Chapter 6
Implications and Conclusions

Implications

It is seen that e-Recruitment processes are increasingly being introduced in the public service recruitment. The most encouraging factor is the acknowledgement of importance and benefits of implementation of Information and communication technology on part of the authorities. Most of the respondents felt that it improves the efficiency of the organisation as well as reduces costs. Intent on part of the recruiting bodies is the first step which is required for smooth implementation. A working group constituted by DoPT has recommended that online registration should be made compulsory everywhere in all areas except North East where additional one year may be given as presently the ICT infrastructure is not extensively available. The registration should be one time registration. It also recommended introduction of online exams without any further delay. (National workshop, 2014). Based on interviews it emerged that Railway Recruitment Boards have decided to introduce 100% online applications as well as online examinations in the year 2015 whereas Department of Post is also mulling over starting online examinations soon. Several State public service commissions are also planning in the same direction.

All the recruitment organisations have their websites. However, the extent of availability of information varies greatly. Issues like lack of technical manpower or inadequate infrastructure may have some bearing in this regard; however, it is more a matter of policy towards more transparency. A respondent very clearly pointed out that

> "The information to be shared with the Users depends on the overall philosophy of the agency and not on the technological capabilities alone. Technically everything can be provided and the system should be transparent. However, the various stages or point of time where the information should be shared needs to be carefully examined and thought out, since disclosure of information at wrong stages may vitiate the process or result in unnecessary litigation by disgruntled elements."

It is seen that even the details which are supposed to be provided by the recruiting organisations under the ambit of RTI are not disclosed online by many of them, leading to increasing number of RTI applications which only brings down the efficiency of the organisation. Information technology provides a very easy way of dissemination of information and hopefully, implementation of e-Recruitment will lead to much required transparency in the present recruitment system.

Availability of internet access in every nook and corner of the country is a primary challenge towards which the government is already geared up as this will affect the roll out of all e-Governance initiatives to which e-Recruitment is no exception. Total internet subscribers in the country as on 31st March 2014 are 251.59 million out of which only 60.87 are broadband connections against a target set by the government of 175 million broadband connections by 2017 (TRAI, 2014). Hence, there is an urgent need to review the present policies and its implementation initiated to build infrastructure required for penetration of internet and broadband in the country. Effective utilization of CSCs created under National e-Governance Plan will also help for the purpose of online application and information dissemination. Public service commissions of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Rajasthan are utilizing the services of AP Online centres, MP online kiosks, Sangram Kendra, NagalandOne CSCs, e-Mitra centres for online application submission with fee payment. Other public service recruitment organisation can also take help of the CSCs in their area of jurisdiction.

Low Computer and internet literacy in prospective candidates is another perceived issue in implementation of e Recruitment processes. This again requires concentrated efforts in the education sector in the country. Households equipped with PC are just 10 per cent in India versus more than 45 per cent of countries such as Brazil, Malaysia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and 35 per cent of China (MAIT-KPMG, 2013). Proliferation of mobile telephony and smart phones is helping in bridging the gap fast and now there is a need to develop mobile applications instead of waiting for the entire population to become computer proficient. Several state public service commissions (Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh etc.) are making good use of mobile SMS for communicating with the candidates. Developing Mobile apps to enable candidates to apply for recruitment using mobile devices is a welcome

recommendation (National workshop, 2014) to be considered by the public service recruiting organisations.

Although one time registration is not very widely used nor is being actively considered for implementation by the recruiting organisations, its requirement will perhaps be felt once 100% online registration is in place for significant time period. Identification of candidates is an activity which takes up a lot of effort on part of recruiting organisations. Four respondents suggested use of Aadhaar number issued by UIDAI as a common unique denominator along with one time registration which will make such identification simple. In absence of any such unique identifier, recruiting organisations are not able to take any action against miscreants in the form of debarment. All recruiting organisations keep a list of debarred candidates but are not able to effectively enforce the same even within the same organisation.

Inadequate technical skillset within the recruitment bodies need to be addressed seriously. Outsourcing to private technology solution providers is seen as a solution to the lack of in house skill set. However as Chairman, SSC pointed out –

> "In the initial stage, public service recruitment organisations may depend on outsourcing for implementation of IT solutions. However, this is not a permanent solution to the problem. In the long run, there is a need of recruiting technical manpower as well as training and capacity building of the manpower. Organisations like National Informatics Centre (NIC) and Department of IT will play an important role in this aspect".

Even with the excellent support provided by NIC, technical capabilities within the organisation are a must. As per Ex DG NIC,

> "NIC can help the recruiting organisations as partner in managing the implementation of IT through outsourcing. However, the in house techno administrative capabilities would still be required else management of private vendors will be a challenge. This capability may be developed through training or through recruitment as it is seen that there is practically no IT knowledge at the lower levels and the higher

management gets no support from lower levels for overseeing the IT implementation."

Issues relating to Data security concerns or Confidentiality & secrecy concerns also have a root in the lack of technical skill set within the organisation which leads to scepticism amongst the key functionaries of these organisations and results in limited top management commitment. This issue may be addressed by setting up well equipped IT cells within the organisations by way of fresh recruitment as well as training the existing staff. Capacity building is one main component of National e Governance Plan. The Capacity Building Scheme under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of Government of India envisions establishment of an institutional framework for State-Level decision-making including setting-up of State e-Mission Teams (SeMTs) having relevant expertise and experience to provide technical and professional support to States and Union Territories. Public Service Recruiting organisations should also take advantage of the scheme.

Insufficient infrastructure availability is the main stumbling block in the way of conducting online examinations. Even in case of traditional paper pen examinations, with increasing number of unemployed youth applying for the jobs, it is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange for screening tests for such a large number of candidates (more than 10 lakh and up to 50 lakh applicants in a single recruitment examination has become a routine rather than exception). In view of different standards of various boards and universities, screening tests cannot be eliminated as no screening can be made on the basis of marks secured in the eligibility Qualification. All the recruitment organisations are jostling to get examination venues in such a large number which are normally educational institutions and are available only on 52 Sundays in a year. This results in multiple examinations being held on the same day and the applicant has to decide which one to appear in. Conducting online examination for each of these screening examinations separately is practically not feasible in view of limited infrastructure available in the country. Hence, there is a requirement of a basic employment screening Examination (which can be an online testing with a score validity of 1 – 2 years) which may be entrusted to a single organisation which may be set up on the lines similar to the well-known ETS i.e. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, and the results thereof may be used by all recruitment organisations for shortlisting candidates for further job specific

assessments. For example, for all recruitments requiring graduation as required qualifications can have one common screening exam. Shortlisted candidates may then be subjected to specific skill tests required for different posts. If this is done, the screening exam can be continuously offered for an extended period of time or round the clock at testing centres and the candidates may appear on selecting any day and time slots. Scores for such exams can be used by different recruiting agencies for shortlisting for any further exams which will involve limited number of candidates. This will reduce the work load on the recruiting organisations and will provide an opportunity of assured returns round the year for infrastructure providers thereby making investment for the purpose feasible. (Key Interview 2).

Recommendations and Way Forward

- Acknowledgement of importance and benefits of implementation of e-Recruitment is required on part of the recruitment bodies which will come by capacity building initiatives.
- Common platforms may be created for exchange of ideas amongst various public service recruitment organisations
- Inadequate technical skillset within the recruitment bodies to be addressed by setting up good IT cells within the organisations by way of fresh recruitment as well as training the existing staff.
- The Capacity Building Scheme under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to include Public Service Recruiting organisations
- Online disclosure of recruitment related information will lead to much required transparency and should be encouraged by Central and State Information Commissions.
- Action on war footing is required to build infrastructure required for penetration of internet and broadband in the country.
- Effective utilization of CSCs created under National e-Governance Plan by the recruitment bodies.
- Concentrated efforts are required in the education sector in the country to increase computer literacy.
- Need to develop mobile applications instead of waiting for the entire population to become computer proficient.

- Use of Aadhaar number issued by UIDAI as a common unique denominator along with one time registration for candidate identification
- There is a requirement of a basic employment screening Examination (which may be an online testing with a score validity of 1 – 2 years) which may be entrusted to a single organisation and the results thereof may be used by all recruitment organisations for shortlisting candidates for further job specific assessments. Meanwhile, individual organisations may also hold common screening tests instead of multiple examinations.
- Setting up computer testing centres for online examination is required.

Contribution of the Study

Theoretical Contribution

This dissertation documents the existing status of implementation of e-Recruitment processes in public service recruitment organisations across the country. The study has built a scale to measure and compare the level of e-Recruitment implementation across public service recruitment organisations. These standardized scales can be used in respect of other recruitment organisations which have not been covered in the study.

Contribution to Public Policy

Status of implementation of e-Recruitment has depicted the states/ organisations and areas which require immediate intervention to achieve targets of Digital India. Various issues and challenges have been listed and their perceived importance from the point of view of key functionaries involved in the recruitment has been shown in comparative terms. This information can be used to set priority for resolving the issues. Suggestions made by the key functionaries of recruitment organisations can be used for resolving these issues.

Contribution to Community

The study describes various e-Recruitment processes and issues and challenges in implementing them. It can be used as a reference to gain knowledge about the topic. A layman can also get an insight into the nature of problems faced in recruitment for public service. This may also be referred by those who are involved in the recruitment

and are planning to implement e-Recruitment processes as they can benefit from the experience of others as presented in a comprehensive form in this dissertation.

Scope of further research

The study of status, issues and challenges as well as the way forward as discussed in this dissertation is based on the organisations view point. Another major stakeholder in the entire process of recruitment is the candidate and the view point from candidates' side can be taken for further research on the topic.

Similar study for recruitment bodies for other public services like banking, insurance, defence, technical and scientific services may be undertaken which have not been included in this study. The scale designed for measuring and comparing the level of implementation of e-Recruitment process may be broadened in further research by including details of additional processes which may be required in these organisations. Scale may be further refined for the processes which are at a nascent stage at present like online examinations and online grievance redressal mechanisms as these processes get widely implemented.