

SHIV SHAKTI
International Journal of in Multidisciplinary and
Academic Research (SSIJMAR)
Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2014 (ISSN 2278 – 5973)

**Faculty Recruitment Tests For Sustained Competitive Advantage - Some
Observations**

S.M.DHANA SUNDARESWARAN

Former Assistant Professor (Senior Grade) in Management
Department of Business Administration
SRM University, Chennai, Tamilnadu

**Impact Factor = 3.133 (Scientific Journal Impact Factor Value for 2012 by Inno
Space Scientific Journal Impact Factor)**

Indexing:



Abstract

One of the formidable tasks in ensuring sustained competitive advantage in employment scenario is recruitment and selection. Recruitment is the process of inviting applications from potential and eligible employees for pre-determined employment positions. Various HR studies show that employee selection system is significantly correlated with individual as well as organizational performance. Within this source, several factors in ensuring competitive advantage among academics include brilliant academic performance, skill sharpness, research capabilities and proven track record in publications, ability to use latest teaching technologies and methods and ability to maximize students' performance in examinations. High quality in academic service is essentially ensured through a reveal of brilliancy in academic records. For entering advanced academic professions, the minimum aggregate marks in postgraduate degree may be increased to 60 percent or even up to 70 percent in place of 55 percent in order to ensure academic perfection resulting in high quality service delivery. The controversies surrounding eligibility tests can only be stopped by repealing the test altogether and replacing it with a much recruitment specific one such as an academic service examination (ASE) or academic service aptitudes test (A-SAT). The A-SAT passed candidates should be accepted for immediate appointment in entry level assistant professor positions in all kinds of institutions including IITs, IIMs and research institutions. The authors' insight on recruitment tests and methods are discussed in this paper.

Key Words: Recruitment and Selection, Competitive Advantage, Higher Education Institutions, Academic Service Examination and Academic Service Aptitude Test

FACULTY RECRUITMENT TESTS FOR SUSTAINED COMPETITIVE

ADVANTAGE - Some Observations

Abstract

One of the formidable tasks in ensuring sustained competitive advantage in employment scenario is recruitment and selection. Recruitment is the process of inviting applications from potential and eligible employees for pre-determined employment positions. Various HR studies show that employee selection system is significantly correlated with individual as well as organizational performance. Within this source, several factors in ensuring competitive advantage among academics include brilliant academic performance, skill sharpness, research capabilities and proven track record in publications, ability to use latest teaching technologies and methods and ability to maximize students' performance in examinations. High quality in academic service is essentially ensured through a reveal of brilliancy in academic records. For entering advanced academic professions, the minimum aggregate marks in postgraduate degree may be increased to 60 percent or even up to 70 percent in place of 55 percent in order to ensure academic perfection resulting in high quality service delivery. The controversies surrounding eligibility tests can only be stopped by repealing the test altogether and replacing it with a much recruitment specific one such as an academic service examination (ASE) or academic service aptitudes test (A-SAT). The A-SAT passed candidates should be accepted for immediate appointment in entry level assistant professor positions in all kinds of institutions including IITs, IIMs and research institutions. The authors' insight on recruitment tests and methods are discussed in this paper.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustained competitive advantage is contributed by human resources that accomplish four basic assumptions of resource based view (RBV) which are value, rareness, inimitability and

non-substitutability (Barney, 1991). One of the formidable tasks in ensuring sustained competitive advantage in employment scenario is recruitment and selection. The term '*recruitment*' refers to the procedures of attracting potential employees as applicants for pre-determined assignments or openings in organizations. Recruitment and selection norms exist in almost all kinds of organizations including universities and begin in job analysis. Joan Marques (2006) observed that reality and need based approach to the development of job description is the need of the hour in organizations. By and large, recruitment sources emerge from internal and external avenues of organizations. Various methods are being used for recruitment and selection of teaching faculty in advanced academic institutions. Electronic recruitment has grown into a very common activity adopted extensively both in industrial and academic institutions worldwide. The existing regulatory framework related to entry level faculty recruitment and the authors' perception on recruitment tests and methods are discussed in this paper.

1.2 HUMAN RESOURCE PROCUREMENT: CRITICAL FUNCTION

A significant source of competitive advantage is human resource procurement methods and strategies. Recruitment is the process of inviting applications from potential and eligible employees for pre-determined employment positions and is usually considered a positive function and selection of people into organizational stream as negative one. Various HR studies show that employee selection system is significantly correlated with individual as well as organizational performance. Recruitment and selection is a high involvement HR strategy ensuring organizational success. Katou and Budhwar (2006) in their study in manufacturing firms found that recruitment policies are positively related to organizational performance. Delaney and Huselid (1996) found that highly selective staffing was positively related to organizational performance. High quality recruitment strategies would ensure high

quality service behavior. Schneider and Bowen (1995), Bettencourt and Brown (1997) and Chebat (2002) stressed upon employees' perception of workplace fairness of recruitment and selection procedures as a key predictor of service behavior. Comprehensive selection and training activities frequently correlate with organizational productivity and performance (Russell 1985, Kleiner 1987, Terpstra and Rozell 1993). Professional skill test during recruitment process increases the possibilities of highly competent faculties in institutions. Senge (1996) argued that academics are HR professionals and so necessitating professional skills. Considering academics as HR professionals, they are expected to be technical (subject specialists), intelligent, flexible and communicative so as to achieve and sustain a learning organization.

Technology has indeed made the entire human resource procurement process robust. Fernandez (1992) argued that sophisticated recruitment and selection system poses the capability in ensuring a healthy match between the individual's abilities and the organization's requirements. William Archer observed that online recruitment is used extensively by organizations that essentially reduces recruitment and selection cost. Yet, there exist drawbacks in faculty recruitment processes and procedures in higher academic institutions. A study funded by European Commission found that recruitment processes in higher education institutions have several drawbacks that included relying on internal sources of recruitment and inappropriate selection criteria with that of favoritism practices (HRM in Public HE, 2012). Scholars have argued that the critical criteria ensuring competitive advantage comprises of attracting, selecting and retaining the employees into the organization (Wright, Dunford and Snell, 2001). Lucian Cernusca and others observed that competency is the quality that is obtained through adequate qualifications and the ability to perform the assignment. Competitive advantage is essential for survival. Higher education institutions

must ensure that the required quality in terms of existing service standards is delivered for increased competitive advantage (Mapesala et.al).

Adelien Decramer et.al (2008) have observed that employees working in higher education institutions are a major determinant of the faculty's unique organizational performance which leads to sustainable competitive advantage. Storey (1995) stressed on commitment and competitive advantage and strategic deployment of highly committed and capable workforce for ensuring success in human resource management. Pfeffer (1994) devised seven measures including selective hiring that would give an organization competitive advantage through human resources. Several factors in ensuring sustained competitive advantage among academics include brilliant academic performance, skill sharpness, research capabilities and proven track record in publications, ability to use latest teaching technologies and methods and the ability to maximize students' performance in examinations. Providing more points to merit is important than concern on experience or seniority while making selection of teaching staff. It is pertinently true that compromising merit decreases the standard of teaching human resource. Higher education institutions in developed nations such as the US recruit the best academic scientists available irrespective of race, religion and nationality. This is one reason why the nation is believed as super knowledge powerhouse.

1.3 INCONGRUITY IN RECRUITMENT RULES

Universities generally employ two staff categories viz., academic and administrative; usually referred to as teaching and non-teaching respectively. The erstwhile academic designations in higher education institutions were modified by the University Grants Commission of India (UGC) in 2009. New additions include senior associate professor, senior professor and professor of eminence (UGC-PRC, 2009). For every rank from entry stage, eligibility conditions, academic qualification, experience and proven track record in academic

excellence differ significantly. The University Grants Commission is primarily responsible for enacting HR and institutional regulations in consultations with higher education stakeholders in India. The body also involves such other organizations whenever it deems necessary to do so in enactment of such rules. The statutory and professional councils and departments of the government of India play very significant role in detailing various modules in the system. Yet, UGC regulations supersede the others in respect of overall governance and management including the management of human resource.

There are 16 statutory and professional councils that are entrusted with the responsibilities of course approval and to enunciate regulations with regard to functioning of the institutions, faculty discipline and code of conduct, eligibility and qualifications and in other HR aspects. The regulations of the councils in their respective disciplines are to be considered in respect of selection of assistant professors in universities. These regulations usually are approved by UGC in-principle; however, the Commission decides and consults whenever required. For instance, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) regulation does not require the National Eligibility Test (NET) qualification for selection of assistant professors in management discipline. Similarly, the Fellow Program in Management (FPM) is deemed equivalent to PhD in Management by the Council and selection of assistant professors in engineering also do not require a NET or State Eligibility Test (SET) qualification as per AICTE norms. Similarly, assistant professorship tests are not required for medical faculties. A master's or the doctor's degree such as MD or MS is sufficient to get recruited as assistant professors in medical universities and colleges. Yet, incongruity in such recruitment rules can be avoided if a uniform method to recruit academics is devised and adopted in all subjects of study including in professional areas such as management and medicine. Rule differences usually create confusions and controversies in the system.

1.4 ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic excellence is comprehended as an ongoing process where the faculty members should continuously endeavor in raising the quality of performance so as to improve individual and institutional reputation (UGC 11th Plan). Generally, master's programs are deemed as post graduation qualification. Holding a master's degree is the first part of recruitment criteria for assistant professorships fixed by UGC in India. Post graduates can be considered as experts in their field of study and of possessing deeper subject knowledge than bachelor degree holders. Post graduate candidates with above 60 percent of marks in aggregate are considered to be first class graduates. UGC has stipulated possessing of at least 55 percent of marks in aggregate to be eligible to apply against openings in teaching jobs in the rank of assistant professor in universities and colleges. Even so, in this regard; the minimum aggregate marks may be increased to 60 percent or even up to 70 percent in place of 55 percent since advanced academic professions require perfection and high quality in service delivery. High quality in academic service is essentially ensured through a reveal of brilliancy in academic records. Academic profession is not like any other professions where greater stress is on practice and the need for academic brilliance is often not scrutinized. Faculty members working in higher learning and research institutions are necessarily academic scientists who need to be very sound in academic endeavors since they are required to possess the capability to advice several stakeholders and groups of people such as students, research scholars, industrial researchers and scientists, parents, civil administration, policy makers and others. Policy decisions on most subjects are based on knowledge and intellectual support provided by eminent academics through committees and panels. In fact, most of the universities in advanced nations such as the US and Europe look for candidates with brightest academic achievements added with professional competence to join advanced teaching and research positions. Therefore, one way to academic excellence can be obtained by increasing

the brilliancy equations by essentially increasing the aggregate percentage of marks in post graduation.

1.5 THE RECRUITMENT TESTS

High quality teaching is one important aspect that determines a faculty member's success or failure (Vicente M Lechuga and Deborah C Lechuga, 2012). Thorough subject knowledge is necessary to render high quality teaching. The eligibility test which is an indispensable qualification ensures insightful subject knowledge to be possessed by potential entry stage faculty members. The NET has been one of the much sought-after examinations by potential academic scientists in India. This test is significant since quality of teaching and research is a subject in higher education with mandate from Constitution of India. The test has been made mandatory in recent times for Indian nationals to be eligible to becoming assistant professors. There are several other bodies that follow the footprints of UGC in conducting NET. These include the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board, the Indian Council of Medical Research, NET and SET Commissions of various states, higher education councils, select public universities and so on. However, the test is only an eligibility ascertaining one and not provisioned with the mandate for providing immediate appointment of the candidates who cleared the test. The qualified candidates have to apply against vacancies in higher learning institutions and research establishments. Yet, as of now the test ensures the requisite intellectual standard in making a successful career in advanced academics (Dhana Sundareswaran S M, 2011).

1.5.1 Amendments in NET Pattern

The UGC notified the minimum qualifications required for appointment and career advancement of teachers in universities in the year 2000. These regulations went through a number of amendments until recently. The 2006 amendment altogether exempted PhD degree holders from NET/SET. However, a significant amendment was passed in 2009 by UGC stating that candidates who are awarded PhD as per UGC Regulation, 2009 shall only be exempted from NET/SET. Further, frequent test amendments were notified in the conduct of the test. These amendments might be attributed to the fact that there exists a great demand for qualified and competent faculty in higher education institutions. The pattern of the examinations as of now does not include the erstwhile descriptive section. This is essentially a dilution in the system largely affecting the high standards and quality as expected out of the test. Any post graduate who thinks that he or she is potentially a brilliant academic may actually attempt the examination any number of times irrespective of age. The present system of providing no age limits for attempting assistant professorship tests can be continued. The attainment of intelligence and knowledge has no connection with age or is not restricted by an individual's age. Probably with this underlying idea, age restrictions have not been imposed.

1.5.2 NET vs. Research Qualification

Research happens to be a highly significant and the most indispensable factor in deciding success rate of academic and industrial scientists in the country. Literally, no academic development can take place in the absence of research. Academically, research is undertaken as a continuous activity spanning throughout the career. On the other hand, research is also undertaken for a specific time bound period especially in case of obtaining research degrees. This happens at PhD levels in general. PhD is a greatly accepted criterion that essentially

reveals research acumen. Yet, the UGC Regulations (2010) states that this experience obtained during the PhD program will not be considered during faculty recruitment.

Furthermore, the UGC Regulations (2009) exempted the eligibility condition of passing NET for recruitment in entry level academic positions to those who have been awarded PhD in compliance of the said regulation. Therefore, on the one hand, it becomes obvious that clearing the eligibility tests ensures complying with minimum condition for recruitment. And that the NET/SET qualifiers do not necessarily have to obtain PhD for assistant professorship. Whereas, PhD aspirants have to obtain the research degree based on the regulations of 2009 if not qualified in the eligibility tests. The regulations make it clear that PhD is necessary only for senior level positions such as associate professors and professors. As a result, both eligibility tests and PhD are important in one way or the other. Passing eligibility tests ensures recruitment as entry level academic scientists and that PhD ensures career development including promotion. It is appreciable that a recent UGC rule does not allow M.Phil degree holders to enter the teaching profession in advanced education institutions. As of now, NET is considered a benchmark for high quality revelation in advanced academia.

1.5.3 Repealing the Test

There had been lot of amendments and discussions on NET in India ever since the test was introduced by the UGC. The controversies surrounding eligibility tests can only be stopped by repealing the test altogether and replacing it with a much recruitment specific one such as an academic service examination (ASE) or academic service aptitudes test (A-SAT). The Commission had already envisioned introducing a higher education service examination in place of eligibility tests in 2003. Besides, the test conducting responsibilities has to be transferred to examination conducting bodies such as the Union Public Service Commission or the Staff Selection Commission that specialize in conducting examinations for several

professions. The UGC is chiefly an apex governing, regulatory and grants sanctioning body to higher learning and research institutions. The UGC allows state level governments to conduct the SET in their approved institutions such as SET Commissions, State Council for Higher Education and State Universities. Nonetheless, both NET and SET should be scrapped in the wider interests of aspirants and stakeholders. In the US for instance, there are no such entry level recruitment tests for assistant professorships. Candidates are recruited based on academic brilliance, qualification and professional competence such as publications and research and teaching experience.

Therefore, it is high time that the UGC and government of India repeal the present eligibility tests in full and introduce immediate selection oriented examinations such as the proposed ASE or A-SAT. Also, there shall be no age limits for appearing in the examination for assistant professorships. The present career development rules stress upon both seniority and merit. However, promotions based on number of teaching years or seniority that compromises merit may be scrapped. The A-SAT passed candidates with PhD and few quality publication works in referred journals shall be selected as senior level academic scientists; one stage below the cadre of associate professors. Teaching experience may not be required for first stage assistant professorship. Teaching experience may be preferred for senior level assistant professor positions or above. The A-SAT qualified candidates should be accepted for immediate appointment in entry level assistant professor positions in all kinds of institutions including IITs, IIMs and research institutions. The UGC with vast powers in deciding any alterations, additions, deletions and exemptions for needed amendments on the issue should introduce a new examination such as the suggested A-SAT with focus on immediate placement against vacancies. A uniform system of recruitment criteria can be prepared and made statutorily applicable in all kinds of higher education institutions including institutions of national importance. Strajeri (2009) argued that recruitment and

selection effectiveness is dependent on the quality of manpower planning and service delivery objectives. As of now, there are variations in the academic human resource procurement criteria in higher education institutions. Therefore, it is high time that NET and SET are scrapped. While enforcing uniformity in human resource management regulations, it should be seen that merit is not compromised and the faculty selection norms should match international standards.

1.6 FACULTY ENTRY FROM INDUSTRIAL BACKGROUND

Huselid (1995) & Huselid and Becker (1996) observed that excellent performance work and practices were actually economic assets that will definitely provide high level of return on investment. Experienced industry professionals if selected as visiting fellows in higher academic institutions would necessarily help in intellectual and institutional growth as well. Apparently, at present there are no comprehensive rules regarding industrial experts entering academic positions in higher education institutions. However, there are possibilities for such aspirants to join as adjunct or visiting faculties. As per existing rules, industrial candidates with considerable experience may be considered for adjunct or visiting faculty openings. This is largely applicable and presently followed in professionally taught subjects such as management, engineering and technology, medicine, law and others. For instance, judicial officers in higher judiciary such as judges of High Courts and Supreme Court having master's degree in law are appointed as adjunct or visiting faculty members in law universities and colleges. Similarly, senior managerial officers such as general managers, managing directors with MBA qualification and considerable experience are appointed as adjunct or visiting faculty in management departments. The minimum expected qualification from such candidates may be a first class master's degree. The adjunct or visiting faculties shall be eligible for full time faculty positions after their retirement from industrial service. Such

aspirants too should have to pass the proposed A-SAT if wishing to join regular academic positions. In no ground, the requisite post graduation or above in respective subjects may be relaxed for adjunct faculty positions in higher academic institutions such as universities. In addition, the practitioners from industry or other organizations shall have at least a few publications in their area of work for being considered as visiting faculties in higher education institutions.

1.7 SKILL AND APTITUDE

While educational qualification helps candidates fulfill necessary eligibility conditions in job application, requisite employability skills enlist the possibility of greater success in the profession once selected for the job. The three rudimental skills in human resource management perspective include, human, conceptual and technical. Obviously, skill sets vary between different jobs. For instance, an individual is supposed to possess profound knowhow in an academic subject which is tested in eligibility tests added with communication skill and demonstration ability to be eligible to become an assistant professor. Similarly, high intelligence, reasoning and statistical ability is expected out of a researcher. Further, in growth oriented context, academicians and researchers are required to possess teaching and investigative skills, communication skill, interpersonal ability and human skill. Advanced academic institutions consider academic achievements, teaching and research experience and proven track record in subject that is evident in various forms such as publications and research works; since teaching is deemed noblest and knowledge oriented profession. Further, it is imminently necessary to provide complete freedom in career development activities and progress, decision making, research works and other academic and administration related functions. Teaching, research and communication skills of the candidates in addition to subject knowledge and computer proficiencies have to be tested in

the suggested A-SAT examination. Spoken language (communication) skills and subject demonstration ability shall also be part of A-SAT.

1.8 CONCLUSION

The contemporary regulations concerning staffing patterns for assistant professor positions in advanced academic institutions such as universities remain effective and efficient. Nevertheless, few development oriented changes as observed and suggested by the author in the paper and amendments in the statutes if carried out would fetch even better results in terms of quality enhancement in areas such as academic record, research, teaching methods, performance standards, student results, professional ethics, adherence to rules and character building among others. Regulatory overhaul especially in recruitment or eligibility examinations if done aptly, increased enhancement in service quality delivery can be realized in future.

References

1. Barney, J 1991. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management* 17 P 99-120. In Adeliem Decramer, Johan Christiaens & Alex Vanderstraeten (2008). Implementation Dynamics of Performance Management in Higher Education. *Working Paper. Earlier Version presented at 21st EIASM workshop on strategic human resource management, 2006* (Aston, Birmingham, UK) P 9
2. Joan F Marques (2006). The New Human Resource Department: A Cross Functional Unit (Forum). *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol.17 no.1, Spring 2006 (Online) Available at <http://www.interscience.wiley.com>
3. Katou, A. & Budhwar, P. (2006). The effect of Human Resource Management Policies on Organizational Performance in Greek Manufacturing Firms. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 49(1):1-35. In Ravichandran A (2011). Organizational Structure, HR Practices and its Outcomes: A Conceptual Model. *International Conference on Technology and Business Management*. March, 2011

4. Terpstra, D & Rozell, E. (1993). The relationship of staffing practices to organizational level measures of performance. *Personal Psychology*, 46:27-48. In Ravichandran A (2011). Organizational Structure, HR Practices and its Outcomes: A Conceptual Model. *International Conference on Technology and Business Management*. March, 2011
5. Senge (1996) as cited in Arrey Mbongaya Ivo (2006). Best practices to human resource management. *African Center for Community and development* (Online) Available at <http://www.africacentreforcommunity.com>
6. Fernandez C J (1992). Solider Quality and Job Performance in Team Tasks. *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 73 Pp 253-265. In Mir Mohammed Nurul Absar, Balasundaram Nimalathasan & Munshi Muhammad Abdul Kader Jilani (2010). Impact of HR Practices on Organizational Performance in Bangladesh. *IJBIT* Vol.3 Issue 2 Sept. 2010 P 16
7. William Archer. Mission Critical? Modernizing Human Resource Management in Higher Education.
8. Human Resource Management in Public Higher Education in Tempus Countries, 2012. Research Project Funded by European Commission.
9. Wright, P., Dunford, B., & Snell, S. (2001). Human resources and the resource based view of the firm. *Journal of Management*, 27, Pp 701-721. In Furrakh Abbas & Shehzad Ahmed. Human Resource Management Practices: Perceptions of Academia. *Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Business Management, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore*
10. Lucian Cernusca & Cristina Dima. Competency and Human Resource Management.
11. Mapesela M L E & Francois Strydom. University of Free State, South Africa. Performance management of academic staff in South African higher education: a developmental research project. *Conference on trends in the management of human resources in higher education*.
12. Adeliën Decramer, John Christiaens & Alex Vanderstraeten, (2008). Implementation Dynamics of Performance Management in Higher Education. *Working Paper. Earlier Version Presented at 21st EIASM workshop on strategic human resource management, 2006* (Aston, Birmingham, UK) P 3.
13. Storey, J (1995). Human resource management: a critical text. *International Thomson (Eds)*, London. In Andy Smith (2006). Control or capability? Human resource practices for a challenging environment. *Issues paper. Consortium Research Program supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future*. Funded by Australian, state and territory governments P 9

14. Pfeffer, J. (1994). Competitive advantage through people. *Harvard Business School Press*, Boston, Mass. In Andy Smith (2006). Control or capability? Human resource practices for a challenging environment. *Issues paper. Consortium Research Program supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future*. Funded by Australian, state and territory governments
15. The UGC 6th Pay Review Committee (PRC) Recommendations, 2009
16. UGC - Higher Education in India - Strategies & Schemes, 11th Plan
17. Vicente M Lechuga & Deborah C Lechuga, (2012). Faculty Motivation and Scholarly Work: Self-determination and self regulation perspectives. *The Journal of Professoriate* (6) 2, an affiliate of the Center for African American Research and Policy P 64
18. Dhana Sundareswaran S M (2011), “*Recruitment Policy of Higher Education System in India*” (Eds). In A Research Book on Global Business Environment and its impact on Management Education, Edited Volume, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai P 626
19. The UGC Regulations, 2010 (Online) Available at <http://www.ugc.ac.in>
20. The UGC Regulations, 2009 (Online) Available at <http://www.ugc.ac.in>
21. Luminita Mihaela Strajeri (2009). The administrative staff recruitment and selection in Romanian public higher education institutions P 344
22. Huselid M (1995) & Huselid & Becker (1996). The impact of HRM practices on turnover, productivity and corporate financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal* Vol.38 No. 3 Pp 635-672 as cited in Arrey Mbongaya Ivo (2006). Best practices to human resource management. *African Center for Community and Development* (www.africacentreforcommunity.com)