

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES ADOPTED FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BY PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The research explored the human resource (HR) policies and practices adopted for persons with disabilities (PWD) by private organisations in Sri Lanka. This study focused on: (1) recruitment and selection, (2) training, (3) performance appraisal, and (4) practices of accommodation. Many international and local policy makers have identified the potential of private sector in Sri Lanka to improve employment opportunities for PWD. Data were collected using a survey strategy. HR and line managers were interviewed from nine companies. Questionnaires from 51 employees who belong to visual, hearing, speech and physical disability groups were collected. The key findings were, private companies mainly employ PWD as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy and have adopted HR policies and practices. However, the HR policies and practices do not give many opportunities for career progression and majority of the PWD are found in unskilled and routine jobs irrespective of their education and unique skills. The findings indicate that PWD can be a valuable resource to an organisation if they are strategically aligned with the help of human resource management (HRM). Hence, the need for “disability-friendly” HR policies and practices are paramount that will create a win-win situation for PWD, organisations and the economy.

Keywords: Persons with disabilities, Private sector organisations, Recruitment, Selection, Training, Performance, Accommodation practices.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, physicians have viewed them as “patients,” government agencies have viewed them as “files,” attorneys have viewed them as “cases,” society has viewed them as “dependents,” EEO [equal employment opportunity] officials have viewed them as “protected class,” and many employers have viewed them as “charity cases” who need pity and special protection. (Pati & Bailey, 1995, p. 9).

Over the recent decades, many academics from different disciplines have paid attention to disability research (Shore, Chung-Herrera, Dean, Ehrhart, Jung, Randel, & Singh, 2009), although it was overlooked and was considered as problematic for many years (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Kwiotek & McDonnell, 2003). Several factors have contributed to the increased attention on disability studies. According to Barnes and Mercer (2005), the exclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD) from the labour market for the last two centuries has been the bedrock for getting widespread attention of academics, professionals and the disabled community. Treating PWD as objects of

charity is deteriorating and the trend is moving towards a rights-based approach where a PWD is considered as a person with equal rights similar to a nondisabled person. Many are finding ways to give equal opportunity on the abilities of PWD (Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, 2007; Murray, 1998).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that approximately 10% of the global population is PWD, which makes them the largest minority in the world (as cited in Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, 2008). The statistics related to PWD in Sri Lanka are not up-to-date. According to Mendis (2004), there are two main sources of disability information and statistics. One is from the national Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme which is part of the Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare. Based on this source, the highest numbers of PWD are found to be in the labour force age category of those who are 10 and above. The second source is from the national census. The disability movement considers the data obtained from national survey as an underestimate of the true picture (Mendis, 2004). Nevertheless, statistics with regard to PWD will further increase due to the negative consequences of the long lasting civil unrest in Sri Lanka, which surveys have not yet accounted so far (M. R. S. Kumara, personal communication, February 3, 2009; P. Mendis, personal communication, September 1, 2009).

In Sri Lanka, employment of PWD was not given much importance for many years. However, due to increasing number of PWD and several initiatives taken by the state and international bodies, employment of PWD is now considered as a vital aspect to ensure the rights of PWD. Nevertheless, similar to Western countries (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Newton, Ormerod, & Thomas, 2007) the unemployment among PWD is still high compared to the unemployment level of nondisabled workforce in Sri Lanka. Although the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) had taken several steps even down to grass root levels regarding employment of PWD, the employment rates for PWD are low (Social Research Study, 2003, as cited in Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). Hence, employers are encouraged to consider issues regarding disabled workforce in recent years to improve employment opportunities (Dibben, James, Cunningham, & Smythe, 2002).

Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

For several years, PWD were dependent on the labour force. However, policy makers in International Labour Organisation (ILO) have found that excluding PWD from the labour force creates additional cost to society due to the costs arising from providing benefits to PWD and the opportunity costs of having such a large pool of labour who are not contributing to the economy (Murray, 1998). Aluvihare (1998) highlighted “persons with disabilities have the potential to become a valuable part of the labour force, contributing to social, economic and community development” (p. 45).

In Sri Lanka, PWD are mostly found in self-employment (32%) and then the government employment (29%) (Social Research Study, 2003, as cited in Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). However, evidence shows that self-employment is a failure in Sri Lanka (J. V. Thambar, personal communication, January 12, 2009; Mendis, 2001, as cited in Mendis, 2004; M. R. S. Kumara, personal communication, February 3, 2009; Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). Further, with regard to government sector employment, GOSL recommends the state sector organisations to allocate 3% of the total workforce to PWD (Foundation for International Training and Regional and Sustainable Development Department, 2005). However, legislation and quota system were not a success in other countries and ILO is encouraging other strategies such as

persuasion and conviction to improve employment of PWD (Employers' Network on Disability, n.d). Hence, the allocation of 3% of the total workforce to PWD in state sector has fewer prospects for gainful employment for PWD.

The third most available type of employment for PWD is found in private sector which accounts for 13% (Social Research Study, 2003, as cited in Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). Although PWD are found less in private sector employment, it is gaining widespread interest of many stakeholders internationally, regionally and locally. Some are even challenging the private sector employers to give the right to employment for PWD which they have neglected for long. This was further enhanced after the inauguration of Employer's Network on Disability in 1999 by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), to promote the employment of PWD among its membership of 457 companies (Mendis, 2004). Hence, private sector employment shows a great prospect which can create a win-win situation for both the employers of private sector organisations and PWD (Employers' Network on Disability, n.d.).

Further, during the initial phase of our research process we found that most of the PWD are doing low profile and odd jobs (i.e., blue-collar jobs) in private sector organisations. In spite of all the international and local hype about improving employment opportunities for PWD in private sector, we were curious to know why there are less or rather no PWD in white-collar jobs in the private sector, when there are many PWD running their own disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) and in such high authority in some of the leading international DPOs.

Moreover, many researchers emphasise that an organisation's HR policies and practices can make or break the case of giving employment opportunities to PWD, irrespective of having a strong disability legislative (Jones, 1997; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Stone & Williams, 1997). This also shows that HR policies and practices are very important to ensure employment for PWD. Hence, as HR researchers, we wanted to know what the HR professionals are currently doing and plan to do in the future to ensure gainful employment for PWD in private firms. Hence, the purpose of this study was: *"to explore the HR policies and practices adopted for PWD by private sector organisations in Sri Lanka."* The objectives of the research were as follows: (1) to identify the HR policies and practices adopted for PWD by private sector organisations in Sri Lanka, and (2) to identify the types of jobs occupied by PWD in private sector organisations in Sri Lanka. The HR policies and practices covered in this study were limited to: (1) recruitment and selection, (2) training, (3) performance appraisal, (4) practices of accommodation. The types of disability covered in this study were limited to: (1) visual disability, (2) hearing disability, (3) speech disability, and (4) physical disability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection is one of the key entry points for a person to access employment. Thus, it is one of the critical factors for PWD to gain employment in an organisation. According to Stone and Williams (1997), HR professionals will make changes in recruitment and selection practices to make it more "disability-friendly" only if they perceive that there are advantages by implementing those changes. This is very important in the case of private organisations as their sole objective is to maximise profit and not run the organisation for charity purpose. Consequently, studies have identified potential advantages which organisations can accrue by

creating a “disability-friendly” resourcing strategy (Center for Workforce Preparation, 2004; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Stone & Williams, 1997). For instance, Stone and Williams suggested that organisations will be more actively involved in recruiting PWD if they have had a positive experience with previous employees with disabilities and perceive that hiring PWD will reflect a more positive corporate image and lead to increased customer satisfaction. Cox (1993, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997) found that organisations will recruit PWD if they believe that PWD will increase customer satisfaction especially customers who are with disabilities.

However, many researchers argue that employers are still adapting to the law and are not clear on how to adopt their recruitment and selection practices to facilitate PWD (Stone & Williams, 1997). Stone and Williams emphasised that changes in selection practices are critical to ensure equal employment opportunity (EEO). Fortunately, many researchers have discussed the effect of disability on selection process with regard to implementing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (Jordon, Blake, & Aguinas, 1996, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997). Moreover, Stone and Williams concluded that although required changes in resourcing strategy may be initially difficult and time consuming, it will result in a win-win situation for organisations and PWD in the long run.

Training

Research with regard to training employees with disabilities is rather sparse. Some researchers suggest that few HR professionals view rehabilitation and training go hand-in-hand (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). However, many researchers have taken a multiple stakeholder approach regarding training practices and PWD (Jones, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Smith, Poval & Floyd, 1991, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004). They suggested that training is important for employees with disabilities as well as any employee who comes in regular contact with them (i.e., line managers, coworkers, etc.). Pati and Bailey also suggested that managers at all levels should be given training on the following areas which is critical to integrate PWD into workplace: (1) attitude management, (2) awareness of adaptive technology, and (3) knowledge of collaborative partnership models which will give a rich understanding on how to integrate PWD.

Moreover, many researchers proposed that diversity training will be useful to remove false beliefs and prejudices which will improve the quality of treatment received by PWD in workplace (Jones, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Perry & Apostol, 1986, as cited in Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). Smith et al. (1991, as cited in as cited in Wordsworth, 2004) suggested that all other staff should be given the opportunity and encouraged to attend short sessions on disability. Further, Smith et al., also suggested that all management, supervisory, customer care and interpersonal courses should contain elements on disability management. Further, ILO emphasise in their code of practice for managing PWD in workplace that all training practices (both internal and external) should be accessible by PWD (ILO, 2002). However, there are no studies regarding accessibility issues in training for PWD in organisational context and future research should give much importance for this aspect.

Performance Appraisal

Outcomes of performance appraisal affect an employee’s improvement with regard to

compensation, training and career progression. Thus, performance ratings are critical for the success of an employee's life at work. Colella, DeNisi, and Varma's (1997) review on appraising the performance of PWD found that ratings on performance appraisal of PWD are inconsistent and full of loopholes. Moreover, there are many studies which compared the ratings of PWD and their nondisabled counterparts (Colella et al., 1997). These results are also inconsistent. Experimental research, even with information on true performance level showed mixed results (Colella, DeNisi, Varma & Lund, 1994, as cited in Colella et al., 1997).

Further, Ren, Paetzold, and Colella's (2008) meta-analysis and Jones' (1997) review found that studies that examine past, observed performance of PWD gives highly inflated ratings. These inflated ratings will not give room for PWD to improve but rather they will be held up in dead-end job (Colella et al., 1997). Colella and Stone (2005, as cited in Ren et al., 2008) suggested that any findings of more favourable outcomes in disability studies should be evaluated carefully.

Consequently, many researchers criticise behaviours that reflect "norm to be kind" (Colella et al., 1997). Colella et al. argued that raters must not perceive that it is "unkind" to give lower ratings and avoid giving negative feedback for PWD. They suggested that PWD must be rewarded for their true level of performance in cases where they perform in par or higher than their nondisabled counterparts. This is consistent with Ren et al.'s argument that negative attitudes and myths can be reduced when raters are given clear information on performance of PWD and when raters observe PWD perform well, especially when they perform more than the expected standard or their nondisabled counterparts. As past studies have consistently shown that employers have false beliefs about few performance indicators' of PWD (Braddock & Bachelder, 1994, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997), it is important to use effective research methodologies that will show the true picture of performance of PWD.

Practices of Accommodations

This differs based on country to country as each disability legislature requires different types of accommodation practices. The Sri Lankan disability legislature does not give any specific accommodation practices but rather general requirements to ensure accessibility on built environment. However, in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Article 9 is specifically on accessibility (Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, 2007), which can also be relevant for HR managers who employ PWD.

Many researchers have identified problems faced by PWD with regard to accessing and moving around buildings and possible suggestions to overcome those problems (Newton et al., 2007). There are many studies conducted to explore the types of reasonable accommodations implemented by employers (Bruyere, Erickson & Vanlooy, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004; Cleveland, Farrell, & Ratz, 1997; Lee, 1996; Mitchell, Alliger, & Morfopoulos, 1997, as cited in Wordsworth 2004). However, Wordsworth (2004) wrote that types of reasonable accommodation vary from study to study and in reality will vary from organisation to organisation. Further, Cleveland et al. (1997) found that employers justify providing accommodation practices based on: (1) legal mandates (i.e., we must accommodate), (2) social or moral mandates (i.e., we should accommodate), and (3) business or economic considerations (i.e., accommodation is an investment with an economic investment).

In summary, it is important to change the negative opinion of providing accommodations for PWD. It is worth considering Pati and Bailey's (1995) suggestion that employers should view accommodation practices for the limitations imposed by the disability and not for PWD. Further, they also suggested that providing reasonable accommodation will help a competent employee with a disability to perform at an exceptional level which will result in high productivity. This suggestion also justifies that providing accommodation practices for PWD can be viewed as an economic investment for organisations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this research is unique compared to those adopted by past research. The main reason is because; *both the employers and PWD are included* in one study which none of the past researchers had attempted within the context of employment. *Survey strategy* was chosen as the research strategy. We were able collect data by employing multiple research methods in order to be flexible for the demands placed by the target participants of the research setting.

Study Variables

Persons with Disability: “Any person who, as a result of any deficiency in his [or her] physical or mental capabilities, whether congenital or not, is unable by himself [or herself], wholly or partly, the necessities of life” (Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1996, clause 37). The following types of disability are covered:

- **Visual Disability:** A person who “experiences a great reduction in the ability to gather information about the external environment through the sense of sight” (Stopford, 1987, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004, p. 145) has visual disability.
- **Hearing Disability:** A person who has a “loss of ability to gather information through the sense of hearing” (Stopford, 1987, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004, p. 137) is considered as a person with hearing disability.
- **Speech Disability:** This refers to difficulties in communications. There are various levels of difficulties which are beyond the scope of this study. However, this study includes any individual who finds it difficult to communicate.
- **Physical Disability:** According to various sources both from literature and empirical study there is no universal definition for physical disability as there are some complications in defining the boundary level of determining a disability as physical. However, a simplified definition can be created from all the sources: physical disability is a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.

Hearing and speech disability are combined in this study. This is because after literature review and the exposure we gained from disability field in the initial phase of our research process, we found that the unique issues pertaining to hearing and speech disability are considered together.

Recruitment and Selection: According to Armstrong (2003), “the overall aim of recruitment and selection process should be to obtain at minimum cost the number and quality of employees required to satisfy the human resource needs of the company” (p. 395). This study aims to get an overall picture of the recruitment and selection practices. Hence, an in-depth analysis is not needed. For instance, details regarding the practices of testing, interviews and assessing candidates are not covered but rather an overall picture to identify the reasons to hire a PWD in private companies. Open-ended and close-ended questions were used to identify the internal

and external recruitment sources. Further, a five point Likert Scale (i.e., “A” - Most willing to “E” - Most unwilling) was used to measure the companies’ willingness to hire PWD in future.

Training: Wilson (2005) wrote that training usually has an immediate application and is generally completed in a shorter period than development practices. This study aims to know the overall training practices under two aspects which are the induction training and the general training. Open-ended and close-ended questions were asked from managers and PWD regarding induction and general training. Further, questions were also asked to know the training needs of the PWD from the managers and PWD.

Performance Appraisal: According to Dessler and Tan (2009), “performance appraisal is: evaluating an employees’ current and/ or past performance relative to his or her performance standards” (Comparing performance appraisal and performance management, ¶ 4). This study is limited only to evaluating the current and past performance of PWD. A list of performance indicators was prepared to rate the performance level of PWD in a five point Likert Scale (i.e., from “A” – Very Good to “E” – Very Bad). The managers were required to rate based on the overall performance of all the employees belonging to each disability group covered in this study. The similar list was also given to PWD for self-assessment. Further, the managers were also required to rate the performance of employees with disabilities comparing the nondisabled employees who are performing the similar type of job. This is measured through the similar rating scale as mentioned above.

Practices of Accommodation: There is no universally accepted definition for accommodation practices for PWD. A list of practices of accommodations from Goldstone’s (2002) study was used. Questions were also asked from managers to know whether the company faced any difficulties in implementing any of the practices of accommodations that they ticked from the list, the managers’ opinion about the cost of accommodation practices and their future plans regarding accommodation practices. Similar questions were also asked from PWD to identify the accommodation practices given by the companies and what they prefer in future.

Sample Selection

To date, there are no accurate data by a regulatory body regarding the total number of private companies which employ PWD. Hence, we gathered primary data in order to identify the private companies which have PWD as part of their total workforce. Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), EFC, disabled persons’ organisations (DPOs), disability advocates, existing contacts and secondary data were used. Based on the above sources, 171 individuals were employed in 28 private companies. Mendis (2004) found 113 employees with disabilities in 57 companies.

We formulated the following two sample criteria in order to select the companies for the study:

- *A minimum of four employees with disabilities:* As the study is focused on exploring the HR policies and practices adopted for PWD, it is inappropriate to include an organisation which has only one or two PWD. Therefore, we decided to select the organisation which has at least four or more PWD during the data collection period between May-October, 2009.
- *Must be a private company:* The aim of the present research was to explore the overall picture about HR policies and practices. Wickramasinghe (2007)

compared the staffing practices of private companies between those which are listed on the stock exchange and those not listed. The need for such comparison as Wickramasinghe's study or based on other criteria such as industry wise, etc. were not necessary in this research. Hence, the other criterion was that it should be a private company.

Among the companies that we identified, only 10 companies met the above sample criteria. All 10 companies were approached to gain initial access. But, one company refused to participate in the survey despite our genuine efforts. Hence, the research was based on the remaining nine companies that were willing to participate in the survey.

We ensured that *HR managers* who are in *senior positions* are included to get accurate information regarding HR practices adopted for PWD. As in Wickramasinghe's (2007) study, the interviews were mainly held with HR managers as they have the greatest access to required HR information. However, non-HR senior managers (i.e., managing director, factory manager, and sustainability and communications manager) who are competent to answer about HR policies and practices adopted for PWD were also selected. These non-HR managers were selected in companies which do not have senior person for HR or where senior HR managers were unable to participate in the study due to their busy schedule. Moreover, any HR manager will be reluctant to divulge any loopholes which may exist in their HR policies and practices adopted for PWD. Hence, we decided to include the *PWD who are recipients of such HR policies and practices* in order to support the data given by HR managers. Great care was taken to ensure that PWD are from the four disability types that are covered in this study.

Data Collection Methods

We designed two comprehensive questionnaires to collect data from the HR managers and PWD. Both questionnaires covered all four aspects of HR practices that are discussed in this research. A mix of open-ended and close-ended questions was used. Under close-ended questions, the lists of options were derived from intensive literature review (Goldstone, 2002; Stofberg, 2007) and from the exposure we gained from disability field in the initial phase of our research process. We ensured that the given options for each close-ended question were exhaustive as possible by using "other" and "uncertain" options in the given list. The questionnaires for PWD were translated to Sinhala as they were not fluent in English.

Data from the managers and PWD were collected through semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires depending on the respondents' convenience. Sign language interpreter was used to collect data from respondents with hearing and speech disabilities. Sinhala translators were also used to interview respondents with visual disability. We conducted all the interviews at the respective companies and all were recorded. The interviews lasted to 45 minutes to 2 hours depending on the respondents' convenience. We also ensured the accuracy of the data by clarifying with respondents regarding any vague answers.

A total of 16 managers were interviewed from the nine sample companies. The interviews were conducted according to managers' convenience. Hence, a focus group type of interview comprising of four line managers, two paired interviews, and the remaining interviews were conducted as a one-to-one basis. One manager participated through a self-administered questionnaire via e-mail due to time constraints.

We tried our best to cover most of the PWD who were employed in the sample companies. We were able to obtain access to 60 PWD out of the 115 PWD (we were unable to collect accurate number from one company due to various constraints) who were employed in the *nine sample companies*. However, due to various constraints, only 51 questionnaires that were filled by PWD were usable for the study. We interviewed 11 respondents with visual disability as they were unable to answer the questionnaire on their own. The remaining 40 respondents with disabilities participated through self-administered questionnaires.

FINDINGS

Recruitment and Selection

Reasons to hire PWD: Out of the eight companies which participated for this question, six companies (75%) hire PWD mainly because it is part of their CSR policy. Surprisingly, only one company which is a plastic manufacturing and packaging type of workplace hires PWD mainly because of the talents, skills and abilities of PWD. Another company from the banking industry also rated the talents, skills and abilities of PWD as being their second main reason to hire PWD. There was also another exception comparing the ones which gave high ratings for CSR. This company is from the garment industry and gave a higher rating for part of partnership project with another company as being the main reason to hire PWD.

Organisation's willingness to hire PWD in future: Out of the eight companies which participated for this question, seven companies (87.5%) were optimistic to hire PWD in future. However, some companies have their own conditions to hire PWD in future, which indirectly limits the scope of future employment prospects for PWD. Few of the conditions are: (1) if only any of the existing PWD leave due to the difficulties in employing many PWD in a beauty salon environment, and (2) if only the PWD has no difficulty with regard to mobility as it is difficult in a super market environment which has two floors. Further, only one company (12.5%) from the banking industry is uncertain to hire PWD in future. This was because they initiated to employ PWD as a trial basis and currently unable to employ many PWD due to the nature of the work in a bank and the inherent difficulties of disabilities. Moreover, most of the managers perceived that PWD cannot be placed in a job that deals with customers directly and are not willing to allocate more PWD, but rather ensure that certain percentage of their workforce represent PWD.

External recruitment sources: Out of all the companies which participated, five companies (55%) use schools specifically for PWD and DPOs which makes these two sources as the most commonly used external recruitment source. With regard to schools specifically for PWD, the St. Joseph School for the Deaf - Ragama, School for the Blind - Ratmalana and School for the Deaf – Ratamalana were used. With regard to DPOs, Motivation, Swedish Organisation of the Handicapped International Aid Foundation (SHIA) Organisation, Rehab Lankan and Sri Lanka Federation of the Visually Handicapped were used. Four companies (44%) use the annual job fairs held by EFC which makes it as the second most used external recruitment source. Further, referrals and training institutes were also considered. With regard to referrals which accounted for 33% (three companies), the existing employees and disability advocates were used. With regard to training institutes which accounted for 22% (two companies), Seeduwa Vocational Training Institute and National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) were used. Apart from the above mentioned sources, three companies (33%) employ PWD when they directly approach the

company seeking employment (e.g., a manager whom we interviewed used to teach English at the School for the Blind. He shared that he has given employment to many people with visual disability who came to his house on their own effort seeking for employment). Furthermore, an HR manager from the super market company shared that they get applications from PWD when they regularly organise recruitment campaigns in outstation areas. Although the company was willing to employ PWD, they are unable to get the job as they have difficulties to come to urban areas (i.e., parents' unwillingness to send their children with disabilities to Colombo, difficulties in finding a boarding place).

Internal recruitment sources: Data regarding this aspect was collected through probing questions while conducting interviews as it is a very sensitive area. All the managers who employ people with hearing and speech disabilities shared that it is difficult to allocate them to the next level of job due to the difficulty in communication and perceive that their employees with hearing and speech disabilities are currently allocated in the ideal positions irrespective of their skills and education. Another HR manager shared that he had to counsel his employee with physical disability as the manager was unable to promote him. The manager perceived that there are natural limitations for PWD so they are unable to be promoted in a customer interaction work place. Moreover, a line manager and his subordinate with hearing disability who participated in this survey joined the bank 5 years ago for the same post. His subordinate shared that he is not promoted as the examinations that leads for promotion is not "disability-friendly". These facts reveal that PWD are stuck with dead-end jobs due to lack of "disability-friendly" internal recruitment sources and the inability of managers to create new openings for PWD that will lead for career progression.

Training

Induction training: As majority of the jobs given for PWD are blue-collar jobs (see Table 2), the induction programme were not as sophisticated and formal when comparing with the induction practices in the literature. Induction practices for PWD in private sector organisations were more of an informal nature where basic introduction about the following areas were covered: (1) nature of the company and business, (2) what are expected from employees with disabilities, (3) rules and regulations (e.g., leave, dress code, office hours, overtime, etc.), (4) to whom they should report, (5) their salary or wages, and (6) instructions on how to perform the job. With regard to instruction on how to perform the job, the supervisors perform and show them how to do the job. This depends on the type of job (i.e., for packing, label pasting jobs, etc.) and type of disability. Further, we also found that induction training is conducted mostly by the personnel manager or their line supervisor. But managers from three companies shared that it will depend on the person's ability to pick up the job requirements. In addition to the above mentioned induction practices, a company from the garment industry used a buddy system for their employees with disabilities. Under this system, each PWD is teamed up with another employee in order to be familiarised with the job. Moreover, only two companies use formal induction training. These two companies, one is a beauty salon and the other is a super market type of workplace have their own training academies. Their employees with disabilities together with their nondisabled colleagues are sent to these training academies before placement of their work and all the areas in induction are covered.

Training practices: There were less training programmes given for PWD with regard to their job as majority are in blue-collar jobs (see Table 2). All the managers

shared that they give instructions about the job and on other areas when the need arise. Furthermore, formal training is provided for jobs that need technical expertise and regular updates with market changes (e.g., tailor, hair dresser beautician). This was observed in two companies (one is a beauty salon and the other is from the garment industry) as their employees with disabilities are doing a job that requires them to be regularly updated to deliver quality products and service. The manager of the beauty salon shared that she does not separate her employees with hearing and speech disabilities from other nondisabled employees when they are given training. Her daughter who is also employed in the same salon helps to communicate with the employees with hearing and speech disabilities using sign language. The other company which gives formal training is from the garment industry and is catering mostly to the niche market. Most of the PWD who are employed in this company are assigned to do basic alteration work of the readymade garments. The PWD need training even to perform this basic tailoring work. This is because they joined the company with poor and obsolete competencies to perform the duty of an alteration tailor, as the training which they received earlier from the state training institutes are not up-to-date and do not focus on the employable skills. Hence, their employees with disabilities are sent to the company's specialised training department. Moreover, in two companies PWD are also sent for other types of training which is offered for every employee (e.g., training on personality development to plan their life and outward-bound training to develop team building skills).

Training needs: Managers from six companies (67%) shared that PWD need training on soft skills. This was because most of the PWD are from a sheltered environment before they joined their companies so they had fewer opportunities to mix with nondisabled people. Hence, the managers have observed that PWD find it hard to build networks and get along with others in the initial stages of their tenure. However, the managers reiterated that when they gave the opportunity to mingle with the nondisabled, some of their employees with disabilities had improved in their soft skills step by step. Further, another manager identified that sign language training for supervisors, colleagues as well as for the employees with speech and hearing disability is essential. This is because most of their employees with hearing and speech disability do not use the correct signs.

Moreover, with regard to technical training needs that is specific to the job, the managers are in the notion that there is no necessity of training for PWD. This was because the managers believe that their employees with disability are specialised with regard to the job that they do. The same finding was found from the data collected from PWD. All the respondents shared that they are specialised in the job that they do and do not need any training on areas relating to their job. However, when we further asked probing questions on any training needs which are needed for career progression of PWD, the managers shared the difficulties of promoting PWD which were discussed under internal recruitment sources and perceive that PWD do not have any training needs for promotions. But, the respondents with disabilities shared that they would like to learn English and computer skills. Most of them (90%) prefer if their companies offer training on these areas and if the management can make flexible arrangements to attend these classes (i.e., English and computer skills) outside workplace. They prefer if these arrangements were mostly in the form of granting of leave to attend these classes as it clash with office hours.

Performance Appraisal

Performance level of PWD: Based on the narratives that were collected from the interviews, we found that the managers were highly satisfied with the overall output that their employees with disabilities give. This can also be visible from the many “A” ratings (i.e., very good) given by the managers for most of the performance indicators. The following performance indicators can be seen as exceptionally well among their employees with disabilities based on the narrative analysis: (1) quality of work (e.g., most of the PWD who are involved in label pasting operations and sorting tea bags are able to perform their job accurately without much supervision), (2) making friends and social contacts (e.g., the managers shared that although PWD had difficulties in mixing with others in the earlier days of their employment, when they were given more opportunities to participate in office trips, parties and other social events they make use of it and are much improved in terms of social skills), (3) interest in achieving the set targets (e.g., the employees with hearing and speech disabilities who are employed in a bank are very quick in meeting all the targets of sorting the cash matters of the bank), (4) commitment to organisation (e.g., the line managers from a bank shared that their employees with disabilities who are involved in sorting documents are very committed to the work that they do and are willing to absorb more workload when the need arise), (5) coming to terms with disability (e.g., most of the managers shared that their employees with disabilities prefer to be treated in the same manner as their nondisabled counterparts), (6) punctuality (e.g., most of the PWD are very punctual, especially employees with visual disability - they come half an hour early to work), and (7) retention (e.g., a manager who had over 15 years of experience of working with PWD found that retention was one of the strong points he has noticed among his employees with disabilities as they know that it is difficult to find job elsewhere if they lose it). With regard to attendance of PWD, apart from one company the remaining companies were satisfied and most of the managers gave “A” ratings (i.e., very good). However, managers from two companies were not satisfied with regard to the discipline of some of their employees with disabilities. Their short tempered nature creates difficulties for the supervisors to give instructions. Further, another manager from an alcohol manufacturing company shared that he is unable to give more workload to his employees with disabilities during seasonal period as they are unable to work long hours due to practical difficulties arising from their disability.

Performance when compared to their nondisabled counterparts: The performances of PWD are on par or above average with regard to the essential functions of a job when compared to their nondisabled counterparts (e.g., PWD who are involved in packaging and label pasting operations give more output in terms of accuracy and quantity when compared to nondisabled employees who are performing the similar type of job, employees with visual disabilities who are involved in sorting damaged tea bags are very good in identifying whether it’s a flavoured tea or black tea than the nondisabled employees). The main reason for this is because of their high concentration on the job when compared to their nondisabled counterparts. Another reason is because when one part of the organ/body does not function for a PWD the other parts of the organ/body get sharper than a nondisabled person. Hence, they are sometimes able to perform above average with regard to the essential functions of a job when compared to their nondisabled counterpart. However, the managers shared that they are unable to get other work, apart from the manual and repetitive work that PWD are currently doing (e.g., a line manager shared that he is unable to get a

report done from his employees with hearing and speech disabilities due to the difficulties in communication). Hence, with regard to nonessential functions of a job, PWD are unable to match the demands of their nondisabled counterparts although they are in par or above average than their nondisabled counterparts with regard to essential functions of a job.

Practices of Accommodation

Present accommodation practices: From the given list of practices of accommodation in the questionnaire, the most common practices found among private companies were providing counseling and allowing for special leave necessitated because of the disability which accounted for 89% (eight companies). Counseling services was needed by the management to explain their employees with disabilities the difficulties of promoting them to next level of jobs and for any personal family issues which they undergo that are detrimental to the performance of their job (e.g., a manager shared how he resolved a family problem between a husband and wife who were both visually disabled and were employed in the same company). Accommodation practice of granting special leave due to disability were mostly given for: (1) to participate a mercantile sports event or to participate in international tournaments representing the country (e.g., some of the employees with visual, hearing and speech disabilities were member of the company's as well as the national cricket team comprising of different disability groups), (2) to participate in disability related events (e.g., a company grants a full day leave for all of their employees with visual disability to participate in White Cane Day events on October 15th each year), (3) to participate in disability related annual meetings (e.g., the hair dressers with hearing and speech disabilities are given leave to participate any annual meetings even if they are rostered to work on a weekend). Further, some of the other accommodation practices which were used are: (1) partnering them up with a nondisabled person or mentor (six companies or 67%), (2) provide training/ retraining (five companies or 56%), (3) provide additional on-the-job support or assistance (five companies or 56%), (4) employ job sharing (three companies or 33%), (5) alter workplace (two companies or 22%), (6) modify workplace/ premises (two companies or 22%), and (7) provide special equipment (two companies or 22%). However, all the managers perceived that accommodation practices given on questionnaire are not needed for PWD as it will be like pampering them which will be detrimental for their growth and also the managers perceive that PWD do not want special treatment that are different from nondisabled employees.

Difficulties in implementing practices of accommodation by the management: All the companies did not find it difficult to implement the accommodation practices that they ticked from the given list. The main reason was due to the fact that the PWD were highly focused and committed on their jobs. Another reason was because the cost of accommodation practices was less. Seven companies (78%) consider the cost of adjustments as part of their normal cost and two companies (22%) did not incur any cost. However, only one manager had difficulty with his employees with hearing and speech disabilities due to the difficulties in communication.

Future accommodation practices: Majority (eight companies or 89%) were very vague about their response and not very specific with regard to future accommodation practices. The managers were in the notion that accommodation practices are not needed in future as they perceived that: (1) their employees with disabilities are well accommodated enough, (2) their performances are up to the mark, and (3) PWD do not want to be treated differently. However, only one company is

planning to ensure that their future building projects are in line with the legal requirements with regard to the built environment. The manager of this company further explained that it is difficult to change the existing building structure to make it accessible as they believe it will lead to high cost. However, PWD would prefer specific accommodation practices to enhance their output. Some of the participants with visual disability (45%) shared that they would prefer if there are iron bars which will indicate that there are machines in the other side to safeguard themselves. Further, employees belonging to physical, hearing and speech disability groups who are involved in label pasting operations prefer if they can get a fan while performing their job.

Types of Job Occupied by PWD

The four job categories in Table 1 are categorised based on Wordsworth's (2004) and Goldstone's (2002) studies. These studies explored the type of jobs occupied by PWD in South Africa and UK respectively. Hence, four categories were identified which best describes the present research setting. There are fewer jobs under sales and supervisory types of jobs as there are less number of PWD employed under these job categories. Further, based on the information given by manager and PWD, the employees who are working as customer service assistant and cash sorting officer are all back office jobs although the job title reflects the opposite.

TABLE 1
Types of Jobs Occupied by PWD under Each Job Category

<i>Routine and Unskilled Jobs</i>	<i>Clerical and Secretarial Jobs</i>	<i>Sales</i>	<i>Supervisory Jobs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory Worker • Labourer – Stores and Packaging, Pasting Stickers to bottles or plastic products, Production collectors. • Machine Operators • Tea Maker • Gardener • General Worker • Customer Service Assistant –No dealings with customer but back office job to maintain stock for customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Operator • Banking Assistant • Data entry operator • Cash Sorting Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair Dresser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi Duty officer – Quality Control • Production Controller • Stores Supervisor

Table 2 shows the number of people employed under each job category that were identified in Table 1. From Table 2, it can be seen that majority (77%) are in routine and unskilled jobs. Clerical and secretarial jobs are the next common category of jobs (15%). The next are sales and supervisory level jobs which is the least amount of job category found among PWD (each 4% respectively). Moreover, we also found that many of the PWD (70%) are employed in a particular company for more than 10 years. However, they are all doing the same type of jobs since they joined the organisations.

TABLE 2
Types of Jobs Occupied by PWD in Private Sector

<i>Company</i>	<i>Type of Workplace</i>	<i>Routine & Unskilled</i>	<i>Clerical & secretarial</i>	<i>Sales</i>	<i>Supervisory</i>	<i>Total</i>
A	Plastic Manufacturing & Packaging	34	1	-	-	35
B	Beauty Salon	-	-	4	-	4
D	Retail - Super Market	2	1	-	2	5
E	Bank	-	10	-	-	10
F	Bank	-	4	-	-	4
G	Alcohol Manufacturing	11	-	-	1	12
H	Tea Manufacturing	9	-	-	1	10
I	Garment Manufacturing	23	-	-	-	23
	Total	79	16	4	4	103
	Total %	77%	15%	4%	4%	100%

Note. Data regarding the nature of jobs of the employees with disabilities in Company C were inaccurate. However, based on the interviews with managers, they are mostly working as alteration tailors which requires certain technical skills.

TABLE 3
Types of Employment Occupied by PWD Employed in Private Sector

<i>Company</i>	<i>Type of Workplace</i>	<i>Permanent</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Contract</i>	<i>Total</i>
A	Plastic Manufacturing and Packaging	34	1	-	35
B	Beauty Salon	4	-	-	4
C	Garment Manufacturing	5	-	1	6 ^a
D	Retail - Super Market	3	-	2	5
E	Bank	10	-	-	10
F	Bank	4	-	-	4
G	Alcohol Manufacturing	8	4	-	12
H	Tea Manufacturing	10	-	-	10
I	Garment Manufacturing	23	-	-	23
	Total	101	5	3	109
	Total (%)	93%	5%	2%	100%

^a We were unable to collect accurate number from HR manager of Company C. The number is from the employees with disabilities of Company C who answered the questionnaire.

Further, data regarding type of employment were also collected which is shown in Table 3. From Table 3, it can be seen that the majority of PWD (93%) are in permanent employment which shows that most of the employers are willing to keep their existing employees with disabilities for a long period. This can also be

substantiated for the fact that low percentage of employees was found in casual employment (5%) and in contract employment (2%).

In summary, most of the PWD are employed in permanent employment although it may vary across different disability groups. Although majority of the PWD are in permanent employment, they are doing routine and unskilled job which is more of a blue-collar jobs. Majority of the 51 respondents were found to have at least the GCE “O” level qualification (see Appendix A). However, it is surprising to find that majority are in blue-collar jobs and less employees in supervisory jobs.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Many past studies confirm that wheelchair users have major difficulties in travelling and accessing buildings to find a job (Newton et al., 2007). The findings of this study did not address any specific issues regarding these individuals as we were unable to collect data from these individuals due to various constraints. Hence, we are unable to derive any findings with regard to accessibility for wheelchair users. As this study is limited to few types of disabilities and only to private sector, future research should focus on HR practices and policies adopted for employees with all types of disabilities (i.e., including intellectual disability, epilepsy and other types of disability) who are employed in the state and NGO sectors including private sector. Much focus should be given for a comparative analysis in terms of different sector and different types of disabilities.

Further, this study covers recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisal and practices of accommodations for PWD. It would have been much effective if a detailed analysis was conducted by limiting the study to two or one HR practice. Thus, it is also important to conduct a detail study on each of the HR practices, with an aim to identify “disability-friendly” HR practices that can be implemented in Sri Lankan organisations.

Many writers believe that both the employers and PWD have an equal role to ensure career development for PWD (Jones, 1997; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Stone & Colella, 1996). Therefore, it is important to explore the barriers for PWD with regard to career advancement and the barriers for managers to give opportunities for PWD regarding their career development.

Moreover, the managers have a strong conviction that it is impossible to assign PWD in a job where it requires dealing with their customers. There were extreme contradicting statements given by managers as well regarding this aspect. Hence, a very vital area in which future researchers should focus is on analysing the customers’ attitudes towards dealing with PWD in business transactions in order to improve the business case of employing PWD.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study explored the HR policies and practices adopted for PWD in private sector organisations in Sri Lanka. We found that private organisations employ PWD mainly because the management considers it as part of CSR policy. This is consistent with many studies conducted in Western countries (Dibben, James, & Cunningham, 2001; Dibben, James, Cunningham, & Smythe, 2002).

We found that majority of the PWD who are employed in private sector are performing unskilled and routine jobs which are similar to blue-collar jobs irrespective of their education and unique skills. This is consistent with many studies

that PWD have mainly been employed in lower status jobs that offer fewer opportunities for their career development (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Goldstone, 2002; Jones, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Stone & Colella, 1996). Further, majority are found to be in permanent employment. It is our opinion that the main reason for this is, as employers mainly hire PWD as part of their CSR policy to meet corporate guidelines (e.g., United Nations [UN] Global Compact) or to improve their corporate image, they ensure a certain amount of PWD represents their total workforce. The management maintains this by allocating them in blue-collar jobs which does not require high wages.

Further, most of the managers are not willing to promote PWD to the next level of jobs and give opportunity in white-collar jobs. This is because the managers believe that in order to be promoted or to work in white-collar jobs, it requires interaction with customers. Most of the managers strongly perceive that their customers will not prefer to deal with PWD and that PWD have natural limitations. However, studies show how PWD have contributed significantly by performing in a job that requires interaction with customers directly (Pati & Bailey, 1995; Smith, 2002). They could consider creative marketing strategies where they can use their employees with disabilities to negate the myths that customers have and by educating them on the exceptional performances of PWD. This strategy is used by McDonald's U.S. business unit to promote the employment of PWD and was a success (Pati & Bailey, 1995). HR professionals should work with the marketing experts to implement such creative marketing strategies, especially those companies which already gave opportunities to deal with customers directly (e.g., the manager of the beauty salon type of company shared that 80% of her customer base are satisfied from the service delivered by their hair dressers with hearing and speech disabilities. Further, she elaborated that some of their customers invite these hair dressers for their weddings who hardly know them).

With regard to external recruitment sources, the sources used by private companies are limited when compared to those suggested by Stone and Williams (1997). None of them cover any sources that will specifically attract qualified disabled candidates that are suggested by Braddock and Bachelder (1994, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997) and Klimoski and Palmer (1993, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997). Further, the internal recruitment sources of the company are not "disability-friendly" which will hamper career progression for PWD. This may be the reason that most of the PWD are in the same position since they joined, even the ones who joined more than 10 years ago and also two degree holders who are underemployed. This is consistent with Braddock and Bachelder's (1994, as cited in Stone & Williams, 1997) finding that internal recruitment practices are less "disability-friendly" compared to external recruitment sources in most organisations. Thus, HR professionals need to explore creative internal and external recruitment sources that can be a win-win situation for the company and PWD.

Further, there were no specific training programmes specially targeting PWD, but rather the training practices were the usual type of programmes given for nondisabled employees. It is important that the HR professionals ensure that all the training programmes are accessible as stipulated by the ILO code of good practice. None of the companies had training programmes that educates PWD on disability issues suggested by Jones (1997). Furthermore, diversity training that educates on disability issues are not given for coworkers, supervisors and other staff members which are in the existing studies (Jones, 1997; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Smith et al., 1991, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004). Hence, HR professionals should move away

from implementing conservative type of training programmes and think beyond the box in order to incorporate these disability aspects in the training practices.

Performance appraisal results are highly inflated in both the self-appraisal of PWD and the appraisal by managers. It is consistent with many studies, that participants usually give inflated ratings on performance of PWD (Colella et al., 1997; Jones, 1997; Ren et al., 2008). It is our opinion that this can be due to the social desirability bias (Colella et al., 1997) and the “norm to kind” effects (Colella et al., 1997; Jones, 1997). However, from the narrative analysis, we found that the managers have observed exceptional performance in PWD with regard to few performance indicators discussed under findings. This is consistent with many empirical findings from other research settings (Center for Workforce Preparation, 2004; Perry, 2003).

With regard to practices of accommodation, although the Sri Lankan legislature includes an obligation on employers with regard to accessibility, most of the managers are not sure of how these legal requirements can be implemented which is similar to Stone and Williams’ (1997) finding that employers are ambiguous on how to implement the accommodations mandated by the ADA. Hence, it is important to give awareness and educate both the HR practitioners and PWD on the accommodation practices found by various researchers that were conducted in Western countries (Bruyere, Erickson, & Vanlooy, 2000, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004; Cleveland et al., 1997; Lee, 1996; Mitchell et al., 1997, as cited in Wordsworth, 2004). It is because, it is our opinion from the responses of PWD and managers that most of them are not aware of the modernised accommodation practices that can give benefits for both the managers and PWD.

Finally, the HR literature emphasise that employees are the most valuable resource of an organisation. However, it seems that these employees are confined to only nondisabled employees. Employees with disabilities also possess unique set of talents and have the similar self-esteem need and self-actualisation needs as their nondisabled counterparts. We argue, as did others (Center for Workforce Preparation, 2004; Jones, 1997; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Pati & Bailey, 1995; Stone & Collela, 1996), that all HR academics and professionals must consider PWD as a valuable resource who can be a source of competitive advantage and not use them only as a means to fulfill their CSR policy and workforce diversity policy. Thus, we hope that this research will be an impetus to identify and implement “disability-friendly” HR practices and policies with a strategic approach which can create a win-win situation for PWD, organisations and the economy.

APPENDIX

Appendix A - Educational Level Composition of the Sample – PWD

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Hearing and Speech</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Total</i>
Below Grade 11	2	3	-	5
G.C.E.O/L	7	11	7	25
G.C.E.A/L	-	3	-	3
Diploma	-	6	4	10
Degree	2	-	-	2
Total	11	23	11	45

Note. There were 6 respondents who did not mention their level of education so the total number of respondents is 45. Among these 6 participants, 5 participants were with hearing and speech disabilities and 1 participant was with physical disability.

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