

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

***AN INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT
PRACTICES IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS
IN REGION FOUR, GUYANA***

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Executive Summary

This study sought to investigate and review employment practices in the public and private sectors in Region Four, Guyana. The research was also conducted to determine whether over the five year period, August 2001-August 2006, there has been equitable distribution of employment to the different ethnic groups in Guyana.

In order to fulfil the purpose of this research, the following questions were posed:

- What ratio of the various ethnic groups, comprise the current staff within the various employment sectors in Region Four?
- What proportion of staff by ethnic groups, have been recruited and exited the various sectors in Region Four, over the period August 2001-August 2006?
- What policies exist within the participating organizations and the extent to which policies are utilized?
- What activities, processes and procedures were carried out in the procurement and termination of staff in the public and private sectors in Region Four, Guyana?

The data analysed in this study was derived from the results of surveys carried out in fourteen organizations in Region Four, Guyana. The organizations constituted the public and private sectors and the trade union. Current staff lists, employment records of incoming and outgoing staff and reasons for employees exit were examined for the period August 2001 to August 2006. Data from the Ministry of labour, Industrial Department was also examined. Questionnaire surveys were done of one human resource personnel practitioner representing each participating organization.

Stratified random sampling and surveys of employees were conducted in the various organizations. Sampling was based on sector, ethnicity and gender. Of the organizations that

consented to participate in the research, approximately 71% of the human resource personnel practitioners returned their questionnaires, while 74% of employees did likewise.

Research data revealed that Africans predominate all the sectors, public, private and trade union in region four, consistent with the regional population distribution statistics.

Analysis of staff levels was carried out, based on a four-tier structure. The data suggests that, in the public sector a higher proportion of East Indians occupies positions at the Senior, Middle and First levels than Africans, the majority of whom occupy Ancillary positions.

The data also suggests that Amerindians occupy positions at the Senior, Middle and First levels, but not at the Ancillary level. The Mixed race seems to be in a position similar to Africans. Fifty percent of them occupy Ancillary level positions while approximately 17% occupy positions in each of the upper levels (Senior, Middle and First). On the other hand, the “Other” group occupy positions at two levels only, (Senior and First) 50% at each level.

In the private sector, higher proportions of Africans occupy the highest categories of positions. Senior, Middle and First, compared to the East Indians, where the finding indicates the reverse. In this sector, the proportions for Africans are 11%, 12% and 24% in comparison to 7%, 7.9% and 22.8% for the East Indians at the three highest levels. The proportions in respect of Ancillary staff, is 62% for East Indians and only 53% for Africans. Amerindians in the private sector, were in a position similar to that of the “Other” group in the public sector, in which they seem to occupy only two positions, the first level with a lower proportion of 37.5%, and the majority (62.5%) occupied positions at the Ancillary level.

More of the Mixed race occupies positions at the Middle level (34%) than at the other levels in the private sector. Equal proportions of them (the Mixed Race) occupy positions at the senior (23%) and first levels (23%), than at the Ancillary (20%) level. The Other group occupies

the same two positions in the private sector as they did in the public sector. The majority (67%) being at the Senior level and the remaining 33% at the First level.

In the Trade Union organisations, the majority of East Indians occupy First level positions, followed by Senior and Ancillary on an equal basis of 17% each. For the Africans, a substantial proportion, occupies First and Senior level positions. The smallest proportion of Africans occupies the Ancillary positions in trade union organizations. Notably, Amerindians and the "Other" group seem to occupy the Senior level positions (100%). Equal proportions (25%) of the Mixed Race occupy positions at each level.

With respect to Employee Intake over the period August 2001 to August 2006, research data signifies a change in the recruitment pattern among the two dominant ethnic groups within the society. Traditionally and up until 1992 Africans accounted for the group with the majority occupying regular positions. However, the data suggests a change in this trend in the public and private sectors and Trade Union organisations in Region Four.

The data shows that East Indians account for the overall highest proportion of persons who were recruited in the sectors in Region Four between August 2001 and August 2006. A total of 665 East Indians were recruited accounting for approximately 50% of those recruited in the Region compared to 621 or 47% Africans.

With respect to individual sectors, a larger proportion of Africans (approximately 22%) were recruited in the Public Sector, compared to East Indians, (approximately 17%). The East Indians however comprise a larger proportion of employees recruited to the private sector (74%) compared to persons of African decent (68.6%). The East Indians also account for a slightly higher proportion recruited to Trade Union organisations when compared to Africans.

With respect to the smaller ethnic groups, the intake among the Amerindians in the Public Sector and Trade Union organisations has been zero percent (0%). All Amerindians recruited in that period in organisations in Region Four, seems to be in private sector. Eight (8) persons, accounting for .6% of the total number of persons recruited to the participating organisations were Amerindians. The majority of the Mixed Race and Other were similarly recruited in the Private Sector.

The majority of employees that exited organizations seem to be of African descent. The data showed that 87% Africans exited the private sector compared to 83% East Indians. Persons from neither of the other races seemed to have exited, either in the public sector or in Trade Union organisations in Region Four during the period August 2001 to August 2006. However, 1 Portuguese, 1 Chinese and 21 persons from the Mixed Group also exited private sector organisations in the Region.

The most substantial proportion of persons who exited their employ in the private sector during the period August 2001 to August 2006 had their services terminated. Dismissal/termination was also the single most common complaint that engaged the Ministry of Labour Industrial department, during the said period. The Ministry received 1,812 such complaints over the five year period, while 49% of private sector employees had their services terminated in the same period.

The characteristics of the participant human resource personnel practitioners confirmed a strong African presence in regulatory jobs. It indicated a high proportion of females in the human resource/personnel sections of the public and private sectors, though not necessarily in trade union organizations in Region Four.

The research data showed that the majority of organizations in the public and private sectors and trade union in Region Four, have policies to address recruitment, promotion, appraisals, transfers and termination of services. However, policies to address non-discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity seem to be lacking in a large proportion of organizations.

The majority of organizations did not “Very Often” follow the policies of recruitment, promotion, appraisals, transfers and termination to guide their organizations’ recruitment and promotional practices.

Employers have differing positions on the notion that some employers have a tendency of hiring people of their own race first, even though a substantial proportion of them strongly agree. The majority of the public sector employers “strongly agree”.

An overall majority of the human resources personnel practitioners strongly agree that employers should attempt to employ all racial groups.

The majority of human resource personnel practitioners never assigned positions to persons based on social characteristics of age, religion, sex nor ethnicity. Only 33% in the public sector assign positions based on age and sex.

At least half (50%) of the human resource personnel practitioners use special criteria for placing applicants. The trade union representative also attested to this as well as 67% of the practitioners in the private sector.

None of the participating organizations in the public and private sectors or trade union organizations seems to utilized social characteristics of marital status, ethnicity nor religion as a requirement for employment. However 20% use gender/sex as a requirement, accounting for 33% public sector and 17% private sector organizations. An overall forty percent also use age, representing 67% public sector and 33% private sector.

Research data further suggests that Human resource personnel practitioners in the public and private sector and trade union organizations have never received complaints from employees, of denial of favourable career move due to age, race, religion, marital status or disability.

The majority of the organizations in the private sector in region four do have procedures for addressing reports of disciplinary matters, grievances, absence due to sickness, pregnancy benefits and exit notices. However, the majority (83%) of them do not have procedures for addressing discrimination.

The majority of organizations in the public sector have procedures for addressing reports of disciplinary matters and absence due to sickness or other reasons, (67% each) but the majority of them on the other hand are without procedures for addressing grievances, pregnancy benefits, and exit notices. Only 33% have such procedures while 33% in each case did not state whether or not their organizations had such procedures. On the other hand, no organization in the public sector has procedures for addressing reports of discrimination. Thirty-three percent (1) human resource personnel practitioner did not state whether his/her organization had procedures for dealing with discrimination.

The representative of the trade union organization (100%) stated that their organizations had procedures for addressing each of the reports, namely, discrimination, disciplinary matters, grievances, absence due to sickness, pregnancy benefits and exit notices.

None of the human resource personnel practitioners in any of the sectors (100%) in Region four seemed to have ever received complaints from employees that they were discriminated on grounds of pay, marital/parental status, age, bullying, sex/gender, disability, religion, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, national origin or any other areas of discrimination.

The majority of the participating organizations in the public and private sectors and trade union in region four have human resource departments in their organizations. Thirty percent did not have, accounting for 33% in the public sector and 33% in the private sector.

In terms of the recruitment process, five most frequently utilized steps in the recruitment process, are as follows.

Public Sector

- Step 1: Write the respective section or officer to seek permission to fill the vacancy.
- Step 2: Advertise internally/send out internal circulars. Do public advertisement.
- Step 3: Shortlist for interview; send the applications to the respective section or Officer.
- Step 4: Conduct interviews; issue internal circulars.
- Step 5: Select the most suitable candidate; wait for the respective sector/Officer to send the suitable candidate.

Private Sector

- Step 1: Advertise internally or promote internally in keeping with the agreed succession plan of the organization, or inform the respective Officer, seeking permission to fill the vacancy or conduct job analysis.
- Step 2: Transfer someone to fill the vacancy or peruse previous applications; advertise externally or internally.
- Step 3: Advertise externally, check with training institutions or advertise internally.
- Step 4: External advertisement is done or Interviews are conducted.
- Step 5: Recruit or do “single source selection”.

It appears that the recruitment process varies from organization to organization and from sector to sector. In analysis of the first five steps representatives of the human resource management and personnel departments stated that they would follow in recruiting new staff, seem to verify this fact.

Frequently utilized recruitment methods grouped by choice of respondents in the sectors.

Public Sector

Internal Advertisement, walk-ins and Recommendation

Media Advertisement

Media Advertisement, Resumes and Recommendation

Private Sector

Media Advertisement and Resumes

Media Advertisement, Internal Advertisement and Resumes

Internal Advertisement, Media Advertisement and Resumes

Internal Advertisement, Walk-ins, Word of mouth and Referrals

Resumes, Media Advertisement, and Recommendations

Trade Union

Internal Advertisement

The two most common procedures utilized in selecting recruits are interviews and panel interviews (40%) each. The other method used is interviews and aptitude tests (20%).

At least half (50%) of the organizations in the participating sectors encourage speculative job enquiries; a substantial proportion (40%) never does while 10% always does.

The majority of organizations in the participating sectors use assessment forms in their recruitment process. This represents the trade union organization (100%), private sector organizations (83%) and public sector organizations (67%).

The majority of the participating organizations in region four shortlist applicants in the recruitment process. Half (50%) of the participating organizations (50%) use panel interviews as a shortlisting procedure, 20% use application forms and 10 percent oral/written tests.

An overall majority (70%) of the public, private and trade union organizations in Region four use job descriptions in their recruitment process.

Human resource personnel practitioners issue job descriptions, mainly before the interview (30%) and at the selection/appointment/promotion stage (30%). Twenty percent issue at the interview and the other 20% at other times.

Half (50%) of the participating organizations “Sometimes” carry out test for knowledge, skills and abilities important for job performance. Thirty percent of them conduct such tests “always” and 20% never does.

Half (50%) of the organizations that participated in this study “always” require some educational background not directly related to one’s job. Thirty percent of them never have this requirement, though 20% sometimes require such educational background.

Organizations utilize certain criteria to determine final selection I a case where there are two equally qualified applicants for a position. They are as follows:

Private sector:

Knowing the organization 16.6 %
Experience, fitness and personality 16.6 %
The situation was never faced. 16.6 %
Appointments done by respective department. 16.6 %
Not stated. 33.3 %

Public sector

Age, other competing personal activities, adaptability, availability to work beyond the normal call of duty. 33.3 %
Seniority, qualification (management level), suitability 33.3 %
Not stated. 33.3 %

Trade union

Apply seniority and test. - 100%

Organizations consider the following factors in carrying out employee appraisals:

Private Sector:

50 %	Performance, conduct, ability, aptitude and attitude.
16.6 %	Experience, fitness and personality
16.6%	Performance
16.6 %	No appraisals done within organization

Public Sector Age, other competing personal activities, adaptability, availability to work beyond the normal call of duty.

67.0% Seniority, qualification (management level), suitability

33 % Performance – 100%

Trade Union

Organizations have advanced the following reasons for employees Exit:

Public sector

Compulsory retirement and resignation or transfer - 33.3 %

End of employment contract - 33.3 %

Not stated - 33.3 %

Private Sector

Dismissal as a consequence of disciplinary action, compulsory retirement and retirement or resignation on medical grounds - 16.6 %

Retirement or resignation on medical grounds - 16.6 %

Compulsory and voluntary retirement - 16.6 %

Dismissal as a consequence of disciplinary action and compulsory retirement - 16.6 %

Other –namely: migration, job change and disability - 33.3 %

voluntary retirement. 100%

Trade Union

Voluntary retirement - 100%

Employees' ages ranged from below 20 to approximately 54 years old. The trade union employees were the youngest while the employees in the private sector were the oldest. The majority of the employees were of the single marital status (53%). The majority of the employees were Christian.

The most common recruitment methods through which employees were recruited were "Recommendation (20%) followed by "Resume (17%) and "walk-ins" (17%).

Employees in the participating organizations in Region Four stated that the most common basis of employees' selection was academic qualification (42%) more than any other. This accounted for the opinion of 62% in the public sector, 34% in the private sector and 20% trade union workers.

The majority (84%) of the employees in the participating sectors believed that neither age, sex nor other social characteristics were requirements for their jobs. This accounted for all the respondents (100%) in the trade union, 86% in the private sector and 76% in the public sector.

All (100%) respondents in the private sector felt they were overlooked for scholarship and transfer, while a large majority of them felt they were overlooked for promotion (83%) and training (60%). The employees in the trade union organizations felt they were not overlooked for any of those benefits.

Employees in the participating organizations, who felt they were overlooked, advanced a number of reasons for their experiences. The most commonly occurring reason was "interpersonal relations" (26%). Eighty percent of them were private sector employees and the other 20% public

sector.

Of those who felt they were overlooked for benefits, 25% of them felt it resulted in lack of initiative and 17% were seeking employment.

The majority, (78%) of the employees in the public and private sectors and trade union organizations had received job descriptions in their recruitment process. Most of them either at their interviews or at the selection, appointment or promotion stage.

A substantial proportion of employees in the public and private sectors and trade union organizations underwent tests of skills and abilities important for their jobs, the majority of them were trade union workers (60%) followed by private sector and public sector employees on an equal basis.

The most common type of tests of skills and abilities important for the employees' jobs, were practical (60%). Only 5% of them were tested both practically and verbally.

A small proportion (9%) of employees in the public and private sector organizations in Region four stated that they were also tested for skills and abilities **not** required for their jobs. Of those tested, 21% of them were public sector workers and 5% were private sector workers.

Of those employees in Region Four who were tested for skills and abilities not required for their jobs, 44.4% of them received practical tests, 33.3% verbal and the other 22.2% were tested both practically and verbally.

The majority (84%) of employees in the participating sectors were not informed about the anti-discrimination act; however a larger proportion (21%) of employees in the public sector were informed about the act than those in the private sector (11%).

Research data suggests that twelve percent of the employees in the public and private sectors in region four were aware of discriminatory practices.

Race/ethnicity was the most common type of discriminatory practices (83%) followed by

bullying (27%), affecting employees in the public and private sectors and trade union organizations in region four.

The data suggests that three percent of persons employed in organizations in Region four were aware of persons who had left because of discrimination.

A substantial proportion (47%) of employees in the public and private sectors and trade union organizations in region four had received formal orientation, accounting for the majority (62%) of those in the public sector and substantial proportions (41%) and (40%) respectively in the private sector and trade union organizations.

The majority (81%) of those who received orientation received it within 1-3 months. The single most common occurring orientation period (26%) was two days. The single most common programme of activities was job-related (36%).

There seemed to be little concerted effort within the public and private sectors and trade union in region four to provide equitable distribution of employment to the different ethnic groups in Guyana, over the period August 2001 to August 2006.

