

A study of key strategic HR issues in IT and Banking Industry in India

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Abstract: The study has emphasized the various dimensions of human resource issues by analysing the data and information qualitatively. The research has specifically focused on the various dimensions such as structure, culture, diversity, HR strategy, HR competencies HR outsourcing. There were 40 interviews taken through open ended questionnaire from 15 companies. For the purpose of extensive work the various hierarchical levels were approached to have the broad perspective on the subject matter concerned. The two major industries were taken for the research, the banking and IT sector. The research has concluded that the management's clarity over the HR issues and the intensity of HR competencies in combination decides the level and job of HR functions in the organization. Outsourcing of HR activities is quite a lot influenced by the organizational growth which is an outcome of HR culture, HR strategy, and HR competencies. The study has also concluded after the multilevel analysis of the data that there is a positive relation between HR diversity management and the work outcome of the employees.

Keywords:HR diversity management, human resource management, Knowledge sharing, corporate culture, corporate structure, HR outsourcing, HR competencies, HR strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The powers of globalization are far broad over the world and national peripheries are vanishing. One noteworthy result of this change is that challenges have strengthened enormously. Previously, incompetent organizations could stay live in light of the fact that they were secured by national limits. This is not the situation anymore. In the era of globalisation, organizations must probably take on different organizations situated anywhere in the world. They should be flexible and adjustable to meet the challenges of this globalised and competitive world. Normally, the inquisition comes as how organizations can confront the challenges by globalization. The reason of this paper is that individuals are one of the most imperative variables giving adaptability and versatility to associations. The managers of large organizations in India noted that, in leveraging the numerous opportunities for growth, the human

resources of any organization should be well trained and well equipped. It should be further noted down that the firm is not the mechanism for adaptability; in fact the human resources are the actual mechanism who would finally react to the changes in the ever changing and competitive environment.

The demand and importance of the strategic human resource management has emerged because of the fact there is an urge to collaborate and merge the management of human resources need with the strategic vision of the company. This is an eminent fact that if the human resources are strategically managed, it would result into firm's sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors. Many researchers and scholars managing the human capital have argued and in fact concluded that managing human capital is more difficult than managing technology or capital of the firm [1]. Also it was found through the scholar's opinion that the firms who have managed to learn the art of handling the human resources effectively definitely have the edge over the competitors as hiring, developing and maintaining the human resources is burdensome and takes a longer duration to put it in effect and continue for longer.

2. STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES- A STUDY

In light of the review of SHRM papers and books, six key HR issues were recognised. Though the organisations policies and plans are important variables affecting HR functions but it has not been taken as the part of the study as enough research on the same has been conducted and enough content exists in the field. This investigation examines, how two vital variables, for example structure and culture, influence the fundamental organization parts of HRM. Both these components are less investigated in the field of SHRM. It was also researched how various HR factors – HR strategy, HR competencies, and HR outsourcing, HR diversity – influence vital administration of HR.

The connection between hierarchical structure and the HR function is the main key HR issue analyzed in the investigation. Hierarchical structure

is a critical variable that influences every single authoritative framework and procedures including HRM. Shockingly, the function of structure in key HRM has not been satisfactorily referred to in past research. One special case is the system given by Golden and Ramanujam [2] that demonstrates different connections among HR and strategic planning: regulatory, single direction, two-way, and integrative. It is intriguing to check whether the companies having diverse connections have same or different cultures. Other important issues for analysing the effect of structure on the HR function are such as, studying of HR as a different department, understanding the reporting procedure of HR managers, enquiring on the title of the head of HR function and most importantly whether HR managers have any key role to play in strategic working of any organisation.

Culture is a fundamental factor which has a impact on the strategic management of the HR function [3-5]. Truss and Gratton [5] remarked that the kind of culture an association has applies a solid effect on its procedure and furthermore on its selected HR system. In this way, it is sensible to anticipate HR actions and practices to adjust as according to the change in firm's culture. Evans [6] noticed that hierarchical culture is to a limited extent looked and handled through HRM practices, for example, recruitment and selection, development of employees, compensation, and retention of right and talented workforce. Little has been done, despite the fact that HR and culture have a strong connection and if studied and strategically used in the organizations would definitely increase the efficiency of the organization. The culture has a great impact on the HR practices, thus it is relevant to study the extent of this impact [7,8]. The role of HR function is not known much in the different cultures. Control based and commitment based are two different typed of cultures which Walton [9] has concluded on and also stated that organizations are moving from strictly controlling the employees to making them more committed employees of the organizations.

One of the important HR strategic issues is the role of HR competencies for managing the human assets of the organization in the effective and efficient manner. Many researchers have always given their view point on the matter that human assets of any organization can be used as one of the key source of competitive edge over other firms. [1,10,11]. Therefore there is a need to have the high level of commitment towards the HR function from the organization that is responsible of managing this precious human asset in the concern. It was

addressed by Barney and Wright [11] that situation is very complicated when talking about the competencies, generally high level of competency is not depicted by the HR managers as a result , they do not form the part of the strategic planning and decision making. In continuation it was also concluded in the study by Cunningham and Debrah [12], line managers and executives have majorly taken over the duties of the HR managers as HR managers lacked the vital skills to perform the tasks and responsibilities. Research over the period of time has suggested that issues like enhancing the status of the HR department and the level of competency of HR managers has a main effect over the extent of collaboration between HR function and HR strategy. [2,3,5]. It was concluded in the study that exhibition of HR manager's expertise has led to a major boost of HR standing and has also strengthened the HR and strategy connection all the more.

HR strategy is though the vital feature and a reason behind the growth and success of any organization but has not been researched extensively. There are past researches which have focused on the fit between HR function and firms strategy vertically and a fit among the HR practices horizontally. But it has been observed by Grundy [13] that the HR practices do not have the desired level of congruency in the firms.

It has been argued that the HR practices have always been recognized and studied in isolation and its connection with other strategic HR issues has been completely ignored. It was also criticized that the HR strategy is considered to be the whole and sole authority of the HR managers and it is not shared by the functional managers in the organization, which is again a very critical issue to be addressed along with the importance of participation of the functional managers in the area of strategic planning and decision making.

The other strategic issue is the HR outsourcing which is on an increasing trend in the organization, as it is considered to be the cost cutting way of doing the things where the companies do not have the specialization and expertise. The need of outsourcing the activities has risen due to the fact that it can minimize the workload of the permanent workers, bring down the cost of operations, will bring in the economies of scale, improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and bring in expertise from the expert people in their own area.

Scholars and researchers have argued that HR outsourcing is basically a tool used by the organizations to have the competitive edge over the competitors. It has also been strongly put forth that

outsourcing the various HR activities basically relieves the HR managers to struggle with the key or strategic business issues. Very little research has been done in the area to find out the factors which result into outsourcing of HR activities, factors which decrease the requirement of outsourcing the HR activities and which are the frequently outsourced HR activities. This has also given rise to understand the need of analyzing and answering the questions of what, how and why the HR activities are outsourced. This will be helpful to understand the relationship between HR function and organizational structure, HR function and organizational culture, HR strategies generally followed by the companies, HR skills and competencies required to manage HR function to build the competitive edge, understanding the concept of outsourcing and diversity.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

The important issue to be addressed by the study is to have in-depth understanding into SHRM issues by using the qualitative research methodology. This method will be the effective way to have rich and deep insight [14] and proper contextual information of the concerned subject. The research is based on three major grounds of: industry based study with number of companies, multiple sources taken for evidence, and semi structured interviews. There are number of such researches in the subject concerned but mostly have been done taking multiple industries. The research has taken multiple companies for study (IT and Banking Industry in India)

The study is based on the data which is collected from the various hierarchies in the organization. The data is collected from top level managers, line managers, and HR managers. The secondary sources of information have also been used such as internal documents and newspaper reports. The study has used the cumulative body of knowledge which will definitely help the management to have the in-depth look into the SHRM issues of the organizations and pave the way of using it to fulfill the strategic aims of the companies. All these sources of information have the different perception and understanding of the organization, therefore the different perspectives hierarchically have been accumulated for the extensive research.

The data was majorly collected through face to face interviews with senior managers of the firms. The majority of the questions were open ended questions and lot of exercise was done to probe into the matters which are generally not so easily answered by the managers. The interview questions were asked in the manner which seemed like more of a conversation than an interview.

4. INDUSTRIES: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Age growth in India has enabled the country to have strong ties with United States and European Union. But the IT companies are deeply influenced by the global financial crisis because of which the hiring has dropped drastically and employees are directed towards the other sectors providing employment opportunities. Lots of structural changes have led to the digitalization in terms of digital services and digital economy because of which requirement of manpower has decreased and the quality of workforce required has increased. Since the economy is capable of giving IT industry a tuff competition in terms of employment opportunities and monetary rewards therefore to retain the quality workforce becomes very crucial for the concern. The key HR issues if can be looked into deeply will require less effort to retain the talented workforce and reduce the requirement of high headcount and fulfill the quality requirements. Thus the strategic HR issues of the need to be dealt carefully by the industry.(<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/jobs/Are-IT-jobs-losing-sparkle/articleshow/6443498.cms>)IT sector in India is blooming and by 2020 it is expected to see the growth of job creation for about 2 million , where 13 percent of such a hike is expected to be in India itself. But the industry does not have match between its requirement and the candidates skills and caliber.(<https://qz.com/india/1502573/indias-it-sector-will-have-250000-jobs-for-techies-in-2019/>).

5. BANKING SECTOR

The financial business in many economies has generally been substantially more managed than different enterprises. In contrast to different ventures, the breakdown of banks can have economy-wide repercussions as the expenses and overhead framework gets disturbed. Such guideline has been even more stringent in creating economies where controls on banks working have been forced to meet social and financial objectives.

The service industry in India consists of various services such as power, water supply, road, water and air transport, health, police, postal services and Banking industry. Banking industry is one of the crucial sectors in terms of generating employment opportunities in India. The network is enormous and spread all over India. Because of this extensive network, it brings together the workforce from various culture and origins in the same organization. This fact gives rise to the acceptance of various HR practices to deal with diversified

nature of workforce effectively so that their potential can be used to the fullest.

Starting with the most recent decade of the twentieth century, globalization, progression and innovative advances have changed the manner in which the business is done over the world uniting different threats and opportunities. So as to meet the fundamental goals, HR staff in Banking Sector needs to identify the nature of these difficulties and opportunities to help in characterizing their jobs and duties all the more sharply to counter these difficulties and handle the different chances.

The financial business in India is experiencing a revolutionary change regarding composition of their staff, training and development and implantation of corporate culture and values in them. Presently developing such a diversified Human Resource is a big Challenge for banking sector in India. In order to meet the demands of the industry and to handle the workforce diversity, the industry has started incorporating various strategic changes in its structure, strategy, outsourcing and competencies.

6. DATA COLLECTION

Permission for the interviews were taken from the managers responsible from different corporations. Mails depicting the investigation's motivation and mentioning consent for meetings were sent to managers to different organizations. This was followed by telephone calls to them after a week later to answer their questions on the subject matter mentioned. Mails were sent later with a questionnaire attached to it. It was a difficult task to convince the companies as companies are generally not interested in sharing the inside information with anyone. But finally 6 IT companies and 9 banks agreed to share the information with us but with the clause of not disclosing the identity and rest declined. Information was gathered through discrete, semi-structured interviews with managers, senior or line staff, and HR managers. Before meetings, every one of the interviewees was given a copy of the designed questionnaire. Giving questionnaire to interviewees ahead of time has the two upsides and downsides. It was expected that this would enable the interviewees to express their thoughts better and therefore giving extensive answers. The biasness was checked: first, by probing through various questions, second, by utilizing a group of two interviewers, and third, by cross-checking perspectives on an interviewee with different interviewees in a similar organization (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The experience and expertise of examiners were quite a lot helpful in determining the biased opinion of the interviewee and reduced it to a great extent.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

The research has used the proposal given by Miles and Huberman's [16] for the qualitative data analysis. The theoretical advancement was done constantly in a way that pursued a procedure of simultaneous information gathering and investigation. Interviews were recorded word by word, leaving no loopholes for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the interviews. Perceptions of two questioners were in understanding in most of cases. Wherever contrasts existed, they were settled by dialog and an accord was accomplished. In order to prevent any biasness the recorded data was analyzed twice to interpret the results from two perspectives. Glasser and Strauss [1] has recommended the thematic analysis procedure for grounded theory, which has two steps of categorization and theory. Categorization is the process of developing categories to group the issues and themes which were identified during the course of study. The qualitative information collected was analysed in different appropriate categories. The categorization basically was used to put the similar things under one category to have a systematic analysis on various platforms, such as "competent HR managers", which will have a different categorization based on the perception of different readers and analysts. For some it can be "skilful managers", for some it can be "experienced managers" and so on, therefore the similar responses were grouped into one category.

8. HR AND STRUCTURE

It was observed in the study, though HR function is playing a crucial role in the companies and top management is taking major involvement of HR function for its organizational activities but in certain organizations it has been overlooked. The study has concluded that nine organizations out of fifteen are taking proactive involvement of the HR function in the organization activities but in six of the fifteen organizations the top management was still expecting more to come. It was observed in 4 companies out of 6 in IT industry, the administrative structure was found to be two way and there is a linkage of one department with the other department in terms of communication and interdependence. This was though not the structure which is quite prevalent in the banking industry where only 2 out of 9 banks followed the two way linkage.

Through the interview it was observed that HR function is no doubt becoming the strategic issue of the company and it has been majorly acknowledged by the various companies but for sure more change is yet to come.

Table 1: Details of the employees interviewed

Industry	No. of companies	Branch Managers	Line managers	HR Managers
Banking	9	6	8	10
IT	6	2	3	11
Total	15	8	11	21

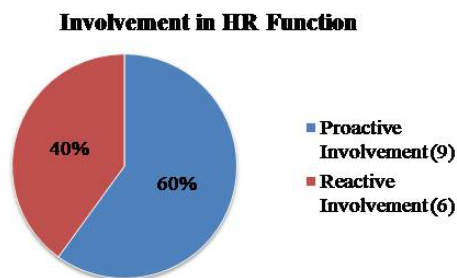
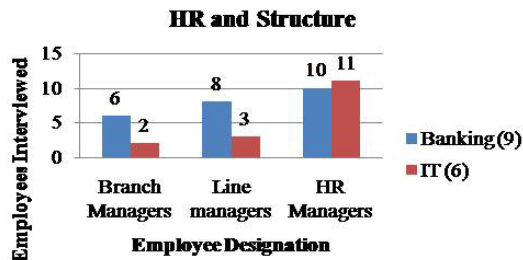


Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to work experience

Work Experience	N	%
Less than 2 years	18	45
2-4 years	15	37.5
4-6 years	3	7.5
More than 6 years	4	10
Total	40	100.00

9. MANAGERIAL CONNECTION

It has been reported by the HR managers that generally the decisions were taken by the management, and there is no participation of the HR department in the decision making process. But there have been chances of HR participation in such crucial events which was considered as the unintentional participation, without invitation to participate and in fact accidental participation because of the by chance presence of the HR managers in the meeting. In the strategic meetings the HR managers become the part of the decision making which was quite a lot restricted to reporting and updates on recruitment and selection or training etc. thus no active role was observed. This was an observation majorly of the banking sector. HR is more reactive than proactive. As and when problem

comes it is solved by the HR department and there is no direct participation in the managerial decision making by the HR department. It was strongly felt that the companies preferred the traditional approach of working.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to gender

Age	N	%
20- 30 years	20	50
31- 40 years	14	35
41- 50 years	6	15
Total	40	100.00

10. SINGLE MODE RELATIONSHIP

Only single communication was found to be active in the organizations regarding the approach followed for reporting. The HR managers reported directly to the top level and found to be reactive and secondary in the strategic issues of the company, though the departments were competitive and had skilled employees but still they were in the developmental phase in the strategic management of the HR. its noteworthy here that in some of the cases where HR department was active in strategic management it was not a sole activity of HR manager but it was in collaboration with the top management, which was a strong observation during the study. Therefore the reasons for the same were found and top managers responded to this observation with the view that generally HR activities do not generally have a strong impact on the strategic planning.

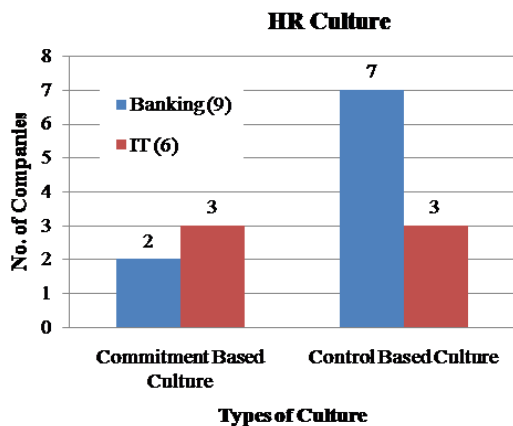
11. CONSOLIDATIVE RELATION

There were four companies in the IT sector where the concept of consolidative relation of the HR department was followed with the other departments. In the study it was found that the HR department here does not work in isolation and has a very important role to play not only in the operational issues but also in the actual implementation of the HR activities. These firms have aligned their corporate goals with the HR functions which is not the case with the banking Industry where only 2 companies out of 9 had consolidative relation with other departments.

12. HR AND CULTURE

The companies have reflected two different types of culture which was quite a lot dependant on the mindset of the top management. The managers who have developed the trust and understood the relevance of HR department followed the commitment based culture and the top managers

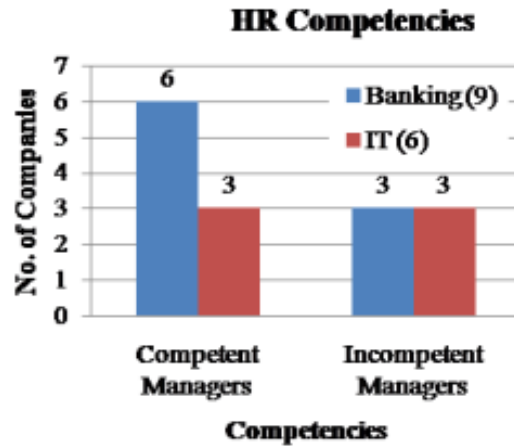
who could not develop the trust and could not understand the relevance of HR department followed the control based culture. Three companies out of six companies in IT sector and two companies out of nine in banking sector have shown the management’s inclination towards the commitment based culture. It was observed that these companies consider the humans as the asset of their organization, prefer to give the administrative freedom to their employees, share a proper communication network and have a formal grievance resolution system. Whereas the control based culture was the part of the organizations where HR had one way connection in the strategic planning. Here companies did not give the HR department to take decisions, involvement in strategic management is low, there is a formal one way communication, top to down approach is followed and promotions are based on the fixed guidelines.



13. HR COMPETENCIES

Nine out of fifteen companies (3 in IT and 6 in Banking), have the qualified and competent HR managers whereas the six companies lacked the competent and skilled managers. Considering the fact that lack of skilled, qualified and competent workforce are the main reasons why the HR functions are not as per the outlook of the management. The management had the observation that the HR managers are of reactive nature than proactive and have a traditional mindset of taking orders. Whereas HR managers have the mindset that top management wants the HR mangers to have the administrative approach and that bounds the HR managers to be traditional in its initiatives. They also have the view that the top managers are unaware of the HR capabilities and thus underestimate them, which can be overcome by developing the right perspective and keeping them informed about the HR role. The study also tried to find out the different perspectives of the various

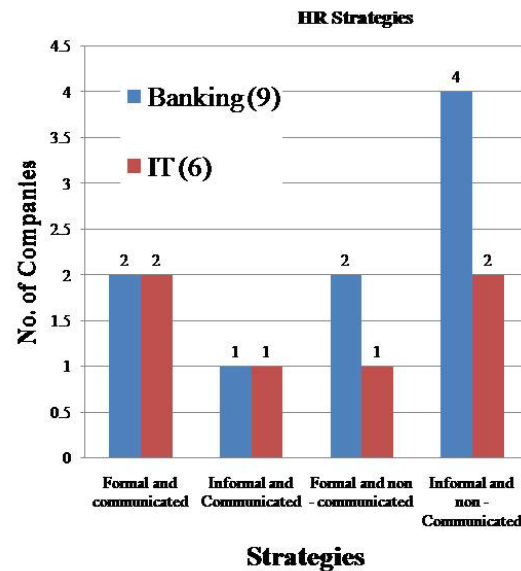
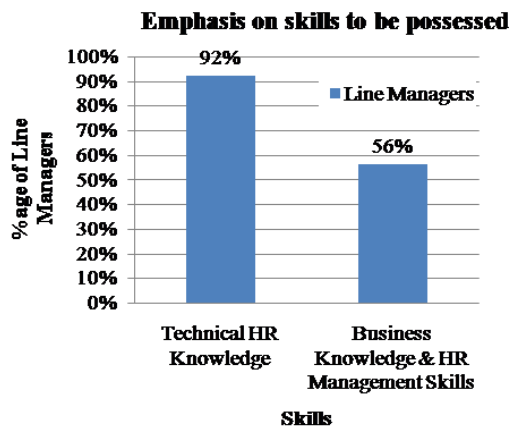
hierarchical levels on the types of skills and competencies required in the HR managers. As per the top mangers the HR people need to have the complete knowledge of the business, so that they understand what is being talked about and can connect it to the vision of the company when compared to operations mangers that have the opinion that HR managers need to have complete knowledge of business strategy.



The study is in consistent with the findings of Ulrich et al. [17] and Cunningham and Debrah [12] that HR managers need to possess business knowledge, analytical and visionary skills, HR management and knowledge. Majorly 92 percent of the line managers have emphasized on the importance of the technical HR knowledge and 56 percent have also emphasized on the importance of possessing business knowledge and HR management skills.

14. HR STRATEGY

It was observed through the research work that generally the organizations follow the four HR strategies in combination that is informal and formal and communicated or non-communicated. The companies use the combination as formal and communicated, formal and con communicated, informal and communicated and informal and non-communicated. If the firm is formal and communicated it clearly indicates that the HR strategy is the platform on which the overall strategy of the company is made to support the objectives of the company. Such companies have tight vertical fit and strong horizontal fit among the HR activities. Only 2 companies were found to be in this category from IT industry and 2 from banking industry.



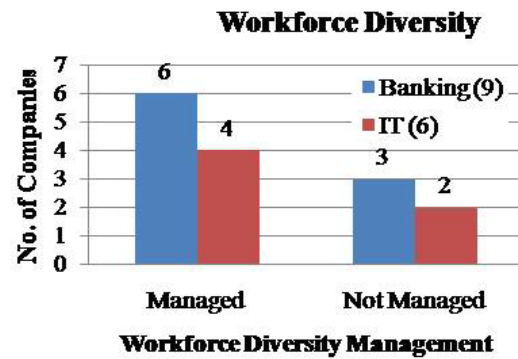
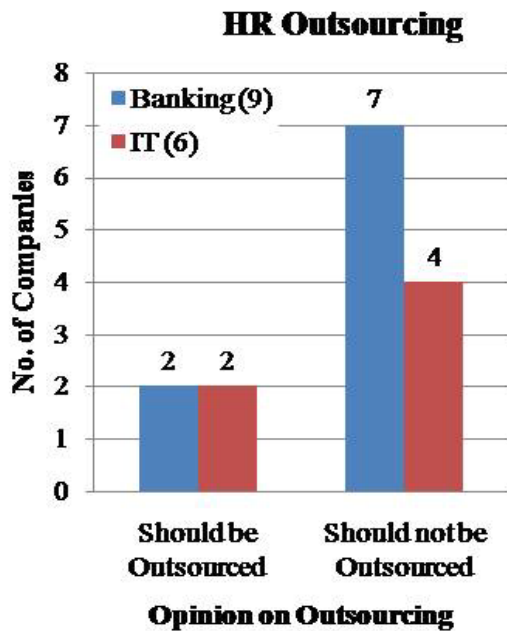
Companies which are formal and non-communicated, the HR strategies are completely in accordance to the corporate strategies which are well documented and framed. Though they are communicated to the members of the organization but unfortunately do not come in the knowledge of the line managers. This has resulted into the one way linkage of the HR and strategic planning but communication and implementation is missing which has ultimately increased the role of functional managers as the implementation becomes their responsibility. Only 2 companies lie in this category from the banking industry and 1 from IT industry.

Companies which are informal and communicated do not have HR strategies written in black and white but the strategies are implied to all the managers. This result in one way linkage of just the participation of the management in the strategic planning where everything is verbally communicated but nothing is documented for reference. Only 1 company falls into this category from the Banking sector and 1 from IT industry.

Companies which are informal and not communicated do not have any clarity on the HR initiatives. Such companies were of the opinion that HR strategies should be explicit to have clarity. Such organizations have weak horizontal and vertical fit. 4 companies from banking Industry fall into this category 2 from IT industry.

15. OUTSOURCING

Outsourcing of HR activities is a critical issue which needs to be addressed, and has lasting impact on the strategic working of the organization. Organisations need to think and determine the need to outsource, where all have different views. There were 11 organizations out of 15 who had the strong opinion that the HR functions or activities should not be outsourced as it has lots of confidentiality issues attached to it. As per the opinion of the managers in these organizations any external party or agent would not be intensely involved in the organization and would not have the in depth knowledge of the business, which would result in incompetent working because of lack of information or awareness. Managers were of the strong opinion if the need of hiring the HR services has come up it clearly indicates that there is a requirement of HR functions to be merged strategically with the organizations goals and thus the people in human resource department need to be trained and made competent and skilled to be able to handle the tasks themselves. On the contrary two companies just had the opposite views on the outsourcing issue. According to them hiring of specialized services will bring in expertise and improve the overall performance of the organization, the managers also had the view that if competent and learned people in the HR field are hired this would definitely bring down the cost of operation of the business and bring in efficiency and effectiveness.



16. WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Workforce diversity is the weapon which has its own pros and cons when employed [18-19]. This generally calculated in terms of its positive implications as enhanced excellence, creativity and innovation and in terms of negative implication as disagreement, coaching costs and communication barrier [20]. It has been thus argued that if organization is capable of managing diversity, this would reduce the negative effects and improve the positive impact of workforce diversity [18, 21]. The study has concluded on a very interesting fact that all the companies have almost the same opinion when it comes to workforce diversity management. The employees at various hierarchical levels have concluded that it is imperative for the top level management to recognize the diversity management as organizations core value and incorporate diversity management with the strategic vision of the company. This would help not only in addressing the issues but would also help to capitalize on diversity and making use of the diverse talent. According to the study 10 companies out of 15 companies (4 from IT and 6 from banking) have the stern opinion that workforce diversity is inevitable, therefore the organizations are managing the issue with due care so the productivity can be enhanced and efficiency can be increased. But 5 organizations out of 15 (2 from IT and 3 from banking) have the a strong opinion against the management that this issue has been seriously looked into and as a result has a negative repercussion on the working atmosphere of the organization and has led to the rise in conflict.

17. FINDINGS

- HR strategies are basically the responsibilities of HR managers which are not shared by the functional managers of the organizations.
- There is proactive involvement of HR functions in the organizations.
- Generally the decisions are taken by the management without any participation of the HR managers in the crucial areas.
- In IT industry HR department had consolidated relation with other department of the organization, which is a positive sign in the field of strategic human resource management.
- Mostly organizations followed the control based culture of management.
- HR functions are not as per the outlook of the management, because of the lack of skilled, qualified and competent workforce.
- Majority of the organization studied have informal and non-communicated strategies.
- Companies under study have favoured the concept of outsourcing and are generally able to manage the diversity of workforce

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

- HR strategies should not be the responsibility only of HR managers, but functional mangers should also be involved into this as they have the in-depth knowledge of their own functional departments.
- HR managers should be involved in the crucial decisions as they have insight of the issues, if there is active participation it would result into effective management and decision making.
- Control based culture does not give enough freedom to the employees thus the management should also follow the commitment based culture to give employees flexibility in their operations.
- Management should follow the right approach of communication to create awareness of the strategies of the organization as this would be

helpful to direct the activities of the workforce strategically.

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QUESTIONNAIRE:

Strategic HR issues of the Company

(Name of the employees and company will not be used for publication)

Name of the company:

Gender

Name of the employee:

Age:

City:

1. Does the company rely on the outsourced activities? If yes then what activities are generally outsourced?
2. What affects the company's decision related to outsourcing of activities?
3. Can the entire HR function be outsourced in future, why?
4. Does your company follow any HR strategy? What are its variables?
5. Does the existence or non existence of HR policy affect the HR function? Explain.
6. Do you find any connection amongst the various HR functions?
7. Do you think HR managers need to be trained for specialized skills and competencies? If yes, what can be those areas?
8. Are the HR managers of your company professionally qualified to perform the various HR functions?
9. What are different values, beliefs and norms (culture) of the employees of your organization?
10. Do you find any connection between the culture of your organization and the HR functions? Explain.
11. What is the strategy of your company?
12. Does HR play a crucial role to implement the strategies of your organization?
13. What is the role of HR in your business organization?
14. Is the performance of HR department as expected?
15. Is HRM a separate department of your organization? If not then which department it collaborates with?
16. Does the HR department play an active role in strategic planning meetings?
17. Has the HR department gone through any changes in the last few years? If yes name those key areas.
18. Does the HR department connect the training programme with the strategic vision of the company?