Human Resources Management: A Comparative Analysis of Recruitment Processes within the United Kingdom and Afghanistan

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Human Resources is the department which formally deals with employees and their issues within the workforce. This includes performance management, compensation, benefits, training, recruiting and onboarding, organisational development and culture. However, the Human Resources function is not limited to this[1]. Human resources specialists work collaboratively with the business, and partner with other functions within an organisation to ensure that there is effective management of the employee's lifecycle. The Human Resources function plays a critical role in developing and making an organisation a success, by supporting employees through their careers and ensuring that employees have the opportunity to bring their best self to work. In the UK you may gain accreditation when working in this area by completing the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) qualifications, who are the main professional body for accreditation for Human rResources and development[2]. In comparison, within Afghanistan such a professional body is not fully functioning, given the political climate of the country for the last four decades[3] of war, attention has been drawn to security, health and welfare rather than putting into place a framework to establish Human Resources management in the sense that the function operates within the UK. However, this has been receiving some attention in Afghanistan through the process of administrative reform and by the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission[4]. Within the UK policies relating to all aspects of an employee's lifecycle sits within the Human Resources function, and is aligned to the labour laws of the country. A similar approach needs implementing for Afghanistan's' workforce in its entiret, whereby policies relating to the workforce are aligned to the Human Resources function, however there is evidence that in 2003 there were attempts by the Ministry of Health in Afghanistan to set up a Human Resources Taskforce to facilitate HR management and recruitment[5]. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that currently the capacity of the HR Functions within the Afghan civil service is given some provision, and there are some apparent initiatives, such as on the job training for HR employees, inclusion and management of roles and responsibilities outlined for employees. Together with the scope that Human Resources professionals review and look at what training is provided for all other core functions within the civil service and their respective staff.

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[1] The balance careers; What Is a Human Resource? https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-a-human-resource-1918144
[2] https://www.cipd.co.uk/
[3] A Comprehensive Framework for Human Resources for Health System Development in Fragile and Post Conflict States https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1001146
[4] Rahela Sidiqi, interview, 2019 (IARCSC established 23 May 2002 by decree 24 of President.)
[5] A Comprehensive Framework for Human Resources for Health System Development in Fragile and Post conflict states https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1001146

Employers in the UK are obligated to protect their staff, and in some organisations Trade Unions[6] work independently to ensure that the rights of an employee are protected. However, Trade Unions which were established in Afghanistan[7] (pre-war) and supported the workforce are no longer systematically connected to the Human Resources function. Through the legislation of the Equality Act 2010[8] (within the UK) all employees are protected when employed. However, it is worth noting that through persistent consultation, various acts and legislations were put into place to ensure that the Afghan workforce are protected, yet the lack of documented evidence suggests that the governance of this is questionable. In addition, it has been highlighted that Afghanistan's workforce legislations are closely aligned to that in existence of the European model[9]. The benefits of utilising a model which is already utilised is that it is tried and tested, however it is worth baring in mind that tweaks will need to be made given local labor laws within Afghanistan. In Afghanistan the reform process[10] has helped the restructuring, formalisation, revision and development of a required structure for Human Resources management within the Civil Service. Laws, regulations, procedures and structures have been reviewed and revised for each department based on the reform framework. This has been undertaken to reduce the duplication of tasks and to introduce new structures within each of the ministries and the governmental overall. Visions, missions and Terms of Reference (ToR) have been created for each department. The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission supports all 42 ministries within the Afghan government, including those at provincial levels[11]. Although the reform process was implemented in 2002, there is then the issue of the change of organisational culture which is a much lengthier process. This requires personal commitment from employees at all levels. In addition, there needs to be governance to ensure that the reform processes are being adhered to, and more importantly to measure the outputs to analyse the benefits of the reforms. However, there is a substantive gap in the reviewing and evaluation of how these reforms are being implemented, and in what capacity they are being administered.

The employee lifecycle begins with individuals being recruited[12] into an organisation, and it is this process at inception that sets the path for their success, or in some cases their failure, as they embark on their journey within an organisation. Within the UK, recruitment and Human Resources specialists work closely together, as well as with the organisation leaders to ensure the demand for staff is met. With the department's recruitment strategy in mind, campaigns are started to attract potential employees via Job Advert's. Insightful job adverts set out in detail the organisations culture and values together with the role that is vacant, detailing the skills which are essential for the role. As well as the essential skills required, desirable skills are also outlined. At this very first step of attraction, transparency comes into play; transparency into the organisations culture, into the role which is vacant and also the process for recruitment which potential candidates will embark on. However, it is unclear how widely recruitment strategies are utilised within Afghanistan, or how widely vacancies are advertised. Nevertheless attempts are made to use a modern form of the

[6] Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development https://www.gov.uk/join-trade-union
[7] Ministry of Labour, Social affairs, Martyrs and disabled https://socialprotection.org/connect/stakeholders/afeghanistan-ministry-labor-social-affairs-martyrs-disabled-molsamd
[8] Equality Act 2010 – Chapter 1 Protected Characteristics & Chapter 2 Prohibited Conduct https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
[9] Rahela Sidiqi, interview, 2019
[10] https://iarcsc.gov.af/en/about-iarcsc/
[11] Rahela Sidiqi, interview, 2019
[12] Recruitment: An introduction https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/recruitment/factsheet#7034

recruitment model, with the area that needs most focus and improvement being with regard to transparency.

Upon application, candidates are often requested to submit a CV, or Curriculum Vitae (this document summarises an individual's career to date, as well as their education and key skills[13]). This document may be submitted on its own, or together with a cover letter which is addressed to the potential employee and highlights the reasons behind application for the specified role. These documents are screened by the recruitment team or hiring manager within an organisation to see how best applicants match the role/roles which are vacant. More often than not, recruitment teams and hiring managers are inundated with applications for vacant roles. It is therefore imperative that CV's re presented in a concise manner, highlighting key skills as well as relevant achievements. In Afghanistan application processes are generally the same, but the issues in most cases are the lack of capacity of the applicants in resume writing and understanding how to best present their skills.[14]

Successful applicants that have been shortlisted during the CV screening stage then enter the second part of the recruitment process, whereby they are invited to partake in tests (these could be a number of different tests, but not limited to, psychometric tests, verbal reasoning tests, numerical tests).[15] Many organisations use these tests to further sift through the applications which have been received at the attraction stage; this helps recruitment teams and hiring managers hone in on suitable applicants by objectively measuring candidate ability. Where there are no intermediary tests involved in the recruitment process, successful applicants are invited into an interview. In Afghanistan there is a gap in the utilisation of tests used at the recruitment stage, which adversely impacts the process of selecting a suitable candidate.

Interviews[16] within the recruitment process can be set up in numerous ways, and there is the option of having various parts to the interview stage. Each interview may have a panel of 2 (as a minimum) or 3 individuals carrying out the interview to further test the applicants' suitability for the vacant role/roles. Interviewee's may focus on competencies, behaviours, experience, technical skills or strengths when carrying out an interview, and there are numerous ways in which an interview could be formatted. It is important to highlight that the format of the interview should be consistent for all applicants, and also transparent so that potential applicants are fully informed of what to expect. Successful interviews are structured, whereby all panel members are aware of the process and there is a scorecard used (by the panel) for all questions which are answered by the candidate being interviewed. Panel members should be aware of biases that could influence the interview. For example they may prefer a candidate who they feel is similar to them, or one person on the panel could be affecting the rest of the panels decision, or rather by allowing first impressions to dictate a candidate's entire interview[17]. Therefor before any interview takes place, the panel should hold a pre-meet and complete unconscious bias training. Regrettably, this stage within the recruitment process needs urgent attention and focus within Afghanistan, the lack of structure and consistency within the interviewing stage leads to the unsuitable appointment of candidates.

Post interview stage, the panel regroups to review all candidates interviewed, after which the most suitable candidate for the vacancy is given an offer for the role which they were interviewed for. This offer may be verbal and is followed up with a contract.

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[13] What is a CV? https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-cv
[14] Rahela Sidiqi, interview, 2019
[15] What are Psychometric Tests? https://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/psychometric-tests/
[16] The Art of Work. The Art of Job Interviewing https://www.artofwork.co/job-interviewing#explainer
[17] The Art of Work https://www.artofwork.co/job-interviewing#explainer

[18] The Art of Work https://www.artofwork.co/job-interviewing

By utilising recruitment policies, the end-to-end recruitment process can be made transparent, and consistent to ensure a fair process is practiced. For Afghanistan, it is imperative that sound situation analysis (Situation analysis refers to a collection of methods that managers use to analyse an organization's internal and external environment to understand the organization's capabilities) is first carried out to identify the contextual variables that influence human resources development, this could then be used to put in place a frame for Human Resources management within each sector[19]. Organisations may also inform candidates seeking to apply for roles about their recruitment processes, this form of external transparency also supports candidates through the process. Where possible recruitment data should be captured, for example the length of a successful recruitment campaign, number of applicants, dropout rates at each stage of the recruitment stage, and finally diversity data for both applicants and those successful appointment. Subsequently these insights can provide valuable analytics for the organisation to analyse their recruitment process as well as the appointments. Data shared internally (or externally where appropriate) further ensures transparency and adherence to the organisations recruitment policy. The growth of Analytics and data usage is a recent phenomenon in the UK. This new method of real time analysis can be hugely beneficial for a country like Afghanistan looking to introduce new policies, as lessons learnt and best practices can be shared. In addition, tweaks and relevant frameworks can be embedded without having to go through lengthy organisational changes. Recruitment and Human Resources specialists within UK organisations use the data collated to inform organisational strategy as well as further improve their processes if there is a pattern that emerges whereby a certain process may not be benefitting the organisation with their recruitment campaigns (for example, not adverstising job posts widely may limit the diversity of applicants). Or, whereby candidates with certain protected characteristics are adversely affected. For example, certain intermediary tests may be putting off potential applicants or playing to their disadvantages unnecessarily, therefore organisations may remove a certain type of test, or may look to alter it to ensure this part of the process is made more inclusive. Furthermore, useful insights from data may indicate which part of the recruitment process is particularly lengthy and needs addressing (i.e. time it takes to invite candidate for interview, or

[18] The Art of Work https://www.artofwork.co/job-interviewing
[19] A Comprehensive Framework for Human Resources for Health System Development in Fragile and Post conflict states https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1001146

time taken to draw up and share a contract). Key insights into diversity of applicants and candidates appointed can also be reviewed to ensure that the recruitment process fairly attracts applicants from all ethnic backgrounds, ages, social mobility status and gender. The lessons learnt through the implementation of recruitment policies within Human Resources can be shared with Afghanistan to ensure that there is sharing of knowledge and best practices when these frameworks are being designed and implemented, this will ensure that common pitfalls are avoided, and there is transparency, equality, inclusivity and diversity at every step. Even though relevant policies are in place within Human resources and recruitment (even if not consistent) there seems to be gaps, challenges and obstacles with the implementation of these Human resources policies. Therefore, closer interaction and increased sharing of knowledge between the United Kingdom and Afghanistan reform systems is urgently needed. Organisations which are deemed as successful work strategically with their respective human resources department to ensure business objectives are met and their human capital is given the opportunity to perform at their best.

Below are recommendations which have come to light based on the comparative analysis of Human resources and Recruitment processes between the United Kingdom and Afghanistan.

1. Strict governance is required by Human resources professionals to oversee the recruitment processes for all governmental departments to ensure there is transparency, departments are adhering to recruitment policies (policies to be created where there aren't any), biases are addressed and end-to-end recruitment campaigns are monitored for everyone who is appointed to a role. This information must be collated and reported to the organisations' Boards for thorough review.

2. Considerations should be made for the uptake of aptitude tests, verbal reasoning tests, psychometric tests (where appropriate) as part of the selection process to ensure that the right candidate is selected for a role.

3. There should be moderation on all recruitment panels during the interview stage to ensure that there is consistency for all interviews taking place, the right questions are being asked, scorecards are being utilised and panel members can be held to account for hiring decisions.

4. Appropriate inductions are needed within departments to ensure that departmental procedures and policies are explained to all new joiners, and a strict model of governance is needed to ensure that new joiners thoroughly understand their roles and responsibilities when they are appointed.

5. Most importantly all staff must understand the risk connected to them under performing when in role. In addition, there must be clarity for each employee of why they are delivering the work which they have been assigned, the relevancy of that role within their ministry and what the connection is between their day-to-day job and the overall delivery of the ministerial department.

6. Human resources to work closely with the business to ensure effective management of employees.

7. Human resources to work closely with the business to ensure that there is a training and development strategy which would upskill employees and support them with progression.

8. Strict governance of the Performance Management System is needed to ensure there is no bias when undertaking performance evaluations and that all managers are well versed and understand the importance, as well as the processes for effective performance management.

9. Trade Unions need to be systematically embedded into partnering with departments and ensuring that workforce rights are protected.