

An Exploratory Study on Entry Level HRM Job Opportunities and Their Requirements in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to explore the types, categories and requirements of entry level HRM job opportunities available in Sri Lanka. In order to achieve the objectives, an exploratory study on all the HRM related employment advertisements appeared in the Sunday Observer newspaper for the period of 3 years (2006, 2007 and 2008) was conducted by using comprehensive and systematic content analysis along with descriptive statistics. The results revealed that a few number of entry level options are available in Sri Lanka. These options can be grouped into two broad classifications such as generalized and specialized way of entry options. Sri Lankan organizations have a practice of recruiting young people as Management Trainee (MT) to fill the current or future job vacancies. In connection with entry-level HRM jobs, MT has been identified as one of the main sources of entry options in Sri Lanka. Based on the needed educational qualifications, the MT option is classified into eight categories. In case of MT, a placement process and conditions were identified. From entry level job seekers, organizations expect twenty nine skills and eight types of personal qualities. The implications of these findings are useful to all stakeholders of HRM especially current and potential job seekers, organizations and HRM workforce developers in Sri Lanka.

Key Words: Entry Level HRM Job Opportunities, Entry Level HRM Job Requirements and Exploratory Study

Introduction

Entry level jobs are the primary jobs which persons will have to hold in order to enter into any field of working. Currently many universities, other educational and professional institutes are offering specialization degree, diploma, certificate programs, and professional courses in HRM in Sri Lanka. Business organizations also advertise various entry level jobs in HRM in order to

attract young HRM workforce or HRM job seekers from the labour market. In this context, it is important to explore this phenomenon systematically in order to provide empirical knowledge to the stakeholders of HRM.

This study explores the entry level HRM job opportunities and their requirements in Sri Lanka. It has been generally observed that there is a gap in the empirical knowledge with regard to the entry level HRM job opportunities, and their requirements in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka. Based on this empirical knowledge gap three research questions were formulated.

1. What are the specific entry level HRM job opportunities available in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka?
2. Are there any observable patterns or categories in the entry level HRM jobs in Sri Lanka?
3. What are the employers'/organizations' expectations in terms of qualifications, competencies and other requirements in respect of the entry level HRM job opportunities in Sri Lanka?

The Research objectives

Consistently, the objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the specific entry level HRM job opportunities available in Sri Lanka;
2. To identify the categories of entry level HRM job opportunities; and
3. To identify the requirements of those entry level HRM job opportunities in Sri Lanka.

Research Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, an exploratory study was conducted by using all the HRM related employment advertisements appeared in the Sunday Observer newspaper for the period of 3 years (2006, 2007 and 2008). This study was longitudinal in time horizon and the unit of analysis of this study was HRM related job advertisement. Hence there had not been any manipulation and control of variables the extent of the researchers' interference in this study was minimal.

The study setting was non-contrived due to the reason that it had been carried out in a natural environment where events occurred normally. Results and findings were generated mainly by using comprehensive and systematic content analysis along with descriptive statistics.

Results, Findings and Discussion

This part has been organized into two subsections, first subsection is related to first objective of the study and second subsection is related to second and third objectives of the study.

Specific Entry Level HRM Job Opportunities Available in Sri Lanka

For the study purpose, job title given in singular form in a job advertisement was counted as one position and job title given in the plural form was counted as only two positions if the number of positions for a particular HRM job vacancy had not been specified by the organization. In addition, repetitions of the same advertisement were excluded to the possible extent in order to reveal the real situation based on collected data. In the Sri Lankan context, there are 23 entry level HRM job titles that have been identified through the data collected for the three years.

These are the specific entry level jobs (employment opportunities) available in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka (see Table 1).

Table: 1 Entry Level HRM Job Titles and Number of Vacancies in Sri Lanka

#	Job Title	Number of Vacancies			Total
		2006	2007	2008	
01	Management Trainee (Graduate Management Trainee)	24	58	82	164
02	Management Trainee (Non-Graduate Management Trainee)	04	12	20	36
03	Management Trainee-HR/HRM (Graduate)	22	28	26	76
04	Management Trainee- HR/HRM (Non-Graduate)	06	10	-	16
05	HR Trainee/Staff Trainee	-	10	02	12
06	Trainee Executive	02	06	-	08
07	Trainee HR Executive	02	02	-	04
08	Senior Management Trainee	-	02	02	04
09	Staff Relation Clerk	-	-	01	01
10	Junior Executive-HRM	-	01	04	05
11	Assistant HR Officer	-	-	01	01
12	Human Resources Assistant/Staff Assistant	34	76	74	184
13	Human Resources /Personnel Clerk	13	25	28	66
14	Recruitment /Administrative Assistant	02	04	06	12
15	Recruiting Clerk	-	02	12	14
16	Payroll Assistant	02	03	02	07
17	Payroll Clerk/Wage Clerk	01	01	05	07
18	HR/Admin. Assistant	04	04	05	13
19	HRD Associate	-	-	01	01
20	Human Resource Development Assistant	01	-	-	01
21	Training Assistant	01	02	-	03
22	Trainee- Counsellor	-	-	04	04
23	HR Advisory Assistant	-	01	-	01
	Total	118	247	275	640

The above Table 1 provides the answers for what and how many entry level jobs are available in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka annually. There were 118, 247 and 275 job vacancies in 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively showing an upward trend of increasing. Even though there were 23 entry level HRM jobs identified according to this study, not all jobs are very frequently demanded by the organizations.

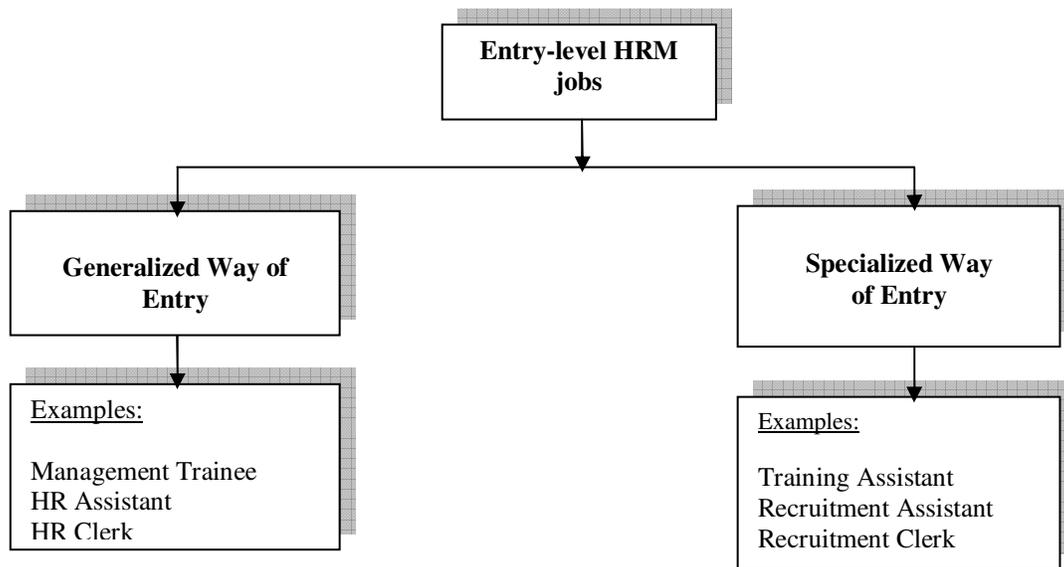
Out of these 23 entry level HRM jobs only very few jobs were demanded by the organizations frequently and they include Management Trainee, Human Resource Assistant and Personnel Clerk etc. The most frequently demanded entry level HRM job is Management Trainee (total of

the four types is 292). The next most frequently demanded entry level HRM job is Human Resource Assistant/Staff Assistant and then is Human Resources/Personnel Clerk.

Categorization of Entry Level HRM Jobs and their Requirements

In Sri Lanka, several entry level options are available and these options can be grouped into two broad classifications such as generalized way of entry options (e.g. Management Trainee, HR Assistant and HR Clerk) and specialized way of entry options (Training Assistant, Recruitment Assistant, Recruitment Clerk etc.) (See Figure 1).

Figure: 1 Types of Entry-Level Jobs in HRM



I. Generalized way of entry options

1. Management Trainee (MT)

In Sri Lanka, organizations have a practice of selecting young people (with or without experience) as a management trainee to fill the job vacancies (current or future) after giving an adequate training. After comprehensive analysis of collected data Table 2 was constructed. The Table shows eight (08) types of Management Trainee (MT) in the HRM field based on *level of educational qualifications* needed in Sri Lanka. The type that has highest number of vacancies is Management Trainee (Graduate Management Trainee). The next type having the second highest number is Management Trainee (HR/HRM).

Table: 2 Entry-Level HRM Jobs in Sri Lanka-Management Trainee

#	Entry-level HRM jobs in Sri Lanka (Based on Educational Qualifications)	Required Educational Qualifications	Number of Vacancies			Total & (%)
			2006	2007	2008	
MT 1	Management Trainee (Graduate Management Trainee)	Degree Holders from any discipline(including HRM or related to HRM)	24	58	82	164 (51%)

MT 2	Management Trainee (Non-Graduate Management Trainee)	O/L, A/L, Certificate/Diploma holders (including HRM)	04	12	20	36 (11%)
MT 3	Management Trainee-HR/HRM (Graduate)	Degree holders in HRM or related to HRM	22	28	26	76 (24%)
MT 4	Management Trainee-HR/HRM (Non-Graduate)	O/L, A/L, Certificate/Diploma (HRM) holders	06	10	-	16 (5%)
MT 5	HR Trainee/Staff Trainee	O/L, A/L,/any other HRM qualifications	-	10	02	12 (04%)
MT 6	Trainee Executive	A/L	02	06	-	08 (03%)
MT 7	Trainee HR Executive	Certificate/Diploma (HRM) holders	02	02	-	04 (01%)
MT 8	Senior Management Trainee	MBA or Master Degree Holders	-	02	02	04 (01%)
	Total		60	128	132	320

As far as levels of education are concerned, it starts from G. C. E. (O/L) to end up with postgraduate qualification (e.g.: MBA). In between these two levels there are several levels including Bachelor's Degrees in HRM, Business Management, Commerce and other levels such as Certificates, Diploma in HRM that are needed to be possessed by job seekers to apply for management trainees in Sri Lanka. For entry level HRM jobs educational qualification is one of the top requirements to enter into the job. From the employer's/organizational perspective following levels of HRM educational and professional qualifications have been identified from this study:

- G.C.E (O/L) qualification;
- G.C.E (A/L) qualification;
- Certificate level HRM qualifications;
- Diploma level HRM (IPM/NIBM/Other) qualifications;
- Other IPM/NIBM qualifications;
- Professional qualifications in HRM and other Field (CIMA/CIM/ACCA etc.);
- Degree in HRM/related to the HRM; and
- Postgraduate qualifications in HRM/related to the HRM (MBA/PGDM) for Senior Management Trainee.

Regarding entry-level graduate management trainee, the degree in HRM or related to the HRM is one of the leading, well recognized and most frequently stated and expected educational qualifications in Sri Lanka. For entry-level non-graduate management trainee, HRM qualifications which are offered by the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) and National Institute of Business Management (NIBM) seem to be popular among the organizations in Sri Lanka.

Table: 3 Industry and Management Trainee

Types of MTs	Number of Job Advertisements								Total	(%)	
	M T1	M T2	M T3	M T4	M T5	M T6	M T7	M T8			
Industry Group	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F			
Manufacturing, Trading & Retailing	36	06	25	03	03	03	01	01	78	49	
Banking, Finance Insurance & Leasing	16	02	02	-	-	-	-	-	20	13	
Consultancy/HR/Professional Services & Education	09	01	02	01	-	01	01	-	15	09	
Export/Import	04	05	03	-	-	-	-	-	12	08	
Construction	01	01	-	02	01	-	-	-	05	03	
Health Care Services	02	-	03	-	-	-	-	-	05	03	
Hospitality	02	02	01	-	-	-	-	-	05	03	
Telecommunication	03	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	04	03	
Transportation /Travel/Logistics	03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	03	02	
IT	01	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	02	01	
Others	01	01	-	-	01	-	-	-	03	02	
Not Specified	04	-	02	01	01	-	-	-	08	04	
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160	100	
Note: F-Frequency Trainee							Note: MT-Management Trainee				

It was possible to find number of job advertisements under each type of entry level job as per *industry*. Table 3 gives number of job advertisements by industry. It indicates that Manufacturing, Trading and Retailing is the industry that had the highest number of job advertisements. The second is Banking, Finance, Insurance and Leasing and the third being Consultancy/HR/Professional Service and Education.

Table 4 gives number of job advertisements under each type of entry level as *per types of ownership of firms*. According to the Table, Sri Lankan Private Sector organizations had the highest number of job vacancies. The next highest number was in Foreign Companies and then Multi National Companies. One implication is that it is very important to let Sri Lankan Private Sector organizations grow with the Government support so that they expand job opportunities.

Table: 4 Types of Ownership of Firms and Management Trainee

Types of MTs	Number of Job Advertisements								Total	(%)
	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8		
Ownership Group	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
Sri Lankan Private Sector Org.	28	12	20	05	03	01	02	01	72	45
Foreign Company	24	06	03	-	01	01	-	-	35	22
MNCs	10	-	07	-	-	-	-	01	18	11
Joint Venture Companies	05	-	03	01	01	01	-	-	11	07
Sri Lankan Govt. Sector Org.	06	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	07	04

Others	01	-	01	-	-	01	-	-	03	02
Not Specified	08	-	03	02	01	-	-	-	14	09
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160	100
Note: F-Frequency Trainee						Note: MT-Management				

As far as *experience requirement* is concerned, for entry level options most of the organizations do not expect experience from the applicants. They expect to give their own training to mould the trainees into their specific requirements. However there are some organizations that have specified 6-12 or 12 -24 months experience in their job advertisements. A reason is that those organizations are very keen in targeting to attract a trained or well prepared young workforce which has already been developed/ prepared by other firms/organizations (competitors /non-competitors to their organizations). General implication is that it will be an advantage if the person, who expects to enter the field, has a sort of training or exposure to the real world of HRM work for about a period of six months or one year.

Table: 5 Age Limits and Management Trainee

Age Group	Number of Job Advertisements									Total	(%)
	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8			
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F			
21 or Below 21		01								01	01
22 or Below 22	-	01	-	-	01	-	-	-		02	01
23 or Below 23	-	02	-	-	-	-	-	-		02	01
24 or Below 24	01		-	-	01	-	-	-		02	01
25 or Below 25	05	04	02	-	-	02	-	-		13	08
26 or Below 26	03	-	01	01	-	-	01	-		06	04
27 or Below 27	04	-	06	-	-	-	-	-		10	06
28 or Below 28	11	02	07	-	-	-	01	-		21	13
30 or Below 30	17	02	05	02	01	-	-	-		27	17
32 or Below 32	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-		01	01
35 or Below 35	02	-	03	-	-	-	-	-		05	03
Not specified	39	06	13	05	03	02	-	02		70	44
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02		160	100

Table 5 presents *age limits* required for Management Trainee. Accordingly minimum age for a person to apply for the post of Management Trainee seems to be 21 and maximum age is 35. Most frequently required age is 30 or below 30. There were 70 job advertisements which had no specified age limit. However it seems that an organization recruits a person who is young not matured or old to work in the capacity of Management Trainee who is supposed to take the business into the future as a future manager.

People who get university admission will take four years studies (for special degrees) and if there is no any system delay or personal delay they can complete their studies at the age of 23 years old or 24 years old generally in Sri Lanka, and after that they will be ready to be absorbed by the industry. For a non-graduate management trainee (common) and a non-graduate management trainee in HR/HRM, most of the organizations expect 25 or below 25 as an age limit. For a

graduate management trainee (common), and a graduate management trainee in HR/HRM, most of the organizations expect 28-30 as the age limit. An important implication is that an undergraduate has to become a graduate before his or her age of 30 to enter as a Management Trainee in Sri Lanka.

Table: 6 Gender and Management Trainee

Gender	Number of Job Advertisements									
	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8	Total	(%)
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
Male/Female	78	17	35	07	05	04	01	02	149	93
Male Only	03	01	03	01	-	-	-	-	08	05
Female Only	01	-	-	-	01	-	01	-	03	02
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160	100
Note: F-Frequency Trainee						Note: MT-Management Trainee				

It is possible to see a gender bias for some jobs in industries. As far as HRM entry level jobs are concerned it seems no gender bias. The above Table shows the gender pattern of Management Trainees in Sri Lanka. There were job advertisements exclusively for males and exclusively for females but the numbers were small, 08 and 03 respectively within the three years under study. 149 job advertisements were not gender biased implying that organisations do not discriminate candidates in terms of gender which is a good practice in Sri Lanka where a large number of females are studying management related educational and professional programmes.

Table 7 presents nature of *place preference* and Management Trainee. Out of 160 job advertisements 48 advertisements (about 30%) had specified place preference. Thus many organizations do not specify place preference when hiring people for MT considering the entire Sri Lanka as the employee market. However there are a considerable number of organizations which expect the candidates who become eligible to apply for management trainees job vacancies if they are living permanently closer to their company/factory/workplace. Explicitly they mentioned 20 KM (radius) away from their workplace in order to reduce traveling problems, late attendance and imbalance between work life and family life.

Table: 7 Workplace Preference and Management Trainee

Place	Number of Job Advertisements								
	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8	Total
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	
Colombo	-	01	03	01	-	-	-	-	05
Panadura	02	-	-	-	-	02	-	-	04
Nittambuwa	01	-	01	01	-	-	-	-	03
Wattala	03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	03
Avissawella	03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	03
Kaduwela	-	-	02	-	01	-	-	-	03
Kandy	-	01	01	01	-	-	-	-	03
Gampaha	01	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	02
Katunayake	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	02

Ratmalana	-	-	02	-	-	-	-	-	02
Maharagama	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Battarmulla	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Welisara	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Makandura	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Pepiliyana	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Galle	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Puttlam	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Biyagama	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Pamunugama	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Hanwella	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Karagoda	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Pannipitiya	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Ekala	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Dambulla	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Wathupitiwala	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	01
Piliyandala	-	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	01
Any part of the country	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Saudi Arabia (Foreign)	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Not specified	64	12	21	05	04	02	02	02	112
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160
Note: F-Frequency Trainee	Note: MT-Management								

Table: 8 Payment/Allowance and Management Trainee

Payment Range	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8	Total	(%)
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
Rs.00,000	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Rs.15,000	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Rs.20,000	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Rs.25,000	02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	02	1.2
Rs.45,000	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Rs.50,000	01	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	02	1.2
Rs.52,800 (USD 480)	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Not Specified	75	18	37	07	06	04	02	02	151	94.1
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160	100
Note: F-Frequency Trainee	Note: MT-Management									

For any job *pay* is an important factor for attracting best/appropriate people to fill vacancies in an organization. The above Table 8 was constructed by using available data about pay/allowance and MT. During the training and development period organizations have a practice of rewarding with reasonable or generous training allowances or payments. In Sri Lanka it may vary from Rs.15,000 to 50,000 depending on size, financial strength, market share of organization and its industry norms/standards. Next section will present placement process and conditions for MT.

Placement Process and Conditions-Management Trainee

Selection Procedure and Mode of Selection

In Sri Lanka based on candidates' performance [(after conducting competitive written examinations, subsequent interview(s), group work, presentation and in some cases medical examination)] organizations select appropriate candidates for the post of management trainee competitively. This placement process consists of several steps and conditions.

Selection Approaches

Profound data mining and diligent investigation (content analysis) of the collected data have revealed two (02) hidden approaches being followed by the organizations in Sri Lanka. Those approaches are roughly termed as (1) "Generalization to Specialization Approach/General Approach (Approach-I)" and (2) "Specialization to Specialization Approach/Specific Approach (Approach-II)".

Generalization to Specialization Approach/ General Approach (Approach-I)

According to this approach, an organization in Sri Lanka selects a pool of trainees as management trainees from any academic discipline/stream and then processes (trains) them through a very serious training and development programme, finally selects and appoints right trainees in a right department/division/section based on their performance.

Specialization to Specialization Approach/ Specific Approach (Approach-II)

In this approach, to select a pool of trainees as management trainees from a specialized academic discipline/stream and then to process (train) them through a very serious specialized training and development programme, to finally select and appoint right trainees in that specialized department/division/section based on their performance occur. Exhibit 1 differentiates between the two initial selection approaches.

Exhibit: 1 Comparison between Two Selection Approaches

#	Generalization to Specialization Approach (Approach-I)	Specialization to Specialization Approach (Approach-II)
1	To select best/appropriate candidates from different streams/disciplines	To select best/appropriate candidates from a specialized/single stream/discipline
2	Used by larger/very large organizations (Conglomerate involved in diversified sector/Group of companies)	Used by small/medium size organizations
3	After the initial selection the trainees are not assigned to a particular division or department	After the initial selection the trainees are assigned to a particular division or department(e.g. HRM)
4	To provide training in all the functional areas/fields by using job rotation technique among the various functions within a reasonable time period (exposing trainees to more than one field)	To provide training in the selected functional area/field by using various training methods such as on-the-job training, case studies, assignments etc. (exposing trainees to one selected field only)
5	During the T&D period, the trainees will be given an exposure to the activities of all departments/divisions	During the T&D period, the trainees will be given an exposure only to an area to which they have been selected initially

6	To observe and record trainees' performance and involvement in all the areas during the transformation/training period	To observe and record trainees' performance and involvement in that specific/particular functional area during the transformation/training period (e.g. HRM)
7	Finally (if organization is satisfied) assign/appoint to a suitable/best fit division/functional field (specialized) based on their performance during the T&D period and observed interest.	Finally (if organization is satisfied) assign/appoint to a specific functional field (for which they have been initially selected) based on their performance during the T&D period.

Table: 9 Period of T & D Programme and Management Trainees

Time Frame	Number of Job Advertisements									
	MT1	MT2	MT3	MT4	MT5	MT6	MT7	MT8	Total	I (%)
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
06 Months	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	02	1.2
12 Months	11	-	06	-	01	-	-	-	18	11.0
15 Months	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
18 Months	01	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	02	1.2
21 Months	-	-	02	-	-	-	-	-	02	1.2
24 Months	06	-	01	01	-	-	-	-	08	5.0
48 Months	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.7
Specified about training but not mentioned about duration	09	04	07	01	-	01	-	-	22	14
Not specified	53	12	21	06	05	03	02	02	104	65
Total	82	18	38	08	06	04	02	02	160	100
Note: F-Frequency Trainee						Note: MT-Management				

Period of T & D Programme

After selection the candidates who are selected as management trainees in the HRM or related to the HRM will have to undergo a period of one (01) or two years (02) of comprehensive training and development programme in all aspects based on organizations' needs.

Training Period/Duration

As per Table 9, there are organizations numbering 104 (out of 160) which have not specified about training and time frame. 22 organizations have specified about training but not mentioned about the duration. 18 organizations have specified a training of one year duration.

Contents of T & D Programme

This comprehensive training and development programme content consists of several components. Exhibit 2 presents its components.

Exhibit: 2 Contents of T & D Programme

-
-
- Leadership development
 - Career counselling and mentoring
 - Skills and competency development
 - Providing exposure to the organization (culture, philosophies, vision and operational strategies)
 - Providing exposure to the business and industry
 - Providing exposure to the business environment and environmental sustainability
 - Providing exposure to the business activities
 - Providing exposure to functional areas of business
 - Providing a better understanding of operational aspects of business
 - Training how to work with senior business leaders or organizational members
 - Providing theoretical aspects and knowledge
 - Providing training on job related technical aspects
 - Providing working knowledge on various disciplines of management across group businesses
 - Providing training to generate confidence to succeed in a complex business environment
 - Providing opportunities to familiarize organizational culture and other aspects
-
-

In General, organizations used workshops, seminars, in-house training sessions, field training, on-the-job training, off-the-job training and lectures as key methods in implementing their comprehensive training and development programme. In Sri Lanka, some organizations have a practice of entering into a bond/agreement with the trainee in order to keep him/her within the organization for a certain period (at least to cover the training cost) or in other words prevent him/her from leaving the organization after gaining the training immediately.

On successful completion of training and development programme best fitted trainees are absorbed into the permanent staff based on his/her performance and interest during the training and development period and cadre needs of the division/organizations. But some organizations again use written examinations, interview and evaluation of performance during the training period or probation period or after that in order to confirm them on the permanent positions.

Positions after the Successful Completion of T & D Programme

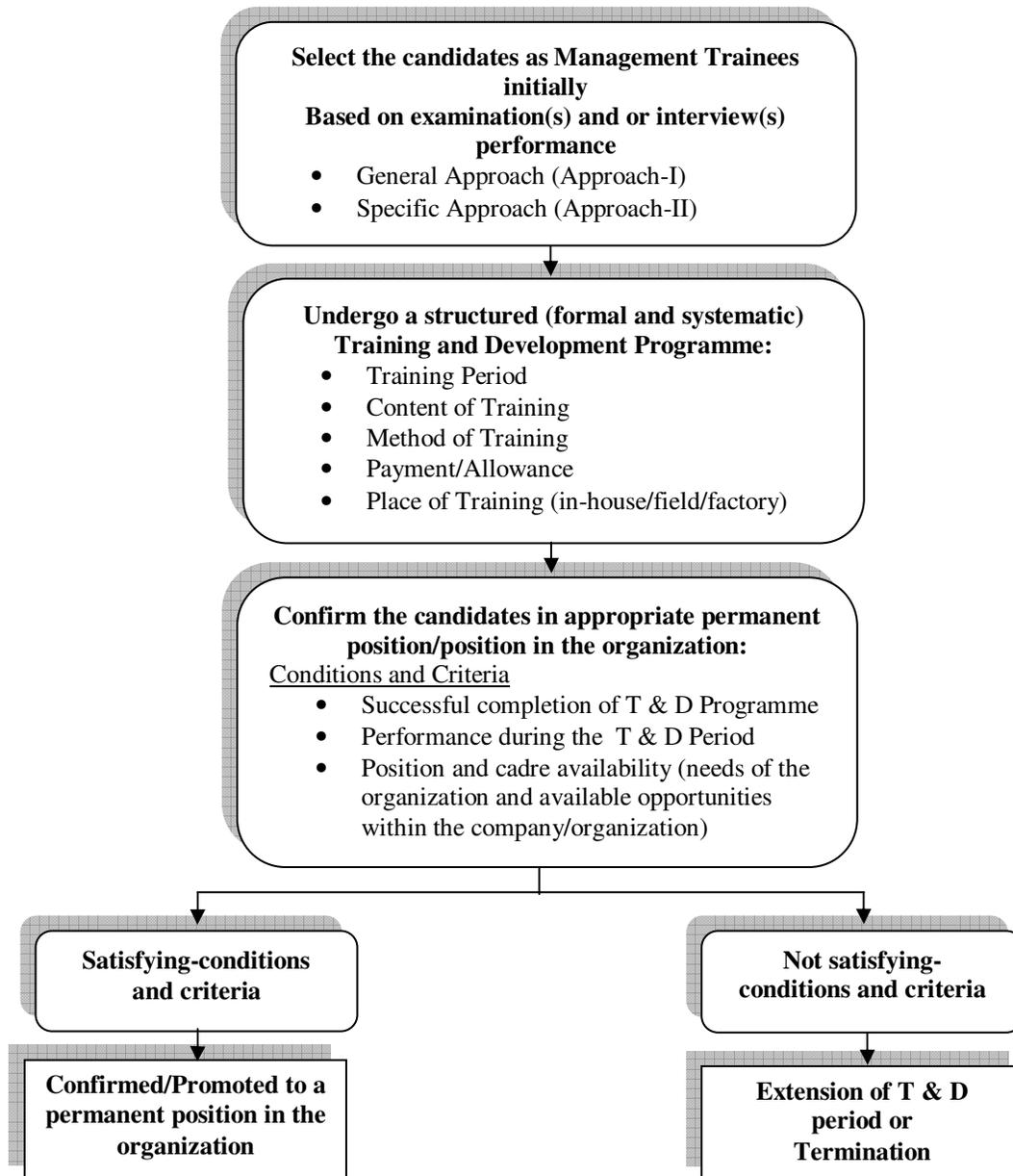
After the successful completion of training and development programme, organizations provide job/position opportunities which are given in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit: 3 Positions after the Successful Completion of T & D Programme

-
-
- Permanent Position as Management Trainee
 - Junior Management Position/Junior Manager
 - Management Position
 - Staff Officer Grade
 - Assistant Manager
 - Junior Level Executive
 - Executive Level/Grade Position
 - Senior Management Position
 - Middle Management Position

If a candidate fails to complete his/her training and development programme successfully, his or her training and development period may be extended or terminated by the organization. Figure 2 was developed in order to show the placement process and conditions of management trainee in Sri Lanka.

Figure: 2 Placement Process and Conditions: Management Trainee



Personal Qualities/Characteristics/Attributes and Management Trainee

As far as management trainees in HRM or related to the HRM are concerned, 101 personal qualities/characteristics/attributes were identified from this study. The following Tables numbering from 10 to 17 list those attributes (**count** means number of time mentioned in the job

advertisements) under the eight (08) types of major qualities/attributes such as leadership, performance achievement, attitude, personality, good character, physical character, team orientation and business related. Accordingly dynamic, young, challenge-enable/willing to take challenges, self-motivated/relentless self-motivations and team player/excellent team player are the top five key personal qualities/characteristics/attributes expected by the organizations. Regarding expected personal qualities/attributes, the highest count indicates the most demanded attribute. For example, dynamism is the most demanded trait under the type of leadership quality.

Table: 10 Leadership Traits/Qualities

Attributes	Count	Attributes	Count
Dynamic/Dynamism	64	Highly Motivated	04
Challenge-Enabled/Willing to Take Challenges	28	Self Starter	03
Self-Motivated/Relentless Self-Motivations	25	Resilient Individual	03
Passion	15	Independent	03
Experienced	13	Focused	02
Enthusiastic/Enthusiasm	12	Proactive	02
Innovative	11	Flexible	01
Dedicated/Unconditioned Dedication/Spirit of Dedication	10	Demonstrated Leadership	01
Confident/Self-Confident	10	Forward Looking	01
Drive/Self Driven	10	High Energy	01
Remarkable Initiative/Initiative	08	Look-out for Ambitious	01
Leadership Qualities	07	Want to Change the World	01
Vision/Ambition	07	Practical Thinking	01
Excellent Communicator	06	Bright Sparks	01
Willingness to Accept Responsibility/ Highly Responsible	06	Helping to Shape the Future of the Company	01
Creativity/Creative	04	Responsible	01
Determination/A Striving Determination to Deliver Results	04	Leadership Role	01

Table: 11 Performance Achievement

Attributes	Count	Attributes	Count
High Degree of Professionalism	22	Versatile	02
Commitment/Committed	21	Willing to listen, learn, observe & absorb	02
Result Oriented	19	Strong Desire to Develop and Grow	02
Energetic/Highly-Energetic	17	High Performing/High Performance	02
Superior or Impressive Academic Track Record	13	Efficient	02
Willing to Work Extra Hours	13	Intelligence	02
Strong & Genuine Desire to Achieve	12	Excellent/Excellent Spirit	02
Excellent Extra Curricular Records/ Activities	09	Exciting	01
Hardworking/Willing to Work Hard	08	Willing to Take the Plunge	01
Exceptional	06	Vibrant	01

Talented	06	Well-Rounded Individual	01
Achievement in Sports	06	Good Aptitude	01
High Caliber/Top Caliber Achievers	04	Competent	01
Strong Desire to Succeed/Genuine Desire	06	Willingness to Contribute	01
Suitably Qualified	03	Vibrant	01
Outstanding	03	Higher Level of Achievement	01

Table: 12 Attitudes Related

Attributes	Count
Positive Attitude	09
Right Attitude	03
Positive Outlook	03
Solution Oriented Work Attitude	03
Positive Thinking/Absolutely Positive Thinking	02
Open door Attitude	02
Out of Box Professional Attitudes	02
"Nothing is Impossible" Attitude	01
Ethical Minded Professional	01
Excellent Judgment	01
Positive Mindset to Learn and Grow	01

Table: 13 Personality Related

Attributes	Count
Outgoing Personality	05
Unique	03
Self Driven	02
A Strong Drive in Implementation	01
Pleasing Personality	01
Pleasant Personality	01
Assertive	01
Diverse	01

Table: 14 Good Character (Virtue) Related

Attributes	Count
Integrity/A high Level of Integrity	04
Well Disciplined	03
Patience	01
Honest	01
Participation in Social & Public Activity	01
Organized	01

Table: 15 Physical Character Related

Attributes	Count
Young	37
Smart/Work Smarter	05
In Excellent Health	01
Right Fitting	01

Table: 16 Team Orientation Related

Attributes	Count
Team Player/Excellent Team Player	23
Team Work/Team Working	14
Team Spirit/Team Oriented	07

Table: 17 Business Related

Attributes	Count
Career Oriented	04
Service Oriented	02
Customer Oriented	01

Table: 18 Types of Abilities/Skills/Competencies and Management Trainee

#	Types of Skills/Competencies	Count	#	Types of Skills/Competencies	Count
01	Communication Skills	90	16	Organizational Skills	02
02	Computer Literacy/IT skills	64	17	Ability to Manage Multiple Tasks Effectively and Efficiently	02
03	Interpersonal Skills	24	18	Planning and Organization Skills	02
04	Analytical Skills	11	19	Ability to See the Big Picture	02
05	Human Relation Skills	08	20	Report Writing Competency	02
06	Leadership Skills	08	21	Logical Reasoning Skills	01
07	Ability to Work Long Hours	07	22	Ability to be Visionary	01
08	Public Relation Skills	06	23	Ability to Handle Multiple Priorities	01
09	Presentation Skills	05	24	Supervision Skills	01
10	Ability to Work Independently	03	25	Managerial Skills	01

11	Ability to Work Under Stress	03	26	Relationship Building Skills	01
12	Ability to Work in a Team	03	27	Negotiation Skills	01
13	Numerical Skills	02	28	Life Skills	01
14	Ability to Self-Start	02	29	Conceptual Skills	01
15	Decision Making Skills	02	Note-1: (Count-Number of time mentioned in the job ads.).		

Competencies/Skills/Abilities and Management Trainee

From the collected data, 29 types of abilities/skills/competencies have been identified and they are indicated in Table 18. According to the Table, the most highly demanded competence is communication skills. IT skills, interpersonal skills and analytical skills are other very important competency requirements.

By using content analysis, lists of competencies were developed for all types of management trainee. After studying those 29 types of abilities/skills/competencies, the top six competencies expected by the organizations from a management trainee are communications skills, computer literacy/IT skills, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, human relations skills and leadership skills. The individuals who have planned to enter into the HRM field must develop those types of abilities/skills/competencies which are valued by the organizations/employers in Sri Lanka.

According to management expert, Bruce Kaufman (As in Kleiman, 1997) Companies want entry-level HRM candidates to possess:

- Leadership and management skills;
- Cross-functional HRM expertise (for generalist positions);
- Technical skills (e.g., computers, management information systems);
- Knowledge of international HRM issues; and
- Knowledge of business basics (i.e., accounting, finance, marketing, management, and economics).

Therefore, based on Bruce Kaufman literature, it is possible to reach a conclusion that these are some of the key aspects for the candidates who are seeking jobs in the HRM field at entry-level. Based on this study, in the Sri Lankan context, out of 29 skills, communication skills, computer literacy/IT skills, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, human relations skills, leadership skills, ability to work long hours, public relation skills, presentation skills and ability to work independently are the top ten skills companies expect from entry-level HRM candidates.

In Sri Lanka, cross-functional HRM expertise (for generalist positions), knowledge of international HRM issues and knowledge of business basics (i.e., accounting, finance, marketing, management, and economics) which were mentioned by Bruce Kaufman are normally included in HRM specialised degrees offered by the leading Sri Lankan universities' HRM departments. Therefore, there were no significant differences between the results of this study and the view of Bruce Kaufman.

Apart from the Management Trainees, HR Assistant and HR Clerk can also be considered as generalized way of entry options in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka because some organizations expect to fulfill these HRM job vacancies with or without experience.

2. HR Assistant

HR Assistant is one of the most frequent HRM job opportunities in Sri Lanka. In addition to certain HRM qualifications (such as certificate/diploma level qualifications) G.C.E (O/L) or G.C.E (A/L) qualifications are also needed to secure the HR assistant job opportunities in Sri Lanka. After the entry, candidates are able to go to higher levels of career in the HRM career ladder by expanding his/her HRM educational qualifications, in addition to gaining experience and his/her enthusiasm in the HRM field.

3. HR Clerk

Same as HR Assistant, HR Clerk is also an operational level as well as entry level HRM job option in Sri Lanka. Depending on job performance and enthusiasm in the HRM field/career, he/she is able to climb the HRM career ladder step by step by enhancing his/her job competencies and education(See Table 19).

Table: 19 HR Assistant and HR Clerk

Year	Number of Job Vacancies			
	2006	2007	2008	Total
HR /Staff Assistant	34	76	74	184
HR Clerk	13	25	28	66

In addition, certain job advertisements of the organisations for HR Executives in Sri Lanka expect the appropriate candidates without experience. They only expect the required knowledge supported by recognized HRM education. These types of opportunities can also be treated as generalized way of entry options in the field of HRM in Sri Lanka.

II. Specialized way of entry options

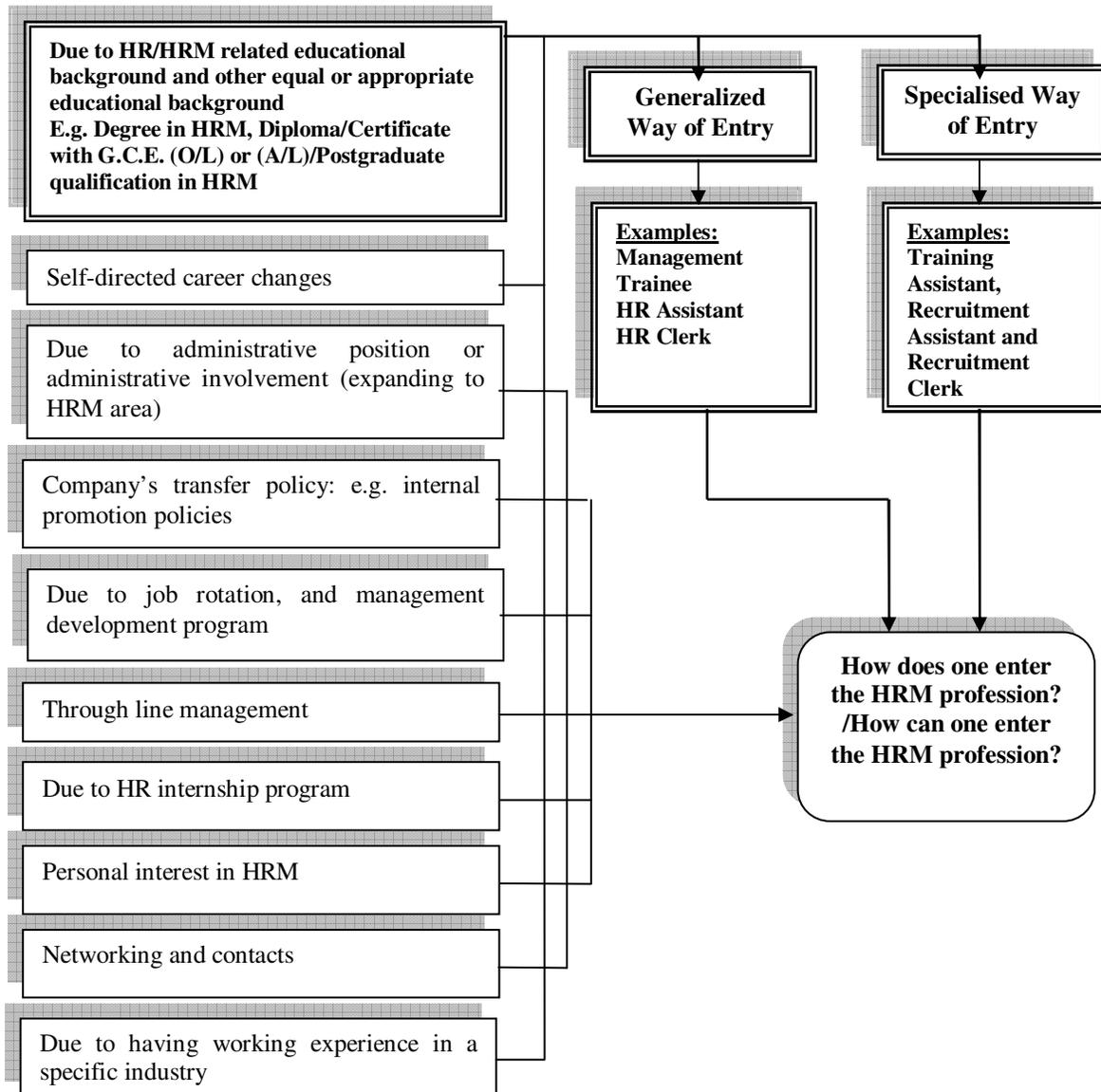
In Sri Lanka, there are few job titles in entry level specialization areas of HRM such as training and development, recruitment, pay management etc. Out of these jobs certain jobs can be figured out as entry-level HRM jobs in those specialized areas. The interesting candidates can join those areas by substantiating their specific and formal HRM qualifications or showing with some little exposure or some previous volunteer work/temporary assignment or by qualifying certain relevant academic/professional courses on those areas. Some of these specialized ways of entry options are listed in the Exhibit 4.

Exhibit: 4 Specialized Way of Entry Options

Entry Options	Specialized Areas
Training Assistant	HR Development
Recruitment Clerk	Staffing
Payroll Clerk	Rewards Management
Staff Relation Clerk	Emp. and Labour Relations
Trainee–Counsellor	Emp. and Labour Relations

A sort of model is presented to give an answer for the question: how does one enter the HRM profession? Or how can one enter the HRM profession? Out of the 10 possible ways of entry options shown in the Figure, this study was mainly dealt with the first one, i.e. Due to HRM/Related educational background (e.g. Degree in HRM, postgraduate qualification in HRM). The results of this study confirmed that HRM related educational background (degree or related) leads to generalized and specialised way of entry options into the HRM field in Sri Lanka. In the generalized way of entry options the Management Trainee option (graduate or non-graduate) is one of the leading options found in this study in the Sri Lankan context.

Figure 3 Possible Ways of Entry Options into the HRM Field



Limitations

The data for this study were collected from the organizations' job advertisements appeared in Sunday Observer newspaper. There may be other formal recruitment methods as well as informal methods which were not considered. In addition, the data used in this study were secondary only. Therefore, avenues for further investigation by collecting primary data sources are also possible. By collecting primary data, it can further strengthen the results and findings of this study.

Future Research Directions

Based on this study, comprehensive studies on HRM education in Sri Lanka, HRM job experience, competencies needed for HRM professionals, personal characteristics of HRM professionals and entry-level HRM jobs could be conducted in the future. Another interesting avenue for future research is to conduct studies of similar nature in Marketing, Accounting, Finance, and Information Technology or in any other area.

Conclusion

There are 23 entry-level HRM job opportunities available in Sri Lanka but all jobs are not frequently demanded by organizations. Frequently demanded entry level HRM jobs are Management Trainee, HR Assistant and Personal Clerk while Management Trainee being the most frequently demand one. There is a practice of selecting young people (with or without experience) as Management Trainee to fill job vacancies after giving a sufficient training, being followed by Sri Lankan organizations. With regard to entry-level graduate management trainee (HR), the degree in HRM or relating to HRM is one of the leading, well recognized and most frequently stated and expected educational qualifications in Sri Lanka.

Manufacturing, Trading and Retailing is the industry that had the highest number of job advertisements. Sri Lankan Private Sector organizations had the highest number of job vacancies and the next highest number was in Foreign Companies and then Multi National Companies. Most of the organizations do not expect experience (previous) from the applicants for MT. Most frequently required age for MT is 30 or below 30. It seems no gender bias in respect of HRM entry level jobs. There is no place preference specified by many organizations when hiring people for MT by considering the entire Sri Lanka as the market. Pay per month for MT may vary from Rs.15,000 to 50,000. Placement process of MT consists of several steps and conditions. There are specific qualities and competencies required from candidates by organizations.

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