specialized experience within field, Scope related experience (Local/National HRM or International HRM), Sector related experience, Level/position related experience (Senior/Middle/Operational level), Industry related experience & HR systems/process implementation. The findings of this study are useful to current HR job holders and future potential HR job seekers in order to get understanding about experience requirements by Sri Lankan organizations to progress in their HRM career in a successful manner. Also some Sri Lankan organizations which are planning to start their operations to develop their HR policies and manuals.

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