Human Resource Management in Indian Central Public Sector Enterprises: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract: Globalization coupled with the endeavors towards liberalization and privatization has resulted in drastic changes in the environment of public sector enterprises which in turn has affected the manner in which these enterprises conducted their businesses, both internal and external. Public Sector enterprise once looked upon as 'model employers' are today facing tremendous challenges in terms of attracting and retaining talent. There is an urgent need for adopting a correct suitable approach towards the employees, considering them as strategic resource. CPSEs have to bring an overall change in their attitude in dealing with people. Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) having recognized the need for building a performance oriented culture in order to survive and sustain competition needs to adopt a strategic approach to people management issues. In the given context the paper aims at highlighting the HR issues in CPSEs at the same time trying to understand the strategies that CPSEs needs to adopt towards it's most precious resource.

Keywords: Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Challenges, Globalization, Human resource management, Strategies.

I. Introduction

Since inception, the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in India have been the mainstay of the Indian economy and were set up with the mandate to serve the broad macro-economic objectives of higher economic growth, achieve self-sufficiency in production of goods / services, facilitate long term equilibrium in balance of payments and ensure stability in prices and create benchmarks for prices of essential items. The Indian Public Sector has always played a dominant role in shaping the path of the country's economic development. With the economy embarking on the process of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization since the early 1990s, the role of the Indian Public Sector has subsequently undergone a rapid change. Integration of the domestic economy with global markets has thrown up a plethora of opportunities and challenges.

According to the Report of Panel of Experts on Reforms in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), (November 2011), CPSEs are losing in terms of global competition and there strong presence is needed in manufacturing, may be, defence, nuclear power, specialized capital goods industries, green technologies and the like. The above mentioned areas are ones which are strategically significant as well as we do not see private sector investments in these areas. So the evident question that needs to be addressed is about the new 'avatar' / role that CPSEs needs to adorn and how should it be structured to taking its challenging role forward.

The public sector enterprises in India are well thought-out as 'model employers'. Best of talents across the country joined CPSEs as the most preferred job. Working in public sector was considered as a matter of pride and privilege for the brightest talent. But with passing time things have changed drastically, the situations are very different today than it was a decade ago. With the opening of the economy, the best talents have found an inclination towards the private sector and MNCs for obvious reasons regarding quality of work life and career advancement prospects apart from handsome pay packages. We are also witnessing an exodus of talent from CPSEs. Public enterprises are today facing tremendous challenge in terms of attracting and retaining talent. There is an urgent need for adopting a correct suitable approach towards the employees, considering them as strategic resource. CPSEs have to bring an overall change in their attitude in dealing with people. There is a need to re-orient the CPSEs culture to a performance oriented culture.

In the given backdrop, it is clearly evident that CPSEs need to rethink on their existing HR practices and also develop a strategy for attracting, motivation and retaining talent. Hence, this paper attempts to review the HR practices in the present perspective and future outlook with the objective of highlighting the present issues and future challenges.

II. Overview of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in India

Phases of CPSEs

The report available on the Reforms in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), (November 2011), has divided the evolution of public sector enterprises in India into three phases spanning for about 15- 20 years, each phase is a reflection of the ideology and vision of the political leadership at that point. It also reflects the economic compulsion of the state at that time. The Phase I (1950-1969) of CPSEs evolution had shown the way of modern India build on a strong industrial background. The nation strived for self - sufficiency. Mixed economy was adopted with the vision of both private and public sector playing crucial role to build a strong, self- sufficient India.

The phase II evolution of CPSEs (1969-1984) was dominated by nationalization of many private sector enterprises. To the extent possible government supported the CPSEs and during this phases the thrust was compliance of the lead down rules and performance gained minimum attention. However, by 1980s, the there were shift in government policies and CPSEs were informed that further support with the present level of performance of CPSEs may not be possible. The CPSEs were asked to improve their performance and make their operation self sustainable. The phase III (1984 to present day) was noticeable by 1991 reforms, opening of the economy and increased competition. The CPSEs were asked to enhance their performance, get listed in stock exchanges and raise funds from capital market. The Roongta committee suggested the need for Phase IV reforms in CPSEs; they have suggested a number of HR, governance and other reforms in CPSEs to address future challenges before CPSEs.

III. Contribution of Central Public Sector Enterprises in Indian Economy

From the beginning, the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) have contributed immensely to the country's growth and prosperity. The contribution of CPSEs towards the growth and development of the country can be gauged from the fact that at the time of the first five year plan, with a total investment of Rs. 29 crores, we had only five CPSEs in our country but today we have 235 CPSEs running into a total investment of Rs. 10,96,057 crore as on 31st March, 2015. CPSEs are the source of employment for 12.91 lakh people (excluding contractual workers) for the year 2014-2015. The salary and wages in all the CPSEs, at the same time went up during the year from Rs. 1,22,322 crore in 2013-2014 to Rs. 1,27,387 crore in 2014-2015 showing a growth of 4.14%. However, the per employee turnover of CPSEs has increased from Rs. 1.53 crore in 2013-2014 to Rs. 1.55 crore in 2014-2015 (Public Enterprises Survey 2014-2015: Vol - I, p: 2). The Government understands the relevance and importance of the CPSEs and also need to empower its management. It was realized that CPSEs board needs greater power and autonomy to compete with its counterpart in private sector as well as MNCs. Hence, the concept of Maharatna, Navratna and Mini-Ratna was introduced with greater delegated authority, both financial and managerial. The other reform introduced was the concept of evaluation of CPSEs performance through Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

IV. Performance Management in CPSEs: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) System

The evaluation of CPSE's performance is done through a structured system of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). A MoU is a document between the management and the government; it is a negotiated document specifying the various financial and non financial targets and the obligations. MoU in the case of CPSEs is a concept of Management by Result instead of control and procedures. Performance is evaluated based on the comparison between the targets agreed to the target achieved at the end of the financial year. The target includes both financial and non financial parameter which is also known as enabling parameter. Each parameter carries certain weightage with mark on 5 point scale. CPSEs are rated as excellent, very good, good, and poor based on actual achievements. The performance and MoU rating of CPSEs for last five years have been compiled and presented in Table I.

Many countries around the globe have introduced Performance Contracting (PC) system as a tool to improve the functioning of their public sector enterprises. It was in the late 1960s that the French government introduced PC system to provide operational autonomy and improve the enterprise performance. Countries like Bangladesh, China, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Gambia, Brazil, Argentina and many others experimented with this system. India too adopted a similar system and named it Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This system was established as a result of the recommendations of Arjun Sengupta Committee set up in 1984. The Objectives of MoU are (i) Improve the performance of CPSEs by increasing autonomy and accountability of management; (ii) Fixing the targets in accordance with the goal and objectives of CPSEs; (iii) Enable performance evaluation through objective criteria and; (iv) Provide a mechanism of rewarding and incentivizing performance.

Table I: Grading of the Performance of Mous Signing CPSEs

Grades	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Excellent	73	67	76	75	76
Very Good	31	44	39	39	38
Good	20	24	33	38	36
Fair	20	24	25	36	29
Poor	1	2	2	2	8
Total	145	161	175	190	187

Source: PE Survey 2014-2015 published by the DPE.

V. Issues Confronting CPSEs in Era of Globalization and Privatization

Globalization coupled with the endeavors towards liberalization and privatization has resulted in drastic changes in the environment of public sector enterprises which in turn has affected the manner in which these enterprises conducted their businesses, both internal and external. The focus on cost effectiveness and efficiency has resulted in the entrepreneurial manager in the public sector, where the focus was on certain features like business acumen, creativity, proactive, task orientation, result orientation, performance orientation, quality consciousness, customer centric, etc. and all the more important the introduction of business environment and principles in the functioning of the public sector enterprises. Public Enterprise (PE) operates as dual personality being a public agency as well as distinct business entity and hence faced with the challenge of applying corporate management practices for efficient operations while coping with all political pressures and government controls (Jadoon, 1994).

Authors (Kane, 2006; Burton, 2003) have identified factors which act as barriers to effective HRM. Some of the pertinent issues include: short-term view of the real issues in HRM and the HRM practitioners are perceived to lack sufficient knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective HRM practices at various levels in their organization. HR professionals have not been assertive enough to be present in the boardroom to guide HR programmes to achieve long-term impacts of HR initiatives.

The world Public Sector Report has stressed the need for holistic approach to managing people as a strategic resource through reforms in the public sector which in turn can yield positive results in the era of globalization (WPS, 2001). In this era of fierce completion the greatest asset for any organization is its Human Capital. So it's extremely important for PSEs to motivate and retain its available talent and also work to attract best talent to gain a competitive edge. Here are few of the challenges faced by CPSEs in the era of Globalization and Privatization.

A. Intense Competition for Business and Talent

It is widely acknowledged that the public sector enterprises today are required to function in an intensely competitive environment dictated by market forces unleashed especially in the post liberalization phase of the country. The competition faced by the CPSEs from Indian private sector companies and the Multi-National Companies (MNCs) operating in and outside the country, extends to both business and talent. In sharp contrast to the formative years of the public sector, barring very few exceptions, no Indian CPSE enjoys a product / service monopoly status or a captive consumption facility from its parent Ministry / Department. In such a situation, the CPSEs have to be as innovative, as efficient and as nimble footed as the private sector companies and MNCs to successfully compete and win in the market place. Talent - both technical and managerial - becomes the fundamental requirement for such a success. The vast differentials in the remuneration, even at the entry level in some cases and at the middle and senior levels in all cases, have made attraction and retention of talent extremely difficult in CPSEs in the last 10 - 15 years. Engineering and Management Graduates from IITs and IIMs do not look at CPSEs as a career option today. Same is almost the case with respect to Regional Engineering Colleges and even Government Engineering colleges. In the 60s & early 70s, CPSEs were the preferred destination for most of the bright and young engineering talent of the country. Probably it is this residual talent, at the helm of the affairs of the Indian CPSEs today, that is contributing to the admirable success of the performing public sector companies of the nation.

B. Attraction and Retention of Talent Becoming More Difficult in CPSEs

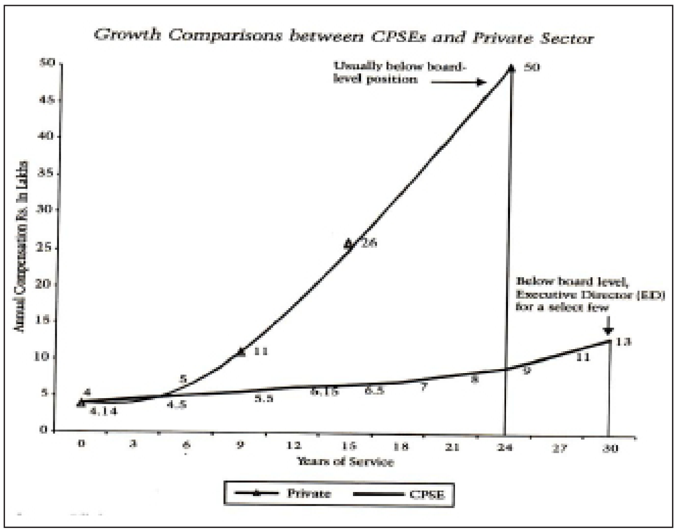
While the junior cadres of management in CPSEs were the targeted community for talent poaching in the earlier years, it is the middle management and senior management personnel who are being lured away in increased numbers now because of the tremendous remuneration gaps between CPSEs and private sector companies & MNCs. The operations of CPSEs are getting very adversely affected in view of this exodus of the experienced and valued cadre of executives of the CPSEs.

It is a fact that the remuneration levels of the entry level executives in CPSEs in some cases are comparable, and sometimes better, to the corresponding emoluments in the private sector. Even such CPSEs are finding it near impossible to attract bright talent. The reasons are twofold: In the earlier times, CPSEs, in a large measure, have been the training platforms for top class Engineering and Management Graduates. In the last one and half to two decades, there are several avenues open to these groups in the private sector companies and MNCs. Secondly and more importantly, the growth opportunities available to the talented ones in the private sector companies and MNCs are far more attractive and rapid compared to the CPSEs.

Therefore, solutions to the problems of 'Attraction' and 'Retention' are increasingly becoming difficult. As things stand, attracting talent is far more difficult compared to retaining talent? In respect of retention of talent some concrete steps have to be taken to preserve the aggregate knowledge and experience within the preserves of CPSEs to cope with the ever-increasing challenges in the market place.

C. Stifled Career Prospects in CPSEs

Mishra *et al.* (2011), in their book on compensation management in CPSEs have mentioned that salaries at the entry level in CPSEs are more or less commensurate with private sector enterprises and MNCs but bright talent are not attracted towards CPSEs due to various reasons. They do not find the career progression as well as the increase in compensation in CPSEs takes place through periodic revision which is not the case with private sector and MNCs. Fig. 1 clearly compares the career growth in CPSEs with respect to private sector and MNCs. If a person aspires to reach as the top level below the board in the case of CPSEs and taking into account the promotional policy in CPSEs, it will take a person 30 years to reach to the position of GM or ED. The present generation wants instant reward and recognition for their effort and is not ready to join CPSEs which has a system of long gestation period. Hence we see that bright talents are not attracted towards CPSEs and even if they join it is equally or more difficult to retain them.



Source: Mishra *et al.,* Compensation in Public Enterprises, Private Enterprises and MNCs in India, Academic Foundation, 2011, pp. 180.

Fig. 1: Career Growth and Compensation Comparison Between CPSEs and Private Sector

D. Shortage of Top Level Executives

As per the report by (KPMG, 2012) as many as 24 CPSEs were functioning without a full - time chairman – cum - Managing Director / Managing Director. This reflects on the need for succession planning in CPSEs and also the importance of revisiting the selection process of Board level positions.

E. Accountability and Compensation Systems in Private Sector Enterprises and MNCs Vis – A - Vis CPSEs

Barring some exceptions, in the last few years ‘Uniformity’ has been the guiding principle in respect of remuneration of the executives of CPSEs - with close linkages to the remuneration packages of the Central Government officers. While this linkage had some basis and rationale in the formative periods of CPSEs, the time has certainly come for snapping this linkage and move towards industry standards in respective of the remuneration packages.

As opposed to the ‘Uniformity’ principle practiced in the CPSEs, ‘Differentiation’ is the guiding factor for remuneration in the private sector companies and the MNCs. This ‘Differentiation’ takes place based on several factors like:

- The Sector to which the organization belongs.
- The functions to be performed by the executive.
- The location of the organization.
- Executive’s performance level.
- The organization’s paying capacity.

HR is one of the most complex and challenging fields of management, as it deals with the people dimension in business management. Thus, the issues being faced by CPSEs in the area of HR includes right from talent management to performance management. HR in CPSEs need to play a strategic role in the growth of an organisation; hence HR needs to contribute to the organizational growth by maximising return on investment through optimum utilisation of human resources which involves the development of HR objectives in alignment with the enterprise objectives. The main challenge for CPSEs is therefore to create an “HRD spirit” within the organizations where the emphasis is more on approaches that are result-oriented and employee-centered, integrating the HRD Strategy with the organization (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2002).

VI. Human Resource Management Challenges for CPSEs in the Era of Globalization and Liberalization

The changes in the industrial scenario have sent clear signals to the public sector to revisit its HRM practices and formulate HR strategies with focus on long-term profitability. To achieve this, the thrust has to be on competitive HR policies. HRM should now focus on building enterprises that change, learn, move and act faster than the competitors; and it is time to build competitive and not merely comfortable PSEs.

Contingency perspective argues that HR will be more effective when it is appropriately integrated with its specific organizational context and external environment (Fombrum, 1984; Golden & Ramanujam, 1985; Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 1998). With this view, HR practices should be adopted according to the unique cultural and environmental demands of the organization and under this perspective, HR practices cannot be simply transferred from private to public sector until they are tailored to the unique environment of public organizations.

The Department of Public Enterprise (DPE), which is the nodal policy formulation agency for CPSEs in India, having realized the importance of Human Resource Management in the efficient and effective functioning of CPSEs have issued guidelines on HR and have also placed HR among the enabling parameters of MoU, highlighting the importance of Human Capital as one of the most important resources for competitive advantage.

HR functions in every CPSE have to take initiatives to benchmark and adopt Best HR practices. Best HR practices aim at building a) competency, b) commitment, c) culture and

d) Systems with a view to increase productivity through efficiency, timelines, and quality and job satisfaction of the workforce.

The guideline has emphasized on the following aspects of HR:

- HR Vision and Mission Building.
- *Manpower Planning*: Long and short term demand and supply, recruitment plan and manpower sourcing strategy preparation.
- *Talent Management*: Recruitment strategy, recruitment policy, online recruitment, recruitment cost / per employee reduction, role analysis, exit interview and mentoring culture.
- *Career Management and Employee Engagement*: Promotion policy, engagement survey and job rotation policy.
- *Leadership Development and Competency Assessment*: Training needs assessment, competency mapping, Assessment and Development center, critical mass of leadership at each level, knowledge management, measuring training effectiveness.
- *Performance Management System*: Transparent and fair PMS, PRP based on bell curve and Performance coaching.
- *Compensation and Rewards Strategy*: Pay and allowances, PRP, Rewards and Recognition.
- *Employee Relations*: Employee satisfaction survey, Participative management practice, Grievance redressal, Work life balance, Social security schemes and Communication with society.
- *HR Branding and Excellence*: Participation in HR surveys, Benchmarking, IT in HR and organization culture building initiatives.

Apart from the Department of Public Enterprise (DPE), vide Order No. 1&M 14(30)/2010 dated 13.08.2010, The Planning Commission had constituted a "Panel of Experts on Reforms in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)". The panel was established to suggest the reforms in CPSEs in order to enhance its competitiveness and also critically evaluate the existing systems and process in CPSEs and suggest reforms. One area where the panel felt that there was a need for major reforms was in the area of Human Resource Management. Keeping in view the various issues confronting CPSEs, following are some of areas were CPSEs needs to develop serious strategy for overcoming the various challenges in order to develop a performance focus for sustainable business.

A. Human Resource Planning

There is a necessity for every CPSE to carry out an exhaustive human resource planning in line with its Strategic plan. Considering the strategic plan and long term prospective, the identification and requirement of key skills and appropriate talent may be established by CPSEs. CPSEs needs to evaluate its workforce demographic ageing pattern, current competence levels and future skill requirements, future demand of human resource and supply, Potential identification, Career and development plan and succession planning.

B. Succession Planning

The incidences of Navranta companies not having full time CMDs for years reflect of the leadership vacuum in CPSEs and also speak about an urgency to relook at the selection process of CMDs in CPSEs. The Roongta panel had suggested CPSEs to develop a leadership strategy so that there should not be any scarcity of leadership for its key positions. Competency mapping may be organized to assess competency levels of employees which could be the basis for developing individual career plans. The MoU Task Force may include parameter of succession planning as a mandatory component under HRM especially for Maharatna and Navratna CPSEs.

C. Recruitment

CPSEs need to be given autonomy to formulate their own recruitment policies according to their strategy and sectoral challenges for all level of recruitments except the board level positions. CPSEs board can be given freedom to develop their own retention policies. CPSEs may be asked to prepare a medium / long term plan for the number of vacancies they need to fill through lateral recruitment at different levels.

D. Learning and Development

With increasing Global Competition, fast paced Business and process transformation and technological transportation, there is a need for rampant HR transformation in CPSEs with learning and development being at the heart of the transformation. To develop and maintain their competitive edge, CPSEs need to increase the potential value of their employees by enhancing and linking their skills and capabilities in tune with the contemporary requirements of the market (Singh, 2005).

Executive learning and development can be geared towards equipping managers transform into business leaders. Executive moving up the organizational hierarchy needs to develop specific skills and alleviate knowledge gaps to keep the career graph growing. Thus, executive learning and development needs to be looked as an investment for employee retention. The approach to learning and development has to be changed and the training provider needs to be looked as a partner and a collaborative effort is required to address the sizable skill gaps. Training approach has to be beyond technical training. Collaborative approach to design is the one most important factor, followed by cost**.** Developing custom learning programs is perhaps the most significant aspect of collaborative. Leveraging technology to promote accessibility to flexible and self paced learning is the need of the hour.

E. Compensation

In the era of globalization and intense competition, CPSEs boards need to be empowered to devise and set their own pay levels and compensation policy. The Roongta committee report (2011) recommended the following steps towards the implementation of empowerment of CPSEs in the of compensation policy formulation: 1) To start with, only fixed component of pay to be determined on the basis of DPE's guidelines and variable component on the basis of Boards decision considering profitability and performance of individual organization. Due importance shall also be given to sectoral need while deciding variable component. 2) Variable component to be raised from 5% to 10% of PBT and 3) Transparent and robust PMS should be the base for arriving to variable pay and each CPSE's can develop its own customized PRP process.

F. Performance Related Pay Based on a Transparent and Robust Performance Management System (PMS)

Department of Public Enterprise (DPE) constituted the Second Pay Revision Committee (2nd PRC) in 2006 with the specific objective of defining the guiding principles for an objective performance management system (PMS) across all CPSEs as well as a mechanism for sharing of a part of the profits generated by the CPSE with employees through Performance Related Pay (PRP).

Setting in an appropriate performance culture is the key for any major improvements to be brought about. The introduction of a balanced scorecard based performance management system and performance linked incentive in the form of performance related pay are steps in the right direction. There is a felt need to critically review the PRP system based on a transparent and robust PMS especially in light of the 3rd pay revision for 1.1.2017. A critical review will help to understand the design and implementation difficulties and also evaluate the effectiveness of the PRP system to meet the objectives with which it was implemented.

Performance Related Pay was implemented in CPSEs to create a performance oriented culture and also to enhance individual as well as organizational performance. The process of PRP involves payment of pay on the basis of individual, team and / or organizational performance. PRP implementation requires the presence of a transparent and robust Performance Management System in CPSEs. Effective PRP implementation requires the following processes are in place.

- Developing a system of goal setting based on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant / Realistic and Time bound.
- Devising fair and consistent methods of measuring performance.
- Effective process of performance management based on measuring and assessing performance against agreed targets and standards.
- Understanding the role of line managers and HR managers as part of a performance management and reward process.
- Process of performance management and PRP should be fully integrated into the business planning and objective setting processes.
- Presence of strong and integrated communication systems to support the introduction and maintenance of PRP.

PRP should be designed taking into consideration the management philosophy towards attraction and retention of talent as the very culture of the organization. Implementation of PRP in public sector is a great challenge. But the task of implementation can be made effective if performance - related pay is based on a well designed, holistic, transparent and robust performance management system. PRP system should be implemented with the involvement of employees at all levels, bringing in a system of mutual goal setting and how they can be achieved, incorporating periodic follow-ups throughout the year and ensuring consistent ratings across the organizations (Singh and Mishra, 2013).

VII. Conclusion

Indian Central Public Sector Enterprises have indeed been the cornerstone in the Indian growth story. India's high growth trajectory will provide plenty of opportunities for CPSEs. CPSEs are hence well positioned to tap business in unexplored territories while also expanding existing engagements. While CPSEs have started witnessing considerable rebound and are poised for growth, there are still some roadblocks which may restrict their full throttle growth, and some of these include: Investments in human capital has become the key priority for most of these enterprises. However, employing the right talent is just one part of the story. Training employees on a regular basis to keep their skills equipped at all times is of equal importance. Public enterprises that have reformed their businesses and benchmarked their performance with the best practices are able to perform better than the rest of the CPSEs. CPSEs need to adopt a strategic approach to HR and have to assume the role of a strategic business partner by identifying its key role with clarity in context of organisational working as well as a contributor to organisational strategy. Strategic HR practices will help the CPSEs to achieve long-term and short-term goals through optimum utilisation of human resources.

Central Public Sector Enterprises in India have recognized the need for building a performance oriented culture in order to survive and sustain competition. There is a need for Human Resource Management by leveraging efficient HR analytics and enabling innovation through cohesive performance and talent management initiatives. Since, "Human Resource Management" is an integral element under the 'Non-financial parameters. Relevant Sub-Parameters under HRM could be selected from the HRM guidelines in line with the HR mission and Vision of the company. However, CPSEs have to expand the scale to which they leverage technology in order to harness its full potential and also to make their processes more robust and efficient.In the public sector, HR practices and their management have a long way to go in order to achieve professional and competitive HR standards. There is lot to be done by HR in terms of identifying and nurturing talent; creating a performance-driven culture; and bringing about changes in the mindsets of employees at all levels so as help CPSEs achieve long-term and short-term goals through optimum utilisation of human resources.

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