

Chapter 1

Introduction

Recruitment for Public Services in India

It is a well-known fact that efficiency of any organisation depends on its people. Public Personnel Management is, thus, a very important factor to be considered for any Government. Employee recruitment is a procedure by which merit is measured and employees are brought into government service. Quality of the government workforce, efficiency and effectiveness of the whole government setup are dependent, on the manner in which this important activity of recruitment is carried out (Llorens, 2007). Union Government and States Governments in India are very large employer with approximately 30.99 lakh government employees in the central government ministries and its subordinate offices (as per the Census of central Government Employees 2009) alone with approximately two Crore employees in all government sectors including the state government and public sector (Swami, 2012). The recruitment for the public service in central and state governments in India is mainly done at entry level and is highly centralised. Union level recruitment is done by the following two main recruitment bodies –

- A. UPSC – The Union Public Service Commission have been entrusted under the constitution with the recruitment to services & posts under the union through conduct of competitive examinations or by selection through interviews (Union Public Service Commission website <http://www.upsc.gov.in>)
- B. SSC - The Staff Selection Commission has been mandated with recruitment of group 'C' (non-technical) and group 'B' (non-gazetted – both technical and non-technical) posts in various Ministries/Departments of Government of India and their Attached and Subordinate offices except those for which recruitment is made by the Railway Recruitment Board and Industrial Establishments (Staff Selection Commission Annual Report 2011-12).

Apart from the centralised set up of UPSC and SSC, Ministry of railways has its own setup for recruitment in the form of Railway Recruitment Boards and Railway Recruitment Centres. Some other large departments like Department of Posts also make recruitment for some specialised posts themselves apart from getting

recruitment done by UPSC/ SSC for regular posts which come under the mandate of these recruitment bodies.

At the state government level, State Public Service Commissions are entrusted with recruitment for the civil services of the state. UPSC and State PSCs are constitutional bodies and have been established under Article 315 of the Constitution of India. Functions of the Public Service Commissions are as per Article 320 of the Constitution. (See Annexure I for the Constitutional Provisions regarding Public Service Commissions).

The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), in their Report on Personnel Administration, drew attention to the fact that the bulk of the staff of the Government at the Centre and in the States belonged to Class III and Class IV categories. Referring to the identical nature of qualifications stipulated for entry into such posts in various offices, the ARC advocated pooling of the requirements of the nontechnical posts by different departments and selection of personnel either by joint recruitment or through a Recruitment Board. After a careful consideration of this recommendation, the Government of India decided to constitute the Subordinate Services Commission in 1975 which was subsequently re-designated as Staff Selection Commission (SSC) on 26th September, 1977 to make recruitment to Class III (now Group 'C') non-technical posts in the various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India and their subordinate offices (SSC, 2013). State Subordinate Service Commissions in a few states were formed subsequently to delegate some portion of recruitment activity from the respective Public Service Commissions.

e- Governance and e-Recruitment in India

E-Governance in India has steadily evolved from computerization of Government departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency. To speed up the e-Governance implementation, Government of India approved National e-Governance Plan in 2006.

With the increased stress on e-Governance as well as realization of various benefits of use of ICT, the recruitment organisations for public services in India have also started moving from the traditional recruitment methods towards e-Recruitment. Following

are the main drivers for these recruiting bodies for moving towards electronic recruitment -

- Ease of operation brought by technology due to enhanced data storage capacities, ease of retrieving and sharing information.
- Use of technology increases the speed of operation and helps in reduction in the time taken to complete the recruitment cycle (Chilana, 2010). Present recruitment cycles are typically in the range of 6 to 20 months from issue of notifications to declaration of results based on the number of stages in the entire recruitment process which varies from post to post. In addition, considerable time is taken from the date of vacancy generation to the notification as well as from the declaration of results to issue of appointment and actual joining of a recruit. Hence, there is a constant demand to reduce the overall recruitment cycle.
- E-Recruitment has the benefit of increased transparency brought by online application and public notification on websites (Chou, 2007). Moreover, increased demand of transparency and that of proactive disclosure of information as per the Right to Information Act 2005 can be met only with the use of technology. For example, if a recruiting body decides to place the marks secured by, say, 20 lakh candidates who took a particular examination in public domain, the best way of doing it is through its website. If any of these candidates demand a photocopy of the answer sheet under Right to Information Act, instead of retrieving the hardcopies, it would make sense to generate scanned copies of the sheets at the time of evaluation and use the softcopies which are easily retrievable.
- With a large number of unemployed youth aspiring for government jobs, the volume of candidates handled by the recruiting bodies is very large and increasing day by day. It is only through the use of technology that handling of such large volumes is made feasible. E-Recruitment provides the benefit of lowering costs (Musa, 2006) as well.
- Use of technology removes the scope of manual errors. For example, while evaluating the script of a typing test, an evaluator may ignore some mistakes made by the examinee under pressure of time and volumes but a computerised

evaluation will be uniformly counting all the mistakes on all the scripts being evaluated irrespective of the volume of evaluation being made.

- Recruitment is a very sensitive process, especially so for the public service where, once recruited, a person is practically employed for life. Removal from the government service on the basis of performance is almost next to impossible. Hence the recruitment bodies require use of innovative tools and techniques provided by technology to ensure maintenance of sanctity of examinations and to guard against attempts by candidates to use any unfair means.

The recruitment process of the private sector is much advanced in terms of use of e-Recruitment process as far as the recruitment interface of recruiting organisation with the prospective candidates is concerned. The current trend in recruitment is sourcing through social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Twitter. Organizations are referring to these sites extensively at some point in the recruitment process. Organizations receive employee referrals from these social media platforms as well (Sudhakar, 2014).

However, the recruitment done by private sector is mostly in a decentralised manner and hence at a very small scale. They do not resort to centralised, high volume, entry level recruitment. They do not have any social obligation to meet unlike government and may resort to sourcing their employees from some select colleges/ institutes through campus placements. Government on the other hand is obliged to provide a level playing field for entry to government setup and hence, has to keep in mind the population at large while deciding on introduction of any changes in the process of recruitment.

e-Recruitment

E-recruitment is defined as the utilisation of the information technology for candidate sourcing, selection, communication and management throughout the recruitment process (Hoffman 2001). Following are some of the important uses of information technology implemented by the recruitment bodies -

- Development and maintenance of websites for dissemination of information on recruitment notices, schedules, results etc.

- Online registration of applications
- Computerised processing of data of applicants for screening and generation of admission certificates
- Online downloadable admission certificates/ Call letters
- Computer Based Testing (CBT) popularly known as online examination
- Computerised evaluation for Online tests or offline objective type tests administered using OMR sheets
- Computerised evaluation assistance systems for descriptive papers
- Computerised administration of skill tests i.e. Typing tests, Stenography tests, Data entry test, computer proficiency test and automatic evaluation for the same
- Computerised processing of results
- Online management of posting and appointment after results
- Online grievance redressal system for candidates

e-Recruitment Processes

Online Registration/ Applications – All the recruitment bodies invite applications from eligible candidate against a recruitment notification clearly stating the eligibility condition and specifying a last date for submitting applications. Online registration / application system provides for submission of the applications using internet. In addition, it also provides for payment of examination fee or application fee as prescribed by the recruitment organisation.

Online Examination – Written examinations are normally conducted by the recruiting organisations as a selection tool apart from other tools as interviews, physical tests or skill tests. These examinations may be conducted in traditional paper and pen/pencil mode or with the help of computers which is known as Computer Based Testing (CBT), or popularly known as online examination. CBT is defined as use of computers to deliver, score, select items and report scores of assessments. (Ockey, 2009)

There are many modes of administration of Computer based Tests. Based on the level of supervision, CBT can be administered in four modes as per ITC Computer-based and Internet delivered testing Guidelines (2005) –

- i) Open mode – Internet based tests without any direct human supervision of the assessment session fall in this category. There is no means of authenticating the identity of the test taker.
- ii) Controlled mode – No direct human supervision of the assessment session is involved but the test is made available to only to known test-takers. For example internet tests requiring login username and password.
- iii) Supervised (Proctored) mode – Where there is a level of direct human supervision over test-taking conditions. For internet testing this would require an administrator to log-in a candidate and confirm that the test had been properly administered.
- iv) Managed mode – This mode has a high level of human supervision and control over the test taking environment. It is normally achieved by use of dedicated testing centres with high level of control over access, security, the qualification of test administration staff and the quality and technical specifications of the test equipment.

In public service recruitment scenario, managed mode is suitable as internet based / web based testing has no provision of establishing the test takers/ examinee's identity. Online examination term used in the document hereafter refers to only this mode of Computer Based Testing.

Online Grievance Redressal System – This refers to any web based system provided by the recruiting organisation to the candidates for communicating their grievances online to the organisation. A rudimentary way of providing the facility would be by the way of publishing an email id to which candidates can send their grievances. A well-developed system would provide a user form with a proper format so that the grievances can be easily categorised and handled.

Statement of Problem

Different e Recruitment processes have been under the process of implementation by the recruitment organisations of government of India. However, the pace of change from traditional recruitment to e-Recruitment has been slow for the government organisation and has also been different for different organisations. There appear to be some issues and challenges being faced by the organisations in the process of implementation of electronic recruitment.

Objectives

Objective of the research is –

- i. To study the present status of implementation of e- Recruitment process for public service recruitment organisations in India.
- ii. To identify the issues and challenges faced in implementation of e-Recruitment and to suggest possible solutions for addressing the issues and challenges.

Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions –

- i. What is the status of implementation of e-Recruitment in the public service recruitment organisations in India?
- ii. What are the challenges faced/being faced by these organisations in implementation of e –Recruitment process?
- iii. What are the possible solutions to address these issues and challenges?

Scheme of Chapterisation

Chapter 1 of the dissertation provides background of the subject and introduces the topic i. e. recruitment for public service in India, e-Governance and e-Recruitment. It also discusses the problem statement and objectives of this study. Review of present literature on e-Recruitment in general as well as on studies carried out in different countries is covered in the second chapter. Chapter 3 describes the methodology adopted and the research design used for the dissertation. The process of development of scale that has been used for evaluation of level of implementation of e-Recruitment

in public recruitment organisations is also described in this chapter. A snapshot of the present status of implementation of e-Recruitment for public service in India is presented in Chapter 4 on the basis of study carried out for several public service recruitment bodies in India. Analysis of the status data has been done by awarding scores corresponding to the implementation level of e-Recruitment processes and grouping the organisations on regional basis. Chapter 5 lists and describes the challenges and issues faced in implementation of e-Recruitment in public service recruitment bodies in India as per the perception of the officers involved in recruitment activities. Conclusion and implications of the study along with the possible solutions which emerged from the qualitative research have been discussed in Chapter 6 and recommendations for the way forward have been made.