

# Employee Recruitment and Selection Procedures of NGOs in Bangladesh: A Study on BRAC

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## ABSTRACT

*Recruitment and Selection is a foundation of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and its integration to business is critical to achieve organisational strategic goals. Better recruitment and selection strategies result in improved organizational outcomes. The basic objective of this research is to explore the recruitment and selection procedures of NGOs based on BRAC; with analyzing these some recommendations are made to improve recruitment and selection practices. Here both primary and secondary sources are used for data collection and a structured questionnaire/ check lists was used to keep the research. The findings suggest that the largest NGOs emphasize professionalism and career orientations and implement long-term, forward looking approaches in their selection, recruitment, and remuneration. The small and mid-size NGOs, however, do not possess HR/ personnel management practices of their own; rather they follow and imitate larger members. The implications for HRM practitioners and scope for further research are discussed here.*

**Keywords:** Recruitment, Selection, Bangladesh, NGOs, BRAC  
**JEL Classification Code:** M500

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and Selection is a major HRM functions (Dessler 2007) as it encompasses all organisational practices and decisions. It has been argued that in order for the firm to build and sustain the competitive advantage, proper staffing is critical (Wright & Snell 1991, Boxall 1996). Recent technological advances, globalization, social trends and changes within organizations have brought new challenges for recruitment and selection (Rowley & Benson 2002). To effectively face the new challenges recruitment and selection needs to be integrated with business strategies (Lam & White 1998).

Bangladesh has turned into a nation of NGOs, and it is argued humorously that in terms of the number of NGOs for every ten thousand people, Bangladesh ranks number one in the world. NGO activities in this country have gained momentum due to the failure of both the GOs (Govt. Organization) and FPOs (For-Profit Organization) to achieve their missions and objectives (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Nobusue, 2002; Ray, 1983; Siddiqui, 1996). Consequently, NGOs have emerged as an alternative solution to the needs of the market and society. NGO activities occur in economic development, and poverty alleviation through employment creation, micro-credit, gender disparity eradication, education, community building, human rights protection and advocacy, social and environmental development, marginally placed and outreach communities protection, and salvation from destitution, have generated enormous success as demonstrated by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Grameen Bank and its founder (Dr. Mohammad Yunus) in 2006 (Khondaker, Bhuiyan, Runa, Khanam, Nahar, Hossain, &

Khoda, 2007; Holloway, 1998; Yunus, 2000; Potter & Ahmed, 2005).

Therefore, Recruiting & Selecting is important for every organization including NGOs, FPOs, GOs, etc because the best qualified applicants must be found to fill vacancies. Recruitment is the process of finding and attracting qualified or suitable applicants to fill vacancies (E. B. Flippo, Weeratunga 2003 block 6:6, Glueck 1978). The methods and procedures used to acquire an understanding about jobs are called job analysis. There are mainly two sources of recruitment: internal and external (Aswathappa 2008:150). On the other hand, selection is a process of hiring suitable people for job who can successfully perform the job (Byars and Rue 1997:172). Right man for right job is the main goal of selection (Dessler 2007). The selection process involves many steps (Decenzo & Robbins 1999: 169) such as preliminary reception of application, screening, interviewing, test, medical test, references and final decision of hiring.

For this study BRAC, the largest NGO of Bangladesh (most probably one of the largest NGOs in the world), is selected. The basic objective of this research is to explore the recruitment and selection procedures of BRAC; to make out the differences between R & S procedures of a NGO (BRAC) and GOs & FPOs; with analyzing these some recommendations are made to improve recruitment and selection practices. Recruitment and Placement unit is the most important and largest unit of HRD of BRAC. This unit is responsible for receiving requisition of recruitment of employees from different departments of BRAC and taking necessary steps to fill up vacant posi-

tions with right persons at the right time in right quantity. The objectives of this unit are to attract the right person, for right place, at the right time, according to the requirement of the organization.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### 2.1 BRAC

BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) started in 1972 as a short-term relief and rehabilitation project following the war of independence with a vision "a just, enlightened, healthy and democratic Bangladesh free from hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and all forms of exploitation based on age, sex, religion and ethnicity." Fazle Hasan Abed is the Founder and Chairperson of BRAC. Today BRAC is the largest development organization in the developing world having the core and the supporting programs. It is one of the largest Southern development organizations. BRAC's outreach covers all 64 districts of Bangladesh and 78% of the total number of villages in Bangladesh and has been called upon to assist a number of countries including Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Africa, etc.

With a goal 'Enforce procedural justice to intensify transparency and equity and facilitate and organizational environment to flourish potentials, promote innovation, change and quality' Human Resource Division is one of the major support program of BRAC. BRAC HR, formally known as the "Personnel Section", renovated itself into "Human Resources Department (HRD)" in 2005, which had centralized operation from the Head Office (HO). The official site of BRAC is <http://www.brac.net>.

### 2.2 Recruitment and Selection

Edwin B Flippo defined Recruitment as the process of finding and attracting capable applicants for employment. It is the pool of applicants from which the new employees are selected. It can also be defined as a process to discover sources of manpower to meet the requirement of the staffing schedule and to employ effective measures for attracting the manpower in adequate numbers in order to facilitate the effective selection of an efficient working force. Recruitment can be defined as the set of activities for an organization to attract job candidates who have the capabilities and attitudes needed to assist the organization accomplish its goals (Glueck 1978). The success of recruitment depends upon its ability to create a large pool of competent applicants. There are numerous sources of recruitment which may be categorized into two—internal and external (Aswathappa 2008:150).

Once candidates are identified, an organization can begin the selection process. Selection practices can also be linked to organizational success. Byars and Rue (1997:172) defined selection as "the process of choosing from among available applicants, the individuals who are most likely to successfully perform a job". Selection is one of the most important functions of HRM because wrong selection of

employees hampers organizational performance enormously (Dessler 2007:194). An ideal selection process comprises some steps such as (Decenzo & Robbins 1999: 169) filling up application forms, initial screening, preliminary interview, employment tests, written examination, comprehensive interview, background examination/ reference check, medical examinations, and job offer.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

An enormous literature was found to define and identify specific characteristics and importance of recruitment & selection, types and methods of recruitment & selection, and proper management of recruitment & selection process. Recruitment is the process of finding and attracting capable applicants for employment. It is the pool of applicants from which the new employees are selected (Edwin B Flippo). Actually recruitment links the employees and the job seekers. The success of the organization mostly depends upon the effective and efficient use of recruitment & selection process. But success may not occur due to some misconceptions or myths about recruitment and selection practices (Taylor, P. 1998, Aswathappa 2008: 186, Khan & Taher 2008: 110). Using appropriate techniques the suitable candidates are thus, able to be recruited and selected during their career development (Crawford 2004).

Bangladesh has turned into a country of NGOs. The NGO sector with 40-65 thousand member organizations, both registered and non-registered, is the biggest employer in this country (Daily Ittefaq, 2011; NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB)/Government of Bangladesh (GOB), 2011; Register of Companies (ROC)/GOB, 2011; Khondaker, Molla, & Rahman, 2008; Potter, 2009), and employs people as paid and honorary staff, professional management, consultant, and volunteers. Numerous studies on NGOs in Bangladesh focus on issues of micro-credit, job formation, sustainable development, women's issues, social and economic issues, NGO interrelationships, NGOs-GOs-FPOs interface, project development and implementation issues, and project efficiency, etc., *but do not deal much with issues on personnel management specially recruitment and selection* (Ray, 1983; White, 1991; Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Farrington & Lewis, 1993; Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Siddiqui, 1996; Holloway, 1998; Anaheier & Salamon, 1998; Holloway, 1998; Yunus, 2000; Nobusue, 2002; Khan, 2003; Potter & Ahmed, 2005; Khondaker, 2006; Khondaker, Bhuiyan, Runa, Khanam, Nahar, Hossain, & Khoda, 2007; Potter, 2009).

Most research on recruitment and selection has been conducted in Western contexts, mainly in the United States (see e.g., Breaugh & Starke 2000, Wright, et al. 2005). It is evident that although rich resources of literature exist on general aspects of NGOs, and human resource management specially recruitment and selection of NGOs/NPOs in other countries like USA, UK, Finland, Nigeria, etc, but

in the case of Bangladesh NGOs, research is still almost non-existent on selection and recruitment, placement and promotion, training and education, compensation and motivation, performance appraisal, career development, and many other sub-domains of management. Although Empirical evidence shows that strategic HRM practices vary significantly between countries, even within OECD nations, and even nature of the organization (Betcherman, et al. 1994, Guest 1997, Schuler & Jackson 1999) but in Bangladesh NGOs follow the trend of Human Resource Management in FPOs and GOs.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

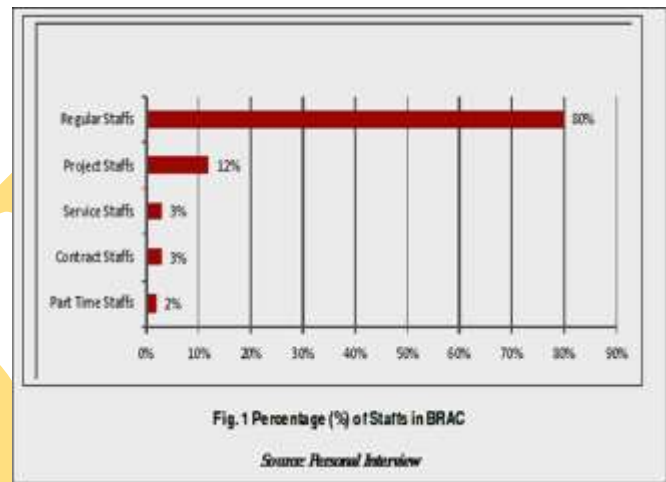
This article is a qualitative research based on a case study of an NGO. The rationale behind choosing a case study based research is to depict the difference between academic know-how and practical experience regarding recruitment and selection procedures of an NGO operating in Bangladesh like BRAC. Here both primary and secondary sources are used for data collection. Personal discussion and interview with employees are the sources of primary data collection. Different books, academic contexts, journals, exploratory research reports and HR departmental manuals are used as secondary data of the research. Though, it is not a quantitative research a structured questionnaire/ check lists was used to keep the research in an assembly and interview the respondents based on employee recruitment and selection policies and procedures as well. This check list is distributed among 30 employees (Gen. Manager-1, Sr. Manager-2, HR Manager-1, Sr. HR Officer-2, HR Officer-3, Program Officer-10, Executives-10, Curriculum Specialist-1) of BRAC. The sample group consists of both male and female staffs from HRD and BEP. The check list comprised total 18 questions focusing on some important issues like; importance of effective recruitment and selection, types and methods of recruitment, steps used in recruitment and selection. The answers reflected the recruitment and selection procedures of BRAC and also helped in detecting areas of further improvement. Charts and diagrams are also used based on employee responses.

#### 5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURES IN BRAC

##### 5.1 Classification of Employee/ Staffs in BRAC

The BRAC Staffs are of five types. Such as: (a) Regular Staff (b) Project Staff (c) Service Staff (d) Contract Staff (e) Part Time Staff. The **Regular Staffs** in BRAC go through the following conditions: (I) Staff level exists (II) Before confirmation one is to work as apprentice for one year (III) After confirmation may be brought under Provident Fund. The **Project Staffs**: (I) Recruited according to the duration of the project for the project period (II) cannot be transferred outside the project. The **Service Staffs** (for example-Electrician, Security guard, Caretaker Liftman and the grade-comprised staffs.) are under grade. Probationary period is not applicable for them. After joining they may come under Provident Fund. The **Contract**

**Staffs**: (I) Permanence of the job depends on the duration of the contract. (II) Benefits of the job are determined according to the contract letter (III) Duration of the contract is renewable. (IV) Will not get festival allowance, gratuity and Provident Fund benefits. (VI) Get earned leave like the regular staffs. And the **Part Time Staffs**: Appointed on hourly or daily basis, other benefits of the job except the daily allowance are not applicable and the duration of the job will not exceed 11 months. Ratio of staffs in BRAC is given in **Fig. 1**.



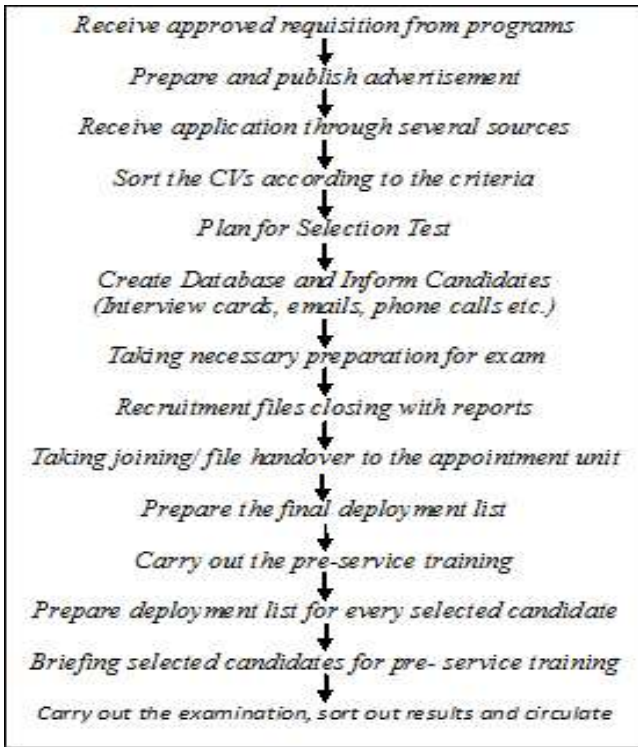
##### 5.2 Employee/Staff Recruitment & Selection Process

The Staff will be recruited according to the Table of Authority. The approval of the Executive Director must be taken in recruiting the staff of all levels of the Head Office. For Urgent need of the program staff can be recruited directly by the Chairman of the Executive Director.

In the beginning of the year all the Programs'/ Department's Head would send the requisition in the fixed form to the Head Office estimating the requirement of new staff for the whole year in their respective department. There would be opportunity to re-estimate the staff-requirement in every three months. But by any means without a notice of a month, staff recruitment processes cannot be commenced.

HRD would make yearly plan to recruit staff on the basis of the received requisition. The staff will be recruited through advertisement in the newspapers and other publicity media where applicable. After recruiting the staff according to the requirement of the program HRD will make a panel of the selected remaining candidates. Afterwards staff will be recruited from this panel if requires. This panel will remain effective for the subsequent six months. The TARC will send the CV filled up by the newly recruited staff to the Head Office where applicable and provide deployment individually in the name of each staff mentioning the salary according to the list provided by the Head Office.

### 5.3 Recruitment & Selection Flow-Chart of BRAC



### 5.4 Rules of Recruitment & Selection

In case of staff recruitment & selection the following rules are followed by BRAC:

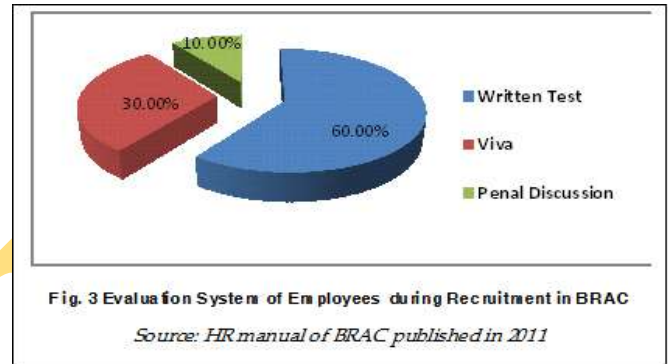
**Basic Rules:** Staff working in BRAC would not be able to apply directly for any other posts of BRAC but by the approval of the Program Head along with the recommendation of the supervisor, the staff will be able to apply. If the staff is selected for the desired new post following the rules of BRAC he will resign from the former post and join the new post. Any staff Dismissed/Terminated for BRAC cannot apply again for recruitment in BRAC. Positive attitude have to be shown and special importance to be given to women, the aborigines and the disable. The maximum level for the driver and the office assistant will be VI & III respectively. The maximum grade of the security guard will be III. However, major percentage of employment is generated from external sources (Fig. 2).

**Qualification and Age:** The minimum educational qualification to apply for level - VIII or above for the general case is Masters Degree. But for the skill-based post like Doctor, Engineer, Agronomist and Such others the minimum educational qualification is Graduation/Masters. If the candidate's age is fifty years old or above then she/he will be only allowed for contract-base appointment. Generally at entry level the age of the candidate shall not be below 18 years and above thirty-five years. In case of on the necessity of the organization and in case of extraordinary qualification the highest age limit is relax able.

**Recruitment Board:** Staff Recruitment Board nominated by the program and approved by the HRD with representative will be conducting the viva of the candidates. In

order to ensure qualitative standard, program should be approved by the HRD with representative will be conducting the viva of the candidates. At least one of the members of the recruitment board will have to be from HRD.

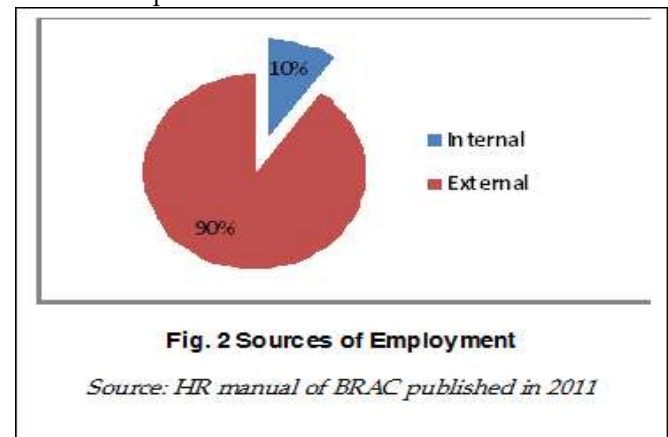
**Evaluation System:** BRAC follows examination system in recruitment process which consists of written, viva & penal discussion (Fig. 3).



**Pre-service Training:** Being selected primarily all the candidates will be attending the pre-service training conducted in the TARC for the final selection. From the participants the most competent 90% will be selected finally. Each of the unsuccessful candidates will be given Tk.50 honorarium per day for participating in the pre-service training.

**Deployment of the New Staff:** The regular staff will have to be willing to work in any place of Bangladesh or outside of Bangladesh where BRAC runs its activities. In case of the male staff posting may be given to any district excluding the staff's own district. In case of the women and disable job seekers during the viva HRD will make a list of the chosen Thana of the job seekers excluding his/her own in accordance with their choices priority and staff will be recruited accordingly on the basis of availability.

**Joining of the New Staff:** According to the condition of the joining letter, the candidate will start working on a date fixed by BRAC and his joining will be considered effective from that day. If a candidate joins by the next seven days of the joining date, the local authority will be able to accept the joining. After seven days the joining can't be accepted without the Permission of the HRD. The

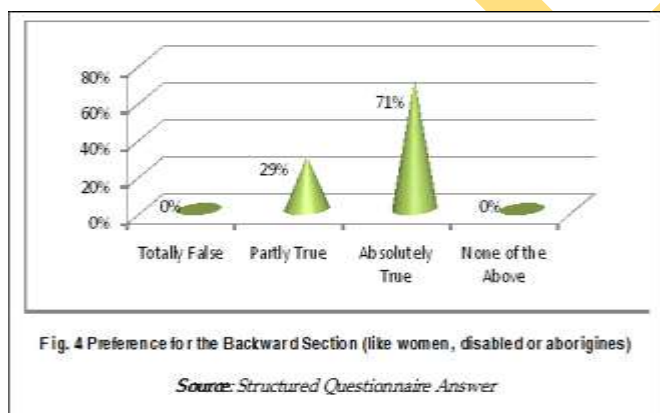


staff will submit the following documents at the time of joining: The interview letter, Filled up security bond where applicable, Nationality Certificate, Blood group report, Deployment given by TARC, Period of probation. All regular staff will work as an apprentice for a yearlong from the joining. The period of probation of any staff cannot be expanded. It is not applicable for the service staff and contractual staff.

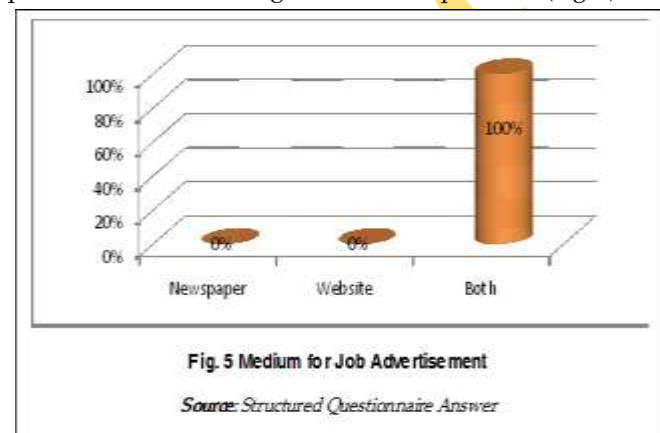
## 6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Through rigorous analysis so many important things have been found regarding recruitment & selection concerns. Some issues distinct BRAC from traditional organization's recruitment & selection process like pre-service training which is not used by many other firms; another thing is interview/ recruitment board is composed with multidisciplinary members. The following critical findings are discovered by the study.

BRAC follows five (5) steps to complete the whole recruitment process and for that they require only one (1) month time to complete the process. It has been found that 71% of the respondents think that there is preference for the backward section (like women, disabled or aborigines) of the society and only 29% says that it is partly true (Fig. 4).



Advertisement for recruitment is published in both news paper and website according to all of the respondents (Fig. 5).



Structured questionnaires about Recruitment and Selection (R & S) process are given to the respondents. They gave their reaction regarding the R & S variables followed by BRAC. The major findings about Recruitment and Selection procedures followed by BRAC are given below (Table 1).

From the survey the following strengths and weakness/shortcomings are found.

### ➤ Strength of recruitment and selection process:

The recruitment and selection process is relatively transparent and fair. Outcomes of the recruitment process are satisfactory. They provide equal job opportunity. Screening criteria in recruitment process is both academic result and experience based; it has been found from the 100% of the respondents. It has been found that 100% of the respondents think that IT support regarding recruitment is available. It has been found that 57% of the respondents think that satisfaction of core programs with recruitment process is satisfactory and the rest of 43% thinks that it is excellent. Structure of recruitment process is composed of both centralized and decentralized.

### ➤ Weakness of recruitment and selection process:

Job description is not clear and specific, written test is not fully program oriented and written test is not MCQ type and agenda related. Sometimes nepotism is bringing into play for recruiting and selecting. Interview board is not in appropriate structured. There is no standard job specification. The management does not maintain more flexibility for internal staff for applying. It has been found that 100% of the respondents think that the ratios of internal applicants are generally very few.

Variables	Reaction	Respondents (%)
Steps followed to complete the recruitment process	5 steps	100%
Total process requires time to complete	1 month	100%
Yearly plan for recruitment is established	True	71%
	Partly true	29%
Sources of workforces employment	Both Internal & External	57%
	As per policy	43%
Preference for the backward section (like women, disabled or aborigines)	Absolutely true	71%
	Partly true	29%
Structure of recruitment process	Both Centralized & Decentralized	100%
Medium for job advertisement	Both Newspaper & Website	100%
Screening criteria	Both Academic result & Experience based	100%
Evaluation system in recruitment process	Written + Viva + Penal discussion	100%
System follows to publish the result	Both website and Notice board	100%
Provides Pre service or in service training	Agree	100%
Frequent recruitment occurs in BRAC	Less than 2 position in a month	14%
	3 - 5 position in a month	57%
	6 - 8 position in a month	28%
Degree of satisfaction of core programs with recruitment process	Excellent	43%
	Satisfactory	57%
IT support regarding recruitment is available	Yes	100%

Source: Structured Questionnaire Survey

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To overcome such shortcomings/ weaknesses here the following suggestions are recommended. For appropriate personnel source professional institutions, HR associations support should be taken by the organization. Job description should be more clear and specific and job description should be mentioned in the job advertisement. There should be orientation for the specific program. During recruitment age limit should be relaxed in case of appropriate staffs. Questionnaire of written test should be improved. More structured interview board should be formed or recruiting agencies can be hired if appropriate personnel are busy. All candidates should be recruited through proper recruitment process and all recommendations by higher management should avoid. For staff development more training need to be introduced by management. For that purpose the budget for staff development should be revised & increased. Encourage self guided training, which may be useful for the employees who are working different remote areas. Here employee is considered to be responsible for self edification, with the organization providing resources, libraries & on line information for employees to work at their leisure. Panel interview should be practiced. Find out proper recruitment expenses so that it could be reduced. Recruit more HR staffs to provide prompt service & meeting all level of staffs physically to hear their problems & give feedback. The compliance audit team should be more strongly constituted & organized to take accurate feedback & ensure the right practice of the human resource policy & procedure.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Selection of deserving and competent staff is always a crucial job for an organization. It has to consider the required level of skills/technical abilities, competencies and flexibilities of an employee. BRAC is an organization where different types of development interventions are carried out. That is why the process of selection is vast and more complicated. Every year a massive number of employees are employed by Recruitment, Selection & Placement Section of HRD for fulfilling the growing number of staff demand from different programs and projects. Through successful recruitment, effective, value driven and competent staff can be hired, who will perform to their best abilities. They can work towards the success and sustainability of the organization by means of adherence and dedication to achieve the goals and objectives. BRAC believes in Equal Employment Opportunity in any recruitment & always gives preference to the underprivileged group of people in the society. Although this research is based on Bangladesh, it would be helpful for other developing countries specially Asian countries. As we know most of the Asian countries are poor and there NGOs play a vital role to the development of economy of those countries. Therefore, for proper recruitment & selection of those countries along with Bangladesh this paper would be facilitated.

## 9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations are faced in the time of preparation of this research.

- The scope of study is limited to a few employees of BRAC only.
- Lack of required information, which is the main obstacle we faced to prepare this research paper.
- Difficult to collect the necessary information (sometimes difficult to realize the actual required information).
- Reluctant to provide confidential information by the employees.
- Lack of previous literatures regarding the related issue in the context of Bangladesh.

## 10. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

Each & every research creates an opportunity of further research. It is also true for this present research. Future researchers can work on effectiveness of recruitment & selection (R & S), impacts of R & S on the organizational productivity, need for pre-service training for successful R & S and retain them, evaluation of R & S through social approach, etc. based on this study.

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