

Managing human resources in university libraries in Sri Lanka: appropriate styles and strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to investigate how certain Human Resource Management (HRM) norms and practices are currently used and to explore the possibilities there exist to improve them in University Libraries in Sri Lanka (ULSL). Objectives of the study were to identify the position and role of HRM for providing an efficient and effective library and information service in ULSL, to suggest some guidelines for formulating human resource policy for ULSL, to explore what are the other supportive policies for HRM, to investigate the needs and changes required to HRM in university libraries. The method used for this study was the descriptive research. The population of the study was the professional staff working in ULSL. Primary data was collected circulating two structured questionnaires among the Library professionals in ULSL. The major focus was given for testing and verification of three hypotheses viz. 01. **HRM is the most important factor for providing an efficient and effective library and information service in ULSL.** 02. **Professionals in university libraries prefer to participative management style than bureaucratic style of management.** 03. **Professionals prefer to work as teams in a more self-guided committed work environment in university libraries.** For testing and verification of the hypotheses, data taken from the above questionnaires were used. To test the hypothesis 01, Librarians and SALs and ALs were asked to mark the most important factor, out of the 6 given to produce an efficient and effective library service. They identified that well trained, qualified and dedicated library staff as the most important factor. Against this background, a suggestion was made to implement more HRM awareness programmes for ULSL and to formulate and implement a sound HRM policy for university libraries.

With regards to hypothesis 02, out of three management styles, the majority of Librarians (70%), and the category of SALs and ALs (85%) endorsed the statement: "*HRM functions and activities which belong to library domain should be dispersed among respective Heads/Sectional Heads, while holding full responsibility with the Librarian himself.*" It manifests that '*participative management style*' which is based on the principles of more collaborative approach is needed for ULSL.

In testing the 3rd hypothesis, out of four organizational structures, the Librarians gave the highest preference by (60%) to the 3rd model: "*a new cohesive and collaborative model, based more on the principles of teamwork with high commitment*" The theory underlying these three hypothesis is that Human Resource factor is to be given the first priority by the ULSL and the very human resources have to be handled with appropriate management styles, strategies and structures.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Teamwork, Participative Management, University Libraries, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Human resource is considered as the most powerful, most essential, dynamic resource among all other resources. It is also very difficult to attract, hire, handle, treat, deploy and retain when compared with other management resources. In Human Resource Management (HRM) context, human resource is the most valuable asset that its social, economic, political, ethical and cultural value which can never be underestimated and marginalized. Every organization in society is led and maintained by the human being. Therefore human capital is the principal and fundamental resource, above all other resources. Studies and research related to library and information services have dealt mostly with the areas like collection management and development, cataloguing, classification, information needs,