

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Strategic human resource management challenges in graduate development officer recruitment in Sri Lanka

Ramakrishnan Vivek<sup>1\*</sup> and Yogarajah Nanthagopan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University Business Linkage, University of Vavuniya, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Business Studies, University of Vavuniya, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.

**Abstract:** Human resource management greatly influences the long-term performance of a corporation. While this has always been the case, the relative importance of HR has further increased in today's fast-changing, highly complicated, and uncertain corporate environment. Sri Lanka encounters a severe issue with hiring in the public sector, and employing graduate development officers has recently become increasingly complicated. They are categorised as insecure in their position due to the effect of human resource strategies in companies. In this regard, exploring the strategic human resource difficulties that influence the nominations of recent development officers is necessary, which mainly impacts graduates entering the business world for the first time. Within this context, a qualitative study was performed using data gathered through ten interviews. By using thematic analysis, the author aimed to determine the impact of strategic human resource practices in development officer appointments. Thus, we suggest the best possible ways of solving issues related to development officer appointments through practical strategies in human resources, such as the internal hiring process, knowledge or skill exams, and one-to-one and panel interviews.

**Keywords:** Strategic human resource practices, graduate appointments, thematic analysis.

---


## INTRODUCTION

The general public has numerous concerns about the ineffectiveness of the Sri Lankan government's overall development officer appointment scheme. The governmental programme for appointing development officers appears not to have adhered to a proper strategic or scientific analysis. Therefore, this study aims to examine the problems with government development officer appointments and recommend future tactics and methods to achieve the nation's short- and long-term goals effectively.

Companies in Sri Lanka are engaged in an open battle to find the best talent for their organisations despite the significantly increased number of Curriculum Vitae they have received over the past five years. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of good talent in the country. Due to the shortage of qualified candidates with the necessary financial expertise, good jobs are unfilled, and salaries are increasing dramatically (Welmilla, 2020).

Brain drain is another factor contributing to this issue, making it challenging for businesses to address crucial short-term skills gaps. Recruitment consultants are pressured to move the limited talent from one firm to another much more quickly due to the demand for vertical skills and corporations searching for a closer fit, which worries human resource managers. Companies are eager to pay top dollar to potential candidates to avoid their business stagnating in the face of a talent shortage; as a result, these companies have unintentionally contributed to a significant rise in salary levels. Today, a skilled employee can be just as valuable and difficult to replace as a devoted client. Various issues with Sri Lanka's education system also do not strongly emphasise the labour market requirements. Because they lack the requisite abilities in demand in the market, graduates from public universities cannot get employment in the private sector. Numerous examples in the real world disclose the various issues in the educational system (Stone & Deadrick, 2015).

---

\* Corresponding author (arvivek46@gmail.com;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5691-6825>)



This article is published under the Creative Commons CC-BY-ND License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>). This license permits use, distribution and reproduction, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the original work is properly cited and is not changed in anyway.

## Background

According to the available research, Sri Lanka should implement a new public management component to gain operational efficiency (Dissanayake & Devapriya, 2022). Administrators and politicians must adopt new behaviours and attitudes to implement these reforms while designing and implementing recent efforts to increase openness in public sector management. Still, it is debatable if there is the necessary political will for such changes (Samaratunge & Bennington, 2002). The Government of Sri Lanka prioritises public sector reform to reach operational efficiency. Reforming Sri Lanka's public sector governance framework is more important than ever to achieve economic and social development (Dissanayake & Devapriya, 2022).

The public sector experiences over-staffing appointments, which without considering strategic analyses, causes much trouble. Fernando (2022) states that the government might at least begin by proposing a voluntary retirement scheme and a method for some people to seek short- to medium-term employment abroad, starting immediately. He elaborates that we cannot put it off, since it may delay Sri Lanka's recovery process, further adding that the government's announcement of a recruiting freeze was a positive move, and continues: "As we examine reducing the size of the national budget, we must inevitably consider agency consolidation and overlap reduction. Many organisations struggle to find funding each year and have little influence" (Fernando, 2022). A recent public expenditure review of the public sector revealed the dispersion of funds across many agencies and, thus, of little impact (Fernando, 2022). Consolidation would ensure that they had more substantial effects and better budgeting overall.

Nevertheless, recent graduate appointments play a vital role in the country's economy due to the recent presidential election pledges, when electoral parties promised to offer graduates development officer positions in the public sector.

This research took the national graduate appointment programme as a case study to explore the strategic human resource (HR) challenge in that execution. Only a few studies have investigated this programme, primarily focusing on finding job satisfaction among recruits. The authors' literature search confirmed the absence of studies analysing the effectiveness of the government's graduate job scheme (Nanthagopan & Vivek, 2021). Thus, studies must determine how the government's development officers are appointed and how this programme is implemented in HR practices (Nanthagopan & Vivek, 2021). A strategic human resource management (HRM) process helps the HR department maximise the potential of its workforce through strategic planning, talent management, leadership development, organisational design, and performance management (Wright & Nishii, 2007). Therefore, this study addresses the gap in development officer appointments and strategic HR practices challenges involved in graduate appointments. This investigation is an initiative to explore issues at the strategic HRM (SHRM) level in development officer appointments.

### Case Study: the programme to employ unemployed undergraduates

This opportunity provides unemployed graduates and diploma holders a way to find work. The programme aims to establish an environment where all young people may meaningfully and rationally contribute to sustainable development, fostering a work culture that benefits the nation. The programme is organised and executed by Sri Lanka's former President's policy statement, 'Saubhagyaye Dekma'. The potential candidates must have completed a degree/diploma programme approved by the University Grants Commission before 31 December 2019, and they should be below 35 years of age. They implemented this programme by offering many graduate development officer positions. It claims that appointments are based on the district, and the initial appointments must serve a minimum of five years. These appointees would receive a 12-month training and a monthly stipend of LKR 20,000 (Sri Lanka, Presidential Secretariat, 2020).

## **Problem statement**

This programme, implemented since 2019, has now been operating for over three years. The government's graduate appointment procedure has challenging SHRM implications. First, the graduates are appointed to the divisional secretariat offices before being employed to fill open government positions. In addition, some inadequate and unnecessary appointments are accepted by the government, without a proper employee recruitment mechanism. These artificially created government posts pose several practical issues (Nanthagopan & Vivek, 2021). This study explores whether this graduate appointment programme followed a strategic HR process before implementing the programme, how development officers face challenges from an HR perspective after the appointment, and what issues arise from this situation.

Reforms are going to be quite painful, so policymakers seem reluctant to push hard for reforms as they are scared that the citizens' frustration during the reform period may dilute the political capital they enjoy. (Fernando, 2022)

## **Research Objective**

The primary objective of this paper is to investigate the strategic HR challenges in recruiting, creating job happiness, and elevating output in development officers in Sri Lanka and make recommendations to improve the current situation.

## **Research Questions**

Three research questions are investigated:

- Does the existing SHRM cater to the effective recruitment of graduates to the development officer appointments?
- What are the SHRM challenges in development officers' appointments in Sri Lanka?
- What strategies can overcome SHRM challenges in creating job happiness and elevating output?

---

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Here, we review scholarly research papers and empirical literature that help investigate the research.

### **Strategic human resource management**

Despite a recent paradigm shift in many firms from an employee advocate model to a strategic business partner approach, some still view HRM as not contributing value to enterprises. This paper briefly discusses the difficulties faced by master's and doctoral-level HR graduate education and emphasises the importance of producing HR specialists and managers who understand the value and significance of HR's contributions to achieving strategic organisational outcomes as a strategic business contributor (Wimbush, 2008).

A company's HR department is tasked with planning staffing needs; and discovering, vetting, selecting, and hiring job applicants. HR then involves training and appraising employees. This study primarily focuses on recruitment since the challenges due to poor recruitment and other SHRM practices are highlighted. HR is critical in the twenty-first century to help businesses adapt to a quickly changing business climate and the increased demand for qualified workers. The recruitment process may be "a means of attracting and finding potential employees to fill open positions inside the firm". The HR recruitment process aids in hiring people based on their work ethic and attitude, which are crucial for achieving company goals (Beer, 2022).

The HRM process begins with the discovery of a job opening within the company, followed by an HR department analysis of the position's requirements, review of job applications, screening, shortlisting of desirable candidates, and hiring the best candidate for the post. SHRM covers the typical HR tasks of recruiting, vetting, interviewing, and employing workers but also collaborates with the overarching company strategy to succeed. However, even if the candidate is a graduate, the recruitment officer in charge should consider the company's perspective and hire the correct candidate based on their general capabilities and not paper qualifications (Lall, 2018).

Strategic HRM planning offers many advantages, e.g., providing a sense of direction to improve how work is accomplished, keeping employees focused on organisational goals, and providing a strategic focus to guide training and development initiatives. There are many additional factors, such as giving tools to leaders to help focus and implement their strategic initiatives, avoiding disruptive, costly surprises that interfere with achieving goals, addressing key issues on time to avoid crises, and encouraging employee productivity and overall organisational success.

Workforce strategy includes workforce planning as a key component, supports organisations' long-term business objectives, and helps them meet their future skill needs. In contemporary fast-changing economies, workforce factors need to align with each level of planning, and it is necessary to ensure that the organisation is building adequate capacity to adapt to new trends and take advantage of emerging possibilities. This has sparked recent interest in this topic and aligned with current HRM mission and goals. The most responsible task in every company is planning, organising, and managing the HR department. The HR should follow the department's planning, organising, and management by hiring the correct person for each position. Therefore, there might be issues when hiring new graduates into the workplace. Hence, graduate recruitment must consider the company's best interest though the company hires fresh graduates for lower positions (Wilson, 2014). Thus, HR practitioners must ensure the effects of programmes on each department's conduct. However, the many issues reported with development officers' appointments indicate inadequacy and unsuitability. This signifies the failure of the whole recruitment process, including planning.

The hiring process is part of the HR planning process, which cannot be completed without careful strategic planning. A definition of recruitment is 'a procedure that creates a pool of qualified job candidates for the business to run their operations effectively, and profiles need to match with candidate selection through an effective strategic planning process. Companies must execute adequate staffing strategies and forecast to ascertain their required employees before hiring. The process of appointing development officers must consider the qualifications and the organisation's needfulness. Employers generally consider graduates' intelligence as an indication that they are amenable to training for more challenging jobs—this was the typical reason for hiring graduates. Some related themes are the ability to conduct research, learn or grasp something new, and do this fast. Some companies believe in a direct link between the skills needed to study and pass tests and the skills required to learn new things on the job (Pollard *et al.*, 2015).

In addition, creating programmes to improve the quality of the work environment, developing talent and future leadership, and conducting motivational programmes will enhance the efficiency of hiring and paying salaries to graduate appointments.

The government of Sri Lanka fulfilled the employment needs of the public sector through the 2004 and 2012 graduate schemes. Graduates are thankful and appreciate the support extended to them by the government by granting permanent employment to 51,420 graduates in the state sector as development officers. This is the highest number of graduates recruited to the state sector by a government in Sri Lankan history. The graduate trainees recruited in 2012 received a monthly allowance of LKR 10,000 during their training period. Of the total recruited, 16,478 were assigned to the Ministry of Economic Development to propel the government's apex project, the 'Divi Naguma' Development Project. Most graduates were recruited to divisional secretariat offices among the

25 districts of the country (Vithanage, 2017). Sixty thousand graduates were recruited to the public sector in 2020, extending the graduate employment drive to create a culture of 'Rata Wenuwen Wada' ('Work for the Country') as envisaged in the 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour' policy statement (*The Morning*, 2020).

With the programmes mentioned above, public sector employees now constitute about 19.10 per cent of the total employment in Sri Lanka. Although the public sector has grown in numbers, many people today query whether its quality has improved as expected. International researchers say Sri Lanka's public service has expanded exponentially due to political and administrative negligence. Currently, many government institutions in the country are overstaffed. The ratio of public servants to citizens has changed from 1:113 when Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 to 1:13 today. The international accusation exacerbates the problem that the public service, expanded due to irrational recruitment in the past, has now become a burden to the country (Ameen & Keppetipola, 2022).

Another critical factor less considered in the public sector is environmental scanning in SHRM, specifically in HR planning. An organisation's entire environment can be divided into two major categories: external and internal. Bryson & Edwards (2022) define environmental scanning as "internal communication of external information about issues that may influence an organisation's decision-making process". Analysing the external environment helps an organisation to understand its external environment. Hitt *et al.* (2006) noted that matching the firm's understanding of the external environment with knowledge about its internal environment helps form the company's strategic intent and mission and create strategies.

### **Procedures for appointing Graduate Development Officers**

Various countries employ different procedures. The Sri Lankan context is much more diverse than other countries.

#### **European context**

Countries have distinct procedures when appointing graduates to the available job vacancies. The UK's approach is somewhat different. After completing academic programmes in the UK, a 'graduate visa' allows staying there for at least two years (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, local and foreign graduates adopt strategic HR practices accordingly. Notably, strategic human resources played a significant role in promoting the hiring of recent graduates during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this discussion, the authors highlight the critical ramifications of COVID-19-era strategic HR research.

First, the authors emphasise the need for a broader understanding of how new work experiences affect employees' attitudes and behaviour in the post-COVID era (Brundha & Chaturvedi, 2021). In every country, strategic HR practices became challenging when appointing graduates. According to the classification provided by the Innovation Union Scoreboard, we studied cultural dimensions in all EU nations, assuming that countries have successfully adopted innovative firms' strategic management of human resources (Erasmus, 2018). That means EU countries consider cultural dimensions when appointing graduates to the workplace. Hence, there are various concerns when adopting a recruitment process in a company. Thus, strenuously considering strategies and challenges is vital to maintain a successful recruitment process. Research conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies in the UK revealed strong evidence of new graduates increasingly entering non-graduate jobs, especially in the hospitality and retail sectors and public administration. This trend was evident before the 2008 recession – especially from the mid-2000s onwards – but was considerably amplified by it. However, past research shows that most graduates, over time, achieve the appropriate level of employment. Graduates from less advantaged communities appeared to fare worse in the labour market. They were more likely to return immediately or soon after graduation to non-graduate jobs in larger employers, where they may have worked during or before their studies (Pollard *et al.*, 2015).

## Sri Lankan context

Thanks to the government's programmes, all unemployed graduates and diploma holders can now find work. This programme aims to establish an environment where all young people may meaningfully and rationally contribute to sustainable development, fostering a work culture that benefits the nation. The programme follows the policy statement, 'Saubhagyaye Dekma'. Before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, potential candidates should have completed a degree or diploma programme approved by the University Grants Commission. On that date, they should be less than 35 years of age. The applicant must not have been employed for the three years immediately before this process. They must be permanent residents in the area under the Divisional Secretariat to which the application is submitted (Sri Lanka, Presidential Secretariat, 2020). However, the goal is to provide vacancies for graduates who have completed their degrees.

The Unemployed Graduates Association in Sri Lanka continuously points out the hiring procedure's problems. According to Article 2 (A) of the government-issued circular, internal and external degree holders should receive equal treatment. However, the administration divided this into internal and external, which caused perceived unfairness to many internal degree holders. These given appointments have many challenging HR issues (Serasinghe & Opatha, 2013): e.g., low salary, vacation issues, and graduate student research appointment interruption. That will affect graduate appointments in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, strategic HR practices should adapt accordingly to avoid such disruption despite the challenging nature of strategic human resources.

According to Sri Lanka's National Human Resource and Employment policy, the public service only marginalises employment as a direct employer, which is confined to a few categories. The policy states that the attraction of the public sector for job seekers is the social status of the former and its job security. This may have fuelled the demand for government employees from university graduates (Vithanage, 2017).

According to the government gazette in 2012, the recruitment method of graduates is as given in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Graduate recruitment criteria (2012)

Criteria	Qualification required
Grade of recruitment	Grade III
Educational qualifications	A degree from a university recognised by the University Grants Commission
Professional qualifications	Not Applicable
Experience	Not Applicable
Physical fitness	Physical and mental fitness to serve and perform the post's duties anywhere in the country.
Employment status	Present an affidavit/ oath to prove that he/she is an unemployed graduate, and the Divisional Secretary of the Divisional Secretariat in which the candidate resides permanently shall certify the same.
Minimum age limit	Minimum 21 years; [Maximum 35 Years]

The candidates from whom applications are called by public notification shall be recruited based on the marks obtained at a structured interview by a board appointed by the government authority officers. No written examination or professional test is required (Vithanage, 2017).

## Strategic human resource challenges

The relative importance of HR has further increased in today's fast-changing, highly complicated, and uncertain corporate environment. It has also evolved the difficulties of HR in hiring graduates. According to LinkedIn, graduates or highly qualified candidates with educational credentials consider the employer's brand before applying for a position. They will neither apply nor accept the job offer if they dislike what they see. A survey by Corporate Responsibility Magazine disclosed that 75% of respondents would not take a position with a company with a poor image, even if they were unemployed (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). Talent scarcity is the most significant

hiring difficulty we encounter today. The HR department's top priority is to hire the appropriate person, although the candidates are graduates. According to many studies, 87% of HR professionals reported "little or no qualified applications" for the positions they wish to fill (Ahmad, 2022).

Employers who aim to fill positions with exceptional candidates must explore outside their staff members' social networks and local areas due to the shortage of eligible applicants. Even though the candidate is merely a graduate, they must figure out a strategy to broaden their candidate's reach to uncover those elusive 'hidden gems'. Thus, that will also be challenging HR practice from the graduates' point of view (Saul, 1987).

Finding suitable job candidates is the most severe difficulty for businesses. Going through several applications from applicants unfit for their vacant positions is a waste of their valuable time, which may reduce the number of graduates hired during the period.

Suitable applicants are available, but HR professionals waste time and effort looking for them without a successful talent-sourcing plan. This produces disappointing results. Finding top candidates among the graduates and obtaining their resumes and contact information is challenging for recruiters. HR professionals must consider all the above when appointing graduates (Nanthagopan & Vivek, 2021). Thus, all considerations challenge the graduate to expect an appropriate job vacancy. Fostering innovation in the organisation is one of the organisation's aims when hiring any person. This is disadvantageous for graduates because they get fewer opportunities. On the other hand, this is a challenge for the HR department.

---

## METHODOLOGY

The researchers evaluated the strategic difficulties that arise in graduate appointments to investigate the research questions and objectives derived in this study. Based on that, researchers thoroughly reviewed the strategic difficulties associated with graduate appointments. It should be emphasised that this study uses earlier research to adapt the qualitative research approach, as indicated in many research articles cited in the literature review. This paper highlights the proper analytical method for determining if graduate positions present strategic obstacles.

This paper is organized into three sections: (1) the information sources, (2) research strategies, and (3) analytical equipment. The data section describes the data gathering, the research plan, and the method used. The second part provides details about the research methodology applied throughout this study, and the final section presents the tools and procedures for evaluating the collected data, serving as the foundation for this study's in-depth analysis. The analytical model estimates and interprets the results to achieve suggested goals. This study adopted qualitative in-depth interview to explore strategic HR challenges in graduate development appointments.

### Research approach

Exploratory research is conducted in situations with little understanding of the phenomenon. The study aims to generate novel insights to help clarify a subject, inform future research, evaluate tactical challenges, and better understand graduate appointment procedures (Vivek & Nanthagopan, 2021a; 2021b). A qualitative study was the best approach for resolving the initial research difficulties. The adaptability of qualitative techniques, including document analysis, observation, and interviewing, allows for in-depth subject investigation. The open-ended research topics that define exploratory research can also be addressed using these methodologies. However, this study is based on qualitative research, and the researchers aimed to identify the challenges attached to graduate appointments through thematic analysis (TA).

Case studies are one of the most prevalent ways to review a person, a group, a community, or an institution. Researchers often utilise the "bounded theory," a method that limits a case study's time or space. For the case

study, the researcher may use information from many different sources, such as interviews, records, and direct observation. All people picked as participants must have something in common, which means they must all have a direct or indirect link to the study issue or subject examined. After collecting all information, the researcher will examine the data to find common or essential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Therefore, this study used a qualitative approach of an inductive nature. Hence, the researchers began with specific observations, In-depth interviews and measures found through the collected data and moved to detect themes and patterns in the data.

### **Data sources**

The research strategy was based on interviews and document surveys including journal reviews. The purpose was to perform an explorative study because the research question had not been studied previously. Exploratory research is a research design that investigates questions that are not profoundly addressed previously. Exploratory research is usually qualitative, and this study collected information from Ten development officers by using purposive sampling and conducting in-depth interviews to explore ground realities of the development officers .

The data collection process acquired the following data categories:

- (1) Journals of observation and inquiry
- (2) Ten interviews

Secondary sources such as HRM, public affairs, and economics journals were consulted throughout the research study. Journals that provided the most citations were in the European setting due to the shortage of relevant literature in the Sri Lankan context. The primary data was collected. Recently recruited graduates (under the Government Graduate Scheme) were interviewed to obtain first-hand information.

Thematic Analysis is consistent with these approaches of data collection, which seek to delve into the experiences, meanings, and events through oral interviews and textual data (journal entries) written by those experiencing them. Even though data were electronically stored in an Excel spreadsheet, the researchers used specific tools such as pens, highlighters, and post-it notes to review and evaluate the printed data (Maher *et al.*, 2017).

### **Data**

Qualitative data collection frequently relies on interpretation, thus suggesting that the data require numerous explanations. This is because massive quantities of high-quality evidence are gathered frequently. According to the study findings, thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) is a specific technique that helps researchers make various links between the data and the evolving social environment. TA is considered the best technique for any study that seeks to apply interpretations. It gives data analysis a methodical aspect and enables the researcher to connect a topic's frequency analysis to study the text's overall content. This increases the precision and complexity of the research while enhancing its importance. Qualitative research necessitates comprehending and gathering many elements and facts. TA provides the ability to identify the possibilities of any topic broadly.

### **Thematic analysis**

TA interprets several data sources as a qualitative analytical tool for practitioners' inquiry. Special attention is paid to the inductive and deductive coding processes used in TA. The codes were constructed by utilising a "bottom-up" and "top-down" technique to uncover themes, with the constructivist epistemology serving as the framework (Braun & Clark, 2006).



Firstly, after familiarising ourselves with the collected data, we should generate initial codes and begin organising available data. Coding breaks down large amounts of data into manageable meaning units. There are several coding techniques, and the one chosen will depend on the viewpoint and study objectives. Answering specific research questions and analysing and considering the data are essential in this phase. Thus, this analysis was theoretical rather than inductive. However, regarding strategic HR challenges in graduate appointments, the codes are designed based on candidates' nature and capability because this study's initial aim is to analyse key strategic HR challenges in development officer appointments.

Table 2 provides the extract codes relating to the data set. Each code transmitted via the data set was assigned a specific topic. A "theme" is a pattern that captures a significant or fascinating part of the data or research subject. The limited size of the data set may cause much overlap between the coding stage and this stage of identifying probable themes. At the end of this phase, the codes had been organised into broader themes that may have anything to say directly about this study subject since identifying the strategic HR constraints in development officer appointment is a requirement of the proposed study question. The answers to the interview questions determined the challenges. In addition, challenges from the employee's point of view are pointed out because this investigation can further implement proper recruitment of development officers.

### **Application of thematic analysis**

Table 2 signifies a few SHRM challenges in the recruitment process of development officers. The standard narratives obtained through the interview are evidence of undistinguishable SHRM practices. As government officers, it is suitable to fetch the right talent at the right time. That means filling the vacancy without the correct employee may challenge the company and employees seeking a job with relevant experience and educational qualifications.

**Table 2:** Themes and codes

Theme	Code	Common narratives
Strategic Human Resource Challenges	Fetching the right talent at the right time (failure in career planning)	No. Not like that. I worked in the income tax department before I came here; I have full knowledge of income tax department works. Here I am learning. They gave without looking at qualifications. I have first class in engineering, but now I am working in a hospital as a development officer even though I do not have any job description, and daily, they send filed work and send me for file collection.
	Improper strategic HR planning	I do not know what I am doing even though my degree is 100 per cent not aligned with what I am doing.... fed up... emotionally unbalanced, sir.
	Less planning on compensation and benefits	I am working as a development officer away from home. I am just getting Rs. 20,000 as my salary. However, this is not even enough for accommodation and meals. I am doing it as it is a permanent government job with a pension.
	The issue of change management	They are not assigning us to one branch. Many branches are there, and they assign us (trainees) on a rotation basis. It is easy to learn and get knowledge in new works through this.
	Performance management and alignment	We all have to work, but they will tell us what to do that day only in the morning. Sometimes, they struggle with their work and ask us to help. That time we will help them to do their work.
	Less training and development strategies	They took us as trainees to the job. Then they separated us for training. We trained in 05 chapters and learned about public sector projects and leadership in our training period. They divided us into five groups and trained each group in only one chapter. After that, due to the pandemic situation, they stopped this training method.
	A vast pool of applicants without the right qualifications	There are huge applications received from graduates, even those who had completed their graduation five to ten years before seeking that opportunity, and unwanted applications are filled. Therefore, there aren't enough chairs for us to sit and work.
	Lack of strategic analysis like SWOT & PESTLE clarify the abbreviations	This means it is not in the correct way of the planned process. They divide and assign a job to us as their wish.
	Unstructured recruitment process	They said they would give suitable work on related subjects/fields during the job interview. Furthermore, they checked our qualifications. However, they just divided and posted to the GS division office and other departments.
Challenges on the part of employees	Educational issues of employees	My earlier aim was to be a doctor, but I could not get good results in the A/L Bio stream.
	Privacy issues	Yes! It is also my home issues and the condition of being home.
	Work attitudes	As I said, I desired to learn new things and work as a trainee whenever I went to a new place. Learning new work always is suitable for trainees.

Source: Authors' compilation based on collected data

Compensation and benefits are vital motivational drives of employees. Though the employee is a government or a private officer, it is always good to follow the correct process of compensating the employee. Every HR practitioner should concern about compensation and benefit at first sight of recruitment.

Change management needs an effective change in the organisation based on the qualifications and the company's purpose, and a good vision of changing trainee development officers is always essential. Performance management and alignment are challenges in recruiting employees. Based on the performance of the employees, they can manage the work alignment by properly creating the workflow.

Training and development strategies are critical for the success of the company, but they might also be a challenge. Officers are not getting proper training, especially in government appointments, which challenges the company and the employee. Therefore, giving adequate training is a significant concern.

Unpleasant applicant experiences may result from an unorganised interview process. Prospects frequently have a bad experience when companies are less concerned about the interview process. For instance, adding procedures to the recruiting process at the last minute might aggravate candidates' hopes for a response. The effects of the challenging nature of unstructured interviews can significantly understand through the responses.

A vast pool of applicants and employees might be an issue. The company must always consider that there is a vast pool of applicants, and they should have the right qualifications. Without the right qualifications, the effort of employees is not valuable to the company. In the initial stage of the planning process in HR functions, the company must follow a SWOT or PESTLE analysis to identify the need for employment. Most government officers are not recruited after proper analysis. Other than that, employees may have challenges, as highlighted. For example, privacy issues and work attitudes may also be challenged in recruiting development officers.

---

## CONCLUSION

Strategic HR functions include compensation, recruitment, succession, and employee development. Additionally, the use of 'employee transfers' and 'job rotations' may have an impact on employees' loyalty to their employers because they may need to adjust to new work environments and work environments with different types of people. Some current employees may not like the idea of moving between organisations or departments. Hence, choosing suitable candidates who can face difficulties and have the proper attitudes, behaviours, and drive may become indispensable for personnel/HR managers.

This study examined the current incarnation of Sri Lankan governance. Administrative, policy and legislative reforms will not enhance the governance quality without political or administrative commitment, system stability, or institutional improvements. Although Sri Lanka's administrative structure has undergone multiple changes, none have significantly improved governance. Additionally, it gave the democratically elected government a disproportionate amount of political authority and allowed bureaucracy politicisation. Therefore, Sri Lanka provides a case study for evaluating the relationship between the political system, reforms, organisational culture, and the effectiveness of governance. Proper SHRM practices are inadequate, which leads to challenges on the part of development officers.

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

According to evidence and discussion, Sri Lanka's political system combines coalition building with paternalism. Traditional, main political parties accept paternalism because of the long-standing impact of political dynasties, kinship, ethnicity, caste, regionalism, and nationalism. A new Sri Lankan administration type was created later due to colonial history, power politics, and social order. The work opportunities that graduate recruiting provides for the unemployed are its most obvious advantage. This study demonstrates how to boost graduate hiring, elevating job happiness; and institutional output. Procedures must be followed before and following the hiring of graduates.

The primary issue with graduate recruiting is the lack of a suitable and organised plan to draw graduates. Multiple recruitment strategies were used in 2012. Political sponsorship was the most typical strategy. According to most respondents, this method is unfit for public duty. The most decisive impact on job satisfaction comes from a mismatch between a person's university education and job. According to the study, nearly half of the recent

graduates are dissatisfied with the employment process. They cautioned against interfering politically in the hiring process. The findings for the public sector suggest creating a thorough job analysis, job description, and task list before recruiting.

Additionally, nearly half of all graduates have a non-academic degree. Internal graduates, therefore, expect preference in government hiring programmes.

The study findings demonstrated that internal hiring techniques, such as the Sri Lankan companies that responded, frequently used the terms 'promotion-from-within,' 'transfers,' and 'job rotations'. The practical upshot is that effective internal recruitment strategies may encourage current Sri Lankan employees to work harder and become more devoted to the company while increasing their job security by providing them with options for lateral or upward career progression (potentially desired HRM outcomes). Effective use of internal personnel resources could also enable management to observe and evaluate the skills accurately, given the accumulated information accumulated throughout the employment connection. According to the research data, 'application forms,' 'knowledge or skill exams,' and 'one-to-one and panel interviews' utilised by Sri Lankan survey companies are the most frequent among the many selection approaches.

In addition, public organisations must develop a coherent set of employment policies to attract and retain qualified staff. However, the particularity of the public sector focusing on public interest outcomes (ill-defined objectives) and the more open accountability (with politicians and taxpayers) may add a complexity level that does not easily fit with HRM as a strategic partner in achieving competitiveness and success (Fahim, 2018). This may be a future research area based on the findings of this paper.

---

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. (2022) COVID-19: Impact on Recruitment Processes, In: *Navigating the New Normal of Business with Enhanced Human Resource Management Strategies*, IGI Global, pp.: 191-211.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-8451-4.ch009>
- Ameen, A. & Keppetipola, R. (2022) Reforming the burdensome public sector, *The Morning* [Online] 10<sup>th</sup> August, Available from: <https://www.themorning.lk/reforming-the-burdensome-public-sector/> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022).
- Beer, M. (2022) Developing Strategic Human Resource Theory and Making a Difference: An action science perspective, *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(1), p. 100632.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmmr.2017.11.005>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp: 77-101.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2022) Conceptual and Design Thinking for Thematic Analysis, *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), pp: 3-26.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>
- Brundha, S. & Chaturvedi, S. (2021) Present Challenges and Future Opportunities of Strategic Human Resource Management in COVID 19 Times: A commentary, *EasyChair Preprint no. 5529 11*.
- Bryson, J. M. & Edwards, L. H. (2022) *Toward a More Strategic View of Strategic Planning Research*, Taylor & Francis.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003295495>
- Dissanayake, D. & Devapriya, K. A. K. (2022) Applicability of Public-Private Partnership to Overcome the Challenges Encountered by Public Sector Building Projects in Sri Lanka, *Proceedings of 10th World Construction Symposium 2022*.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/WCS.2022.10>

- Erasmus, B. J. (2018) Unethical Behaviour in Human Resource Management Practices in South Africa: Views of human resource practitioners, *Management Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 23(2), pp: 65-86.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30924/mjcmi/2018.23.1.65>
- Fahim, M. (2018) Strategic Human Resource Management and Public Employee Retention, *Review of Economics and Political Science*.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-07-2018-002>
- Fernando, A. (2022) Public sector reforms: Fixing Sri Lanka could take a decade, *The Morning* [Online] 28<sup>th</sup> May, Available from: <https://www.themorning.lk/public-sector-reforms-fixing-sri-lanka-could-take-a-decade/> [Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022].
- Hitt, M. A., Ireland, D. R. & Hoskisson, R. E. (2006) *Strategic Management: Concepts and cases* (with InfoTrac), X<sup>th</sup> ed. South-Western College Publishing.
- Lall, M. (2018) Enhancing Organisational Performance Through Strategic Human Resource Management Practices, *Commerce Today*, 12(01).  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29320/jnpgct.v12i01.10985>
- Maher, C. et al. (2017) *Ensuring Rigor in Qualitative Data Analysis: A design research approach to coding combining NVivo with traditional material methods*, SAGE Open.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918786362>
- Nanthagopan, Y. & Vivek, R. (2021) Government Recruitment Programme for Unemployed Graduates and Issues: Lack of professional vision, mismatch of skills, and unsatisfied job roles: A study on the perspective of Sri Lankan government appointed graduates in 2020, *Social Work and Education*, 8.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25128/2520-6230.21.4.11>
- Pollard, E. et al. (2015) Understanding Employers' Graduate Recruitment and Selection Practices: Main report, *BIS Research Papers 231*, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Sabina, L. L. & Colwell, C. (2018) Challenges of Principal Succession--Examining the challenges of hiring internal vs external candidates, *Athens Journal of Education*, 5(4), pp: 375-395.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.5-4-3>
- Samaratunge, R. & Bennington, L. (2002) New Public Management: A challenge for Sri Lanka, *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 24(1), pp: 87-109.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02598272.2002.10800395>
- Saul, P. (1987) Change: The Strategic Human Resource Management Challenges, *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 25(1), pp: 80-89.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02598272.2002.10800395>
- Serasinghe, D. S. & Opatha, H. (2013) Human Resource Management Practices in Listed Firms in Sri Lanka, *Sri Lankan Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1(1).  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljhrm.v1i1.5110>
- Sri Lanka Presidential Secretariat (2020) The recruitment process of unemployed graduates and diploma holders begins, Application Forms & Paper Advertisement (7<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2020) Colombo, Sri Lanka: Presidential Secretariat [Online] Available from: <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/index.php/2020/02/07/recruitment-process-of-unemployed-graduates-anddiploma-holders-begins/> [Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022].
- Stone, D. L. & Deadrick, D. L. (2015) Challenges and Opportunities Affecting the Future of Human Resource Management, *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(2), pp: 139-145.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.01.003>

The Morning (2020) 60,000 graduates recruited to the public service, *The Morning* [Online] 02<sup>nd</sup> September, Available from: <https://www.themorning.lk/60000-graduates-recruited-to-the-public-service/> [Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> April 2023].

Vithanage, S. (2017) The study on 'Recruitment of Graduates into the Public Service, and their contribution to the Productivity vis-a-vis their job satisfaction, NHRDC (National Human Resource Development Council of Sri Lanka).

Vivek, R. & Nanthagopan, Y. (2021a) Multi-Method Qualitative Research Study in Management, *Journal of HRM Perspectives*, 6(2), pp.: 21-39.

Vivek, R. & Nanthagopan, Y. (2021b) Review and Comparison of Multi-Method and Mixed Method Application in Research Studies, *European Journal of Management Issues*, 29(4), pp: 200-208.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15421/192119>

Welmilla, D. I. (2020) Human Resources Challenges in the Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka, *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, pp: 45-55.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34257/GJMBRAVOL20IS2PG45>

Wilson, J. D. (2014) Human Resource Development Practices and Orthodoxies, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 25(4), pp: 493-497.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21204>

Wimbush, J. C. (2008) Human Resource Management: Challenges for graduate education, *Business Horizons*, 51(2), pp: 151-154.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2008.01.001>

Wright, P. M. & Nishii, L. H. (2007) *Strategic HRM and Organizational Behavior: Integrating multiple levels of analysis* [Online] Available from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37148687\\_Strategic\\_HRM\\_and\\_Organizational\\_Behavior\\_Integrating\\_Multiple\\_Levels\\_of\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37148687_Strategic_HRM_and_Organizational_Behavior_Integrating_Multiple_Levels_of_Analysis) [Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022].

Zhang, J. *et al.* (2021) Gender Discrimination in China: Experimental evidence from the job market for college graduates, *Journal of Comparative Economics*.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2021.01.003>