

Human Resource Management (HRM) Issues in Mobile Telecom Industry: A Comparative Study on Public and Private Mobile Operators in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Cellular telephone system is such an amazing mode of communication all over the world that produced unexpected results in the socio-economic development of the developing countries like Bangladesh. As a whole, the mobile market got dramatic expansion and mobile phone became a common mode of communication in Bangladesh. The contribution of the telecom service sector to the GDP is 3.54%² and the mobile phone penetration rate is 56%³. At present, Grameenphone has an experience of 15 years of operation, while Teletalk is nearly to complete 7 years of operation in the market. An organization's advancement and profitability depends on both the factors inside and outside the organization. As the market is vibrant and expanding, the operational environment is fully supported by the government and the investment and progress is also satisfactory, the success of mobile operators in Bangladesh mostly depends on the inner qualities of the companies. Modern management theories assume that the productivity and efficiency of an organization are very closely related to the treatment the employees get while working in the organization. The Human Resource Development Policy is the determinant of the outcome of all the policies and strategies in an organization, especially in case of operating in a service sector. If the HR policy is not designed to ensure the employees' minimum benefit and maximum scope of flourishing their potentials, the marketing, finance or technological strategies may not produce the expected result. And this is the key point of the comparison made on the HR policies of two mobile

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² Bangladesh Economic Survey, 2011

³ <http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Bangladesh-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html>

phone operators in Bangladesh – Grameenphone and Teletalk, keeping special focus on the issues like: training, human resource development policy, employment benefits, health & safety issue, equal opportunities at workplace, voice of employees or employee association, CSR programs, etc. The article also depicts a comprehensive picture on present status of mobile operators and ever rising subscribers in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Mobile phone, Grameenphone, Teletalk, Human Resource Management

Introduction

In spite of being one of the poorest, most densely populated, least developed countries in the world, Bangladesh has revealed a way to grow its telecommunications sector. Following a number of years of steady growth, starting from a very low base, the total number of mobile phone active subscribers has reached 85.455 million or more than 50% penetration rate at the end of December 2011 (BTRC) while the number was 68.645 million at the end of 2010 i.e. 16.81(24.48%) million subscribers are newly added last year (2011). Enhanced use of mobile phones can help developing countries like Bangladesh to fight against poverty and empower poor men and women. Bangladesh has been highly lauded for its success in the mobile phone coverage in terms of population and territory and for a relatively faster penetration and revolutionary changes to lower call-charges than many countries. However, having this substantial success in flourishing the telecom sector in Bangladesh, the present condition of the mobile operators in terms of Human Resources Management (HRM) issues is almost frustrating.

By HRM issues, here, I mean some very important problems or necessities that any organization should mitigate in a planned and systematic way so that people working in the organization can be made dedicated for high quality service delivery to the customers and clients and thus make a corridor to reach the organizational goals and objectives. Theoretically, HRM is the strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets - the people working there, who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the business. For the last 20 years, empirical work has paid particular attention to the link between the practice of HRM and organisational performance, evident in improved employee commitment, lower levels of absenteeism and turnover, higher levels of skills and therefore higher productivity, enhanced quality and efficiency.

An organization's advancement and profitability depends on both the factors inside and outside the organization. As the mobile phone market is vibrant and expanding, the operational environment is fully supported by the government and the investment and progress of recovery record is also satisfactory, the success mostly depends on the inner qualities of the companies. Modern management theories assume that the productivity and efficiency of an organization are very closely related to the treatment the employees get while working in the organization. The Human Resource Development Policy, commonly known as the HR policy, is the determinant of the outcome of all the policies and strategies in an organization, especially in case of operating in a service sector. If the HR policy is not designed ensuring the employees' minimum benefit and maximum scope of flourishing their potentials, the marketing, finance or technological strategies may not produce the expected result. In this regard, the organizations in Bangladesh have many limitations especially those as the public entity. Though mobile telecom sector is booming up rapidly in Bangladesh as mobile phones have become a fundamental part of personal communication at all level of the society during the past ten years, but the HRM issues and practices have been devoted little specific attention. Some private mobile companies try very enthusiastically to address the problems related to work and personnel, but there is extreme dissatisfaction among the employees in public mobile operator, Teletalk, regarding the working environment.

Thematically this paper can be divided into five parts. In the first part a brief introduction along with elaboration of the basic concept of HRM and an outline of the study methodology have been given. History and present status of mobile operators in Bangladesh have been discussed in the second part. In the third part some articles and clauses of ILO convention as well as Bangladesh Labour Law which are relevant to this study have been presented in brief. Comparative discussion on HRM issues between public and private mobile operator, the main focus of this paper, has been provided in the fourth part, and lastly based on the findings of the study a conclusion has been drawn in the fifth part of this paper.

Objectives & Methodologies of the Study

This study was conducted on four mobile operators⁴ in Bangladesh regarding different HRM issues as instructed through the Term of Reference (ToR) of ‘UNI Global Union’⁵. And this article is developed on the basis of the findings, observations and experiences gathered during the study. The major focus of the study was to understand and investigate the existing mobile market in Bangladesh with an emphasis on various issues related to the comparative working environment in the companies.

Interview, literature review, websites and other secondary sources are the major part of the study. A set of questionnaire and checklist were also prepared to collect necessary data and information from different mobile service providers in Bangladesh. Through predesigned questionnaire, face to face interview was taken with different level of officials, and some interview and information were collected through email communication also.

Mobile Telecom market in Bangladesh

The history of mobile phone is not very new in this poor country as it has already passed two decades starting from the early part of 1990s. The beginning of mobile phone has been pretty late in our country compared to that of the neighboring and developed nations, but in the last 3-4 years an explosive growth and the earth shivering changes yielded up in the mobile phone sector in Bangladesh.

| Serial* | Name | Issue of Licence | Date of Commencement |
|---------|--------------|------------------|--|
| First | Citycell | 26-07-1989 | 11-08-1993 (HBTL) 1996 (Citycell Digital) |
| Second | Grameenphone | 11-11-1996 | 26-03-1997 |
| Third | Robi | 11-11-1996 | 11-08-1997 (Aktel) 28-03-2010 (Robi) |
| Forth | Banglalink | 11-11-1996 | 03-09-1997 (Sheba) Feb, 2005 (Banglalink) |
| Fifth | Teletalk | 01-09-2004 | 31-03-2005 |
| Sixth | Airtel | 20-12-2005 | 10-05-2007 (Warid) 20-12-2010 (Airtel) |

* Serial is made based on the time of commencement. Source: Based on information available on BTRC website.

⁴ The four mobile operators are Grameenphone Ltd, Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd, Banglalink Ltd and Airtel Ltd.

⁵ UNI Global Union is a Switzerland based organization representing hundreds of trade unions all over the world. Its more than 900 affiliated unions in 140 countries have 20 million members.

In 1989 Bangladesh Telecom Limited (BTL) was awarded a license to operate cellular and then in 1990 Hutchison Bangladesh Telecom Limited (HBTL) was incorporated in Bangladesh as a joint venture between BTL and HBTL. They began commercial operation in Dhaka using the AMPS⁶ mobile technology in 1993 and became the 1st cellular operator in South Asia. HBTL changed its name to Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBTCL) in February 1996 and launched the brand name "Citycell Digital" to market its cellular products.

From 1993 till 1996 the mobile phone services were monopolized by one company; Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd. which didn't let the customer benefitted, however, with the launching of mobile phone service by Grameenphone Limited (GP) with its GSM⁷ technology in 1997, the situation started to get better in terms of price reduction and quality. Grameenphone received a license for cellular phone operation in Bangladesh on November 28, 1996 and started operations on March 26, 1997, the Independence Day in Bangladesh.

Aktel, initially a joint venture between Telekom Malaysia and the local AK Khan Group, launched services in 1997 in Bangladesh but on 28th March 2010, the service name was rebranded as 'Robi' and the company came to be known as Robi Axiata Limited; joint venture between Axiata Group Berhad, Malaysia and NTT DOCOMO INC, Japan.

Sheba Telecom Pvt. Ltd obtained GSM license in 1996 to extend its business to cellular mobile, radio telephone services. It launched operation in the last quarter of 1997 as a Bangladesh-Malaysia joint venture. In September, 2004, Egypt based Orascom Telecom Holdings (OTH) purchased 100% of the shares of Sheba and afterward it was re-branded and launched its services under the "Banglalink" brand on February 10, 2005. The arrival of Banglalink in the mobile phone market

⁶ Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS) was an analog mobile phone system. It is the first-generation cellular technology.

⁷ GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) is a standard set developed by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) to describe technologies for second generation (2G) digital cellular networks. It is developed as a replacement for first generation (1G) analog cellular networks (AMPS). The standard was expanded over time including GPRS (General Packet Radio services) and EDGE (Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution). It is more improved after the development of third generation (3G) UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System). It will evolve further as they begin to incorporate fourth generation (4G) LTE Advanced (Long Term Evolution) standards.

brought revolutionary changes in the sector and created substantial price competition.

Keeping a specific mission in mind "Desh Taka Deshey Rakhun" ("Keep your Money in your Country"), in 29th December, 2004, the only state-owned mobile operator, Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd., induced in the mobile market with very high public expectation and some lucrative offers different from existing operators at that time.

UAE-based Warid Telecom is the latest company to enter in Bangladesh market and they obtained license to operate as the sixth mobile phone operator in December 2005 and started rolling out its network from mid-2006, and launched commercial operations on May 10, 2007 covering 26 districts. Later, India's leading telecom firm, Bharti Airtel, bought 70 percent of Abu Dhabi Group's Warid and rebranded the company's services under its own airtel brand from 20 December 2010.

In Bangladesh the number of mobile subscribers was very limited in the beginning. In the first year (1992) the number of subscribers was only 250 and till 1999 the number was below 1 lac. In 2002 the mobile phone users crossed 1 million and the rapid growth started from 2005 was really amazing and millions of new subscribers added in each year. Following table will show the subscribers growth rate in the country:

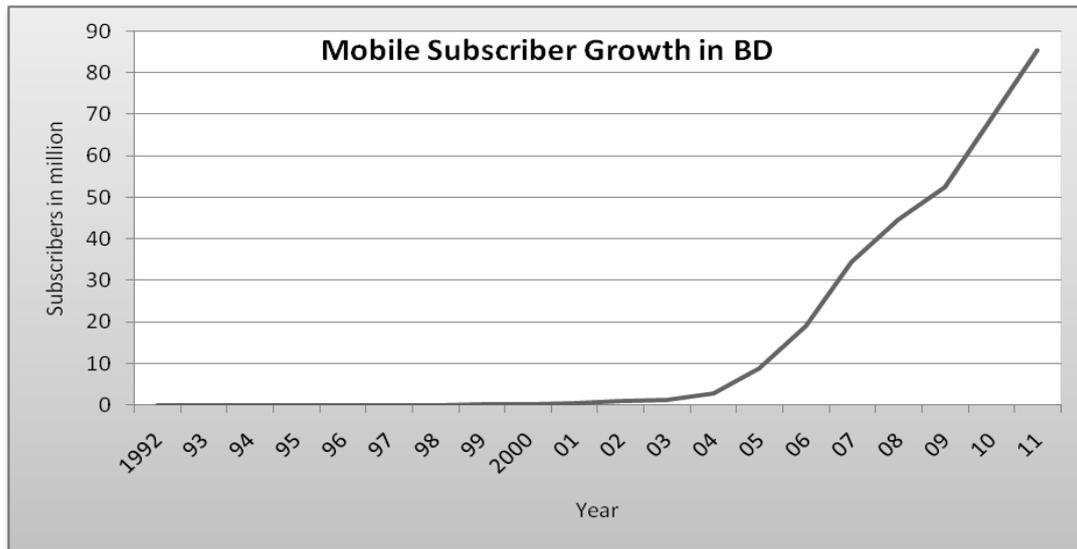
Table: Mobile subscriber growth in Bangladesh.

| Year | Subscribers (In ml) | Growth Rate (%) |
|------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 2004 | 2.78 | 104 |
| 2005 | 9 | 224 |
| 2006 | 19.13 | 113 |
| 2007 | 34.37 | 80 |
| 2008 | 44.64 | 30 |
| 2009 | 52.43 | 17 |
| 2010 | 68.65 | 31 |
| 2011 | 85.46 | 24 |

Due to the sky-scraping competition, service providers came up with lucrative packages, putting pressure on profit margins and revenues, as they battled for customers. The mobile sector is expected to reach 120 million over the next five years.”⁸

⁸ Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSSGE70E01O20110115>

Figure: Mobile Subscriber Growth in Bangladesh from 1992-2011



Source: Based on statistics gathered from BTRC website (<http://www.btrc.gov.bd>) & <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/bangladesh/mobile-cellular-subscriptions>

However, mobile penetration is still not satisfactory as the network coverage is almost 100% but 50% population is still out of connectivity. Moreover, the total subscription reflects connections or sold SIMs (Subscriber Identity Module) only, not the number of people, so the actual number of subscriber is less than that it's shown as there are so many individuals possessing more than one SIM card. The present scenario of all over the world regarding mobile phone penetration rate indicates that there is still plenty room for growth in mobile sector in our country⁹.

Mobile Operators in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a huge potential in mobile telecom sector and it grew at such an incredible rate within just a decade that anyone could hardly imagine. Now there are a number of players battling so hard for their respective market share and as a result the subscribers as well as the economy of the country benefitted from this tremendous competition. The players are Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel, Citycell and Teletalk.

As of December 2011, leading operator Grameenphone stays ahead with 36.49 million users, while Banglalink, in the second place, has now 23.75 million, Robi with 16.14 million is in third position, Airtel is in fourth having 6.03 million, fifth and sixth position hold by Citycell and

⁹ Some countries where mobile penetration rate is very high (in 2010) are: Macao-206.3%, Libya-171%, Russia-167%, Saudi Arabia-188%, and the average in 91.1%

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Teletalk with only 1.82 and 1.22 million subscribers respectively. This can be shown in the following diagram:

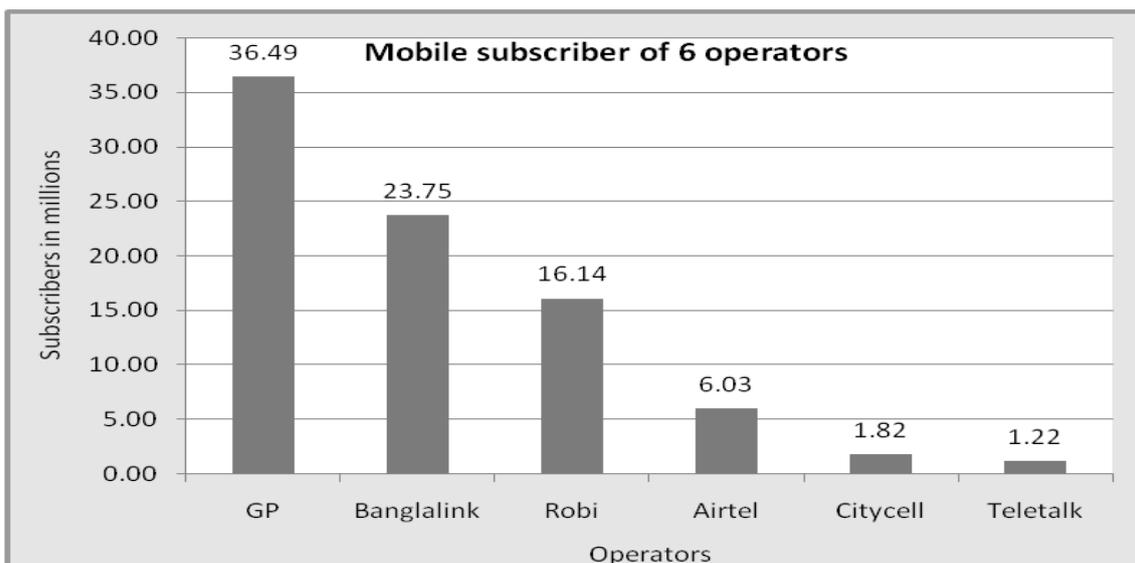


Figure: Mobile subscriber of different operators in Bangladesh (2011), source: BTRC

Grameenphone acts as the market leader and capture about 50% market share. The second largest part of the market is owned by Banglalink (28%), Robi is in 3rd position with 19% market share and the rest 3 operators have very insignificant portion of the total market.

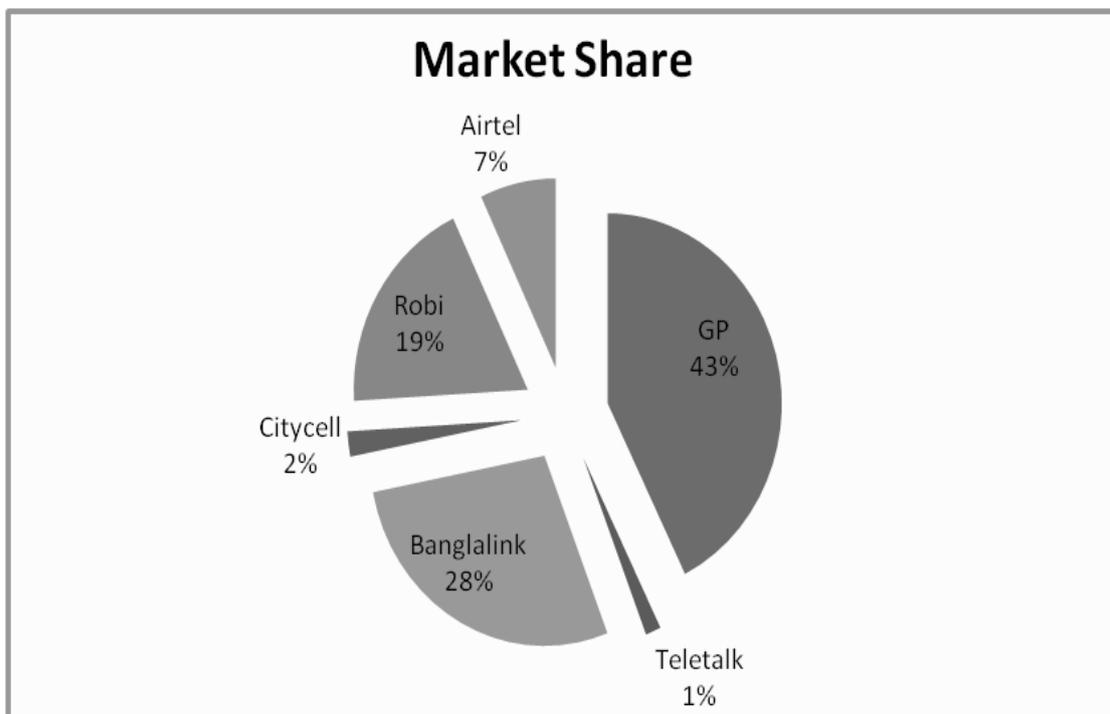


Figure: Mobile market share ratio of different operators, as of Dec 2011.

Theoretical Framework

In accordance with the office and work related issues a conceptual framework is built as follows by blending the Bangladesh Labour Law

and ILO Convention which outline some basic rights of employees in any type of organizations. To make a basis of my discussion now I am quoting here some of the provisions of them in brief:

ILO Convention 87

C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948

Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing without previous authorisation. They shall have the right to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organise their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes. They shall have the right to affiliate with international organisations of workers and employers. The public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede the lawful exercise thereof.

ILO Convention 155

P155 Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981

Under this protocol there are several issues which must be taken care of by any type of organization, like occupational accident that covers an occurrence arising out of, or in the course of, work which results in fatal or non-fatal injury; occupational disease that covers any disease contracted as a result of an exposure to risk factors arising from work activity; dangerous occurrence that covers a readily identifiable event as defined under national laws and regulations, with potential to cause an injury or disease to persons at work or to the public; commuting accident that covers an accident resulting in death or personal injury.

Bangladesh Labour Law

Safety of Health and Hygiene

According to the Labour Law there are some important issues related to the health and hygiene of the employees in the office compartment that must be taken into consideration by the organization. The issues are cleanliness, ventilation and temperature, dust and fume, removal of wastage substance, wastage box and dustbin, latrines and urinals, drinking water, etc. Regarding to the safety of workers the some measure should be taken such as safety of the building and the machinery, precaution about fire, hoists and lifts, floor stairs and means of passage, etc.

Welfare Measures & Provident Fund

The welfare measures include first-aid appliances, reservation of safety record book, washing facilities, canteen, rest house, child room, recreation and education facilities, etc. According to the Section-264, provident fund shall be constituted for the workers for their privileges.

Trade Unions

According to the Section-176 of Labour Law, all workers shall have the right to establish and, subject to the rules of the trade unions concerned, to join association of their own choosing.

Private Vs Public Mobile Operators in Bangladesh

The sole public sector mobile phone operator in Bangladesh is Teletalk Bangladesh Limited which is absolutely owned by government of the country. To make a comparative study I have chosen Grameenphone Ltd, the market leader, as a counterpart mobile operator of Teletalk. Before proceeding to main discussion, a short description about the two operators can be presented.

Grameenphone Limited

Grameenphone Ltd., after 15 years of successful operations, is the largest mobile phone service provider in Bangladesh. The company was successfully listed to the capital market in November 2009 and subscribed the largest IPO¹⁰ in the history of the Bangladesh capital market. Grameenphone Ltd., together with its subsidiary, Grameenphone IT Ltd., engages in the provision of mobile telecommunication services and information technology related services to rural and urban customers in Bangladesh. The company offers pre paid and post paid services; Internet packages, Internet security, WebSMS, Internet SIM, and high-speed Internet modem; and international roaming services. It also provides value added services comprising MobiCash, call block, stock info, instant messaging, downloads, cellbazaar, mobile backup, Health Line, cricket score, namaz timing, news, welcome tune, messaging, Power Menu, Study Line, bill pay, SMS chat, music, e-bill, team tracker, missed call alerts, vehicle tracking, and mobile ticketing. In addition, the company offers various handsets and modems.

Grameenphone is a private company; its ownership is now divided into 3 parts. The major part is owned by Telenor Mobile Communications (TMC), a company organized under the laws of the Kingdom of Norway. It owns 55.80% of total share whereas Grameen Telecom (GTC) owns

¹⁰ Initial Public Offering (IPO) is the first sale of stock by a company to the public. It is used to raise expansion capital and become publicly traded enterprises.

34.20% share and general public and other institutions have only 10% share.

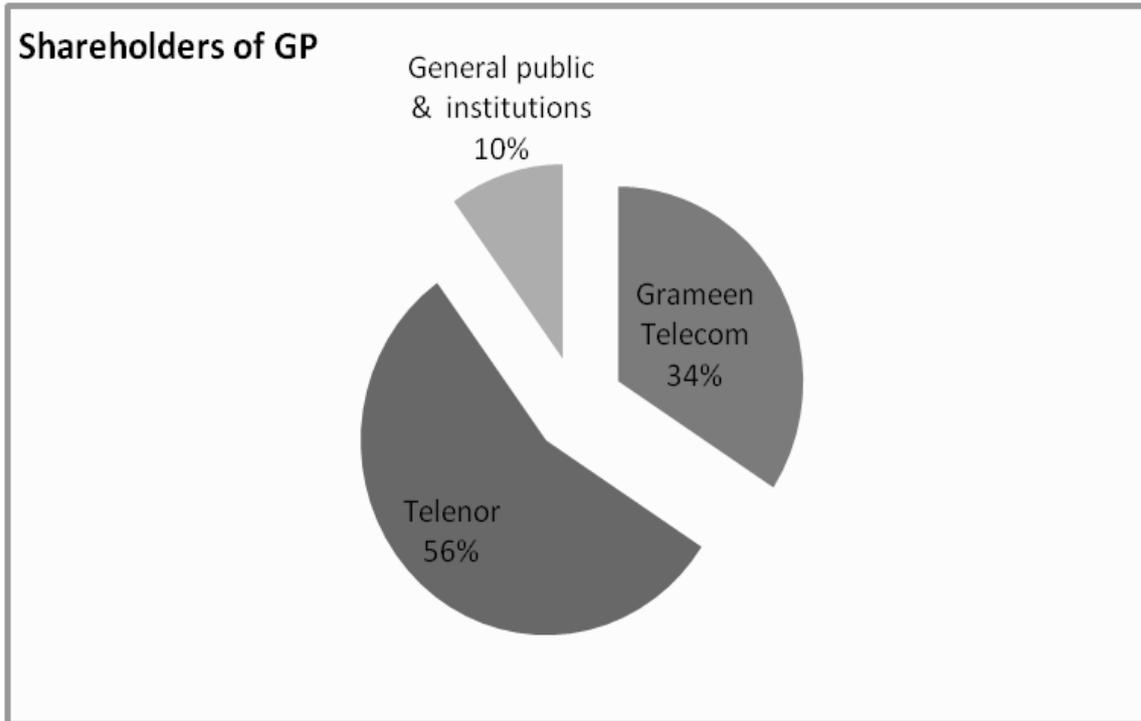


Figure 3: Shareholder Structure of GP

Teletalk Bangladesh Limited

Teletalk Bangladesh Limited is a Public Limited Company and its 100% capital share is owned by the Government of Bangladesh. Initially, Teletalk started its journey under the name of BTTB. It was incorporated under the Companies Act, 1994 with an authorized capital of 2 thousand crore taka being the only government sponsored mobile telephone company in the country. Teletalk is nearly to complete 7 years of operation in the market. The biggest advantage that Teletalk had during its inception was the permission of using all the infrastructural facilities of Bangladesh Telecom Company Limited (BTCL) spread all over the country. Still, statistics say that the sole public operator is the smallest operator in terms of number of subscribers. The basic product of Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd is its SIM card. In addition to offering the fundamental pre-paid and post-paid mobile services, it offers a wide range of value added products and services such as, SMS, GPRS, mobile data services, infotainment services, SMS banking, Caller Ring Back Tone, Ringtones download, Picture Messaging, MMS, Voice Greetings. In comparison, Teletalk lacks acutely in value added services what the market leader Grameenphone possesses, but the general call rate of Teletalk is significantly low.

Comparative Analysis

Grameenphone is the largest mobile operator and Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd is the smallest in the context of the number of subscribers which has been discussed earlier. Now I will try to make a comparison between the two operators based on the information and statistics collected mostly through face to face interview and documents received at the time of study from respective officials of both the companies.

Employment Opportunity

Bangladesh mobile industry is a great source of employment. A huge number of people are working in different mobile companies in our country. The total number of employees in Grameenphone (as of December 20, 2010) is 4999, the largest number in mobile industries in Bangladesh. At present the number is more than 5 thousand (GP-website) and the employees are divided into three categories; permanent (85%), part-time (13%) and others (02%). Part-time employees are recruited on contract basis with a fixed period of time. Among the total employees male is 75% and female is only 25%.

On the other hand in Teletalk, the number of employees is only 396 (December, 2010) which is very limited and not enough to run all the activities smoothly. There are also three kinds of employees. Most of the employees are fulltime officials (78.28%) and the rest is recruited on lien (6.57%) and outsourcing (15.15%) based. The figure of female employees is very low, only 17%, against the 83% of male employees. Actually, the scenario in both GP and Teletalk regarding male and female ratio is not satisfactory.

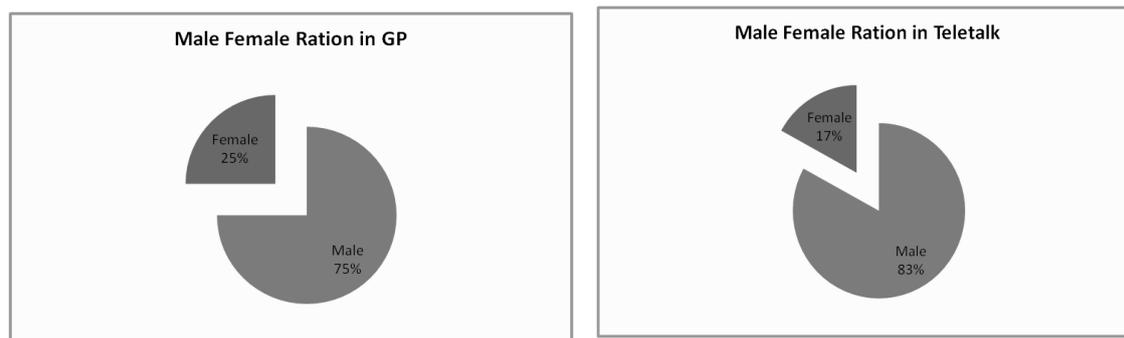


Figure: Male-Female Ratio in GP & Teletalk, Source: Study Findings

Training for Employees

Training is necessary for every type of organization to build an effective and innovative, efficient and committed staffs capable of delivering quality and cost effective services to the people or customers. Grameenphone provides in-house training through the experts available within the organization. There is also scope to take supports from local

training providers. International training programs are also offered based on need and feasibility.

On the contrary, there is no formal arrangement for the training of the employees in Teletalk Bangladesh Limited. Like every other government organization, Teletalk seems to be less concern or active regarding training for the employees. Therefore, Teletalk, in comparison to its competitors in the market, is the most ineffective, inefficient and unpopular mobile operator in our country. Although having all sorts of advantages for being government owned operator, it is referred as a provider of very poor customer service and less impressive product design.

Plan for Human Resource Development

Human resource development is the key to success for any organization. For this reason different HRM approaches are taken by different organizations for continuous development of their human resources. But, unfortunately, government organizations in our country are quite reluctant about this serious matter whereas private companies are in extreme competition to develop their human resources. According to the HR division of GP, their upcoming development works in terms of Human Resource Management are: Talent Management Process, Leadership Academy, Comprehensive Induction Program, Strategic Workforce Planning, Improved Performance Management, etc.

While the HR department of Teletalk does not have such kind of plan for human resources development to ensure better performance and better service delivery. Even they have no intention to compete in the market with the counterpart operators. The consequence is very poor service delivery and thus the workforce remains unskilled or their potentialities remain unexplored.

Motivation for Employees

Motivation is the activation or energization of goal-oriented behaviour among the employees to encourage them work more attentively and sincerely for the betterment of the organization. So there should be some motivating factors like suitable working environment and some extra facilities available for the workers in any organization to retain them as well as to maintain the quality of work.

Most of the interviewed employees in Grameenphone Limited said that they are happy and satisfied with the existing working environment

in their company. In this regard Human Resources (HR) Department of the company stated that: “Grameenphone is providing one of the best working environments in the corporate sector of Bangladesh. From the organizational climate survey, exit interview, recruitment interviews and other feedback generating platforms, it is evident that all Grameenphone employees are satisfied with the work environment that the organization nurtures. Also the work environment is the core factor for retaining and engaging the employee base at Grameenphone Ltd.” There are a number of extra facilities in the company available for the employees to enrich their motivational level. Some of the additional facilities are: House Rent, Medical Allowance, Discounts at local and international hospitals, Transportation service, Long-service recognition, Provident & Gratuity Fund, Company share ownership, LFA, Education Fund, Special Loans, Day Care Centre, Mobile bill facility, etc. Though the rate of facilities varies depending on the individual’s position in the company, every employee is satisfied with the facilities provided against his/her level.

In Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd., although employees are a little bit happy with the existing working environment in their company but they are not satisfied at all with the facilities, in addition to the salary, available for them in the company. They said that there are no mentionable facilities but the salary only. Some senior level officials are entitled to get transport and mobile bill facility to a narrow extent. Junior level officials, unfortunately, have to be satisfied with a mere and fixed amount of salary which is also very small compared to the same the other operators provide to that level of officials. All of the employees have a strong demand for some other extra facilities as provided in different mobile operators.

Working Condition; Health and Safety

There should be friendly and feasible working environment where every employee can work smoothly in the organization without any health hazards or safety concerns. So it is imperative to have specific health policy and appropriate safety measures for the employees in every organization.

Grameenphone, as said by its HR department, provides extensive preferences regarding the health and safety need of its employees. It has very strong commitment to ensure proper and adequate health facilities in order to maintain sound physical and mental ability of its every employee. Accidents and incidents are handled very meticulously in the company and it has specific policies and guideline that enables to

facilitate health and safety security for not only its employees but also for the vendors and suppliers. The health facilities available for employees in the company are: yearly health check-up, full-time medical service through phone, medical outdoor inside office premises, assistance in getting appointment with leading doctors in both home and abroad, emergency blood arrangement, 6-months maternity leave and many other service as and when necessary. Similarly, several safety measures are also taken by the company such as: extensive awareness session on Health and Safety, separate department responsible for Health, Safety, Security and Environment, First-Aid box in all office floors, vehicles, meeting places, etc., First-Aid training to representatives throughout the organization, regular Fire-Drill, special security force dedicated for safety, 24 hour stand-by ambulance, observance of special health days and related awareness session, and so on.

A quite opposite scenario prevails in Teletalk Bangladesh Limited; there is no remarkable health facility, except a small health allowance, available for the employees. No precaution or measures are taken to ensure safety of the employees in the office in case of emergency. Only pure drinking water is supplied for the officials. In this regard the major problems, as the employees claimed during interview, are: no medical services, no fire or emergency exit, lack of proper fire fighting equipments, no emergency power backup, ventilation system is not available without air conditioning. In fact, the overall condition cannot be compared with the other operators.

Equal Opportunities at Work

It is the constitutional right to have equal opportunities at every kind of work for the employees according to their quality. But nowadays it has become a common phenomenon to have biasness, nepotism, favouritism, politicization and some other forms of discrimination in almost all kind of organizations in our country, especially in the public sector.

In the Grameenphone Limited, all the employees enjoy equal opportunity and non-discriminative working environment as the HR department of the company claimed that: “Grameenphone consciously does not discriminate on any basis like ethnic origin, color, political opinion, religion, gender etc. Roles and responsibility determines the candidature of any applicant. The issue of discrimination is not raised in the organization as there is no evidence of widespread practice of discrimination within the organization. In rare cases which are of

individual base are immediately resolved by the compliance manager. The strict adherence of our code of conduct ensures a discrimination free organization. Grameenphone Ltd. is committed to remain a compliant organization in accordance to the labour law. This reflects in every sphere of the HR practices of the organization along with the defined Grameenphone Codes of Conduct. The Values, GP WAY: a unique way of working that nurtures transparency-flat structure-seamless work style, the environment, leadership expectations and organizational culture is committed to implement, demonstrate and improve on the aspect of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.” Regarding the distribution of workload HR department stated that: “The climate survey reflects the overall satisfaction level to be acceptable throughout the organization in this regard”.

However, a little bit different information found during interview when some employees confessed that in GP there are some sorts of discrimination on the basis of political opinion or personal affiliations regarding the issues of making job permanent, training, promotion, posting etc.

Similarly, some of the employees in Teletalk Bangladesh Limited report that there is political biasness as well as gender discrimination to a certain extent in their organization. But they can't give any example of such incidents. Female workers mention that many times they have to face a sort of mental harassment in different forms. The company has no formal or written rules and regulations or strong commitments towards non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. On the other hand, employees are overloaded with excessive works to perform as there is not enough number of workers required to carry out the organizational activities smoothly. The tasks are also not distributed fairly and the present structure of salary is not appropriate with the workload assigned to the employees.

Trade or Labour Union

Trade or labour union in any organization is the platform or association of the employees to raise their demand and protect their rights. It helps to improve the people's participation in decision making and thus makes the organization effective resulting the best outcome for both employees and owner. According to ILO convention as well as Bangladesh Labour Law, there must have freedom for the employees to form or to join in any associations of their own and the company authority can't interfere or impose any restriction on the matter.

In terms of forming or having any employee association, HR department of Grameenphone argued that: “In our GP WAY philosophy, any employee at any time can raise voice or concern. We also have clear and specific platforms where solutions and conflict are resolved using formal procedures and legal modes are used where necessary.” They also claimed that there is no obstacle created from the part of the company to form any workers’ union, but the employees do not feel the necessity of it as the company is free from any sorts of discrimination and very much responsive to all kinds of demand of its employees.

But some interviewed employees reported that it is strictly prohibited to have or form any kind of labour union or association in the company. That’s why there is no formal association of employees in the organization to uphold their voice and establish their legal rights in decision making of the management. The employees in the organization strongly believe that there should, certainly, be a formal workers’ union or employees should be united to secure their rights and protest any forms of discrimination against them. But, unfortunately, they do not go for it as they are not confident about it due to lack of job security.

Similarly, in the government mobile company, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited, there is also no labour union due to the strict restriction from the authority. But the employees in the company expect that a formal workers’ union may have immense contribution to secure their rights and protest any forms of discrimination like political harassment and biasness against them.

Corporate Social Responsibilities

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), as we see it, is a ‘complementary’ combination of ethical and responsible corporate behaviour, as well as a commitment towards generating greater welfare for the society by addressing the development needs of the country. Every organization must have some sort of liabilities toward the society it operates for the sole benefit of people not with any other intention like publicity or popularity.

Grameenphone follows the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly Education, Health and Empowerment in all its CSR activities and employees are thoroughly engaged in all CSR activities. There are lots of CSR activities where Grameenphone engages in different time in order to response the demand of the society. The social investments of Grameenphone are consolidated in three main focus areas, namely,

Healthcare, Education and Environment. They also contribute in sponsoring different national or international sports events, emergency relief works, etc.

Like GP, Teletalk Bangladesh Limited also involves itself in several CSR activities for the benefit of pro-poor and vulnerable people in the society. Teletalk believes in the empowerment of the people as well as the potentials inherent in all of us to collectively enforce positive changes in our own lives. Some notable CSR activities performed by Teletalk are short code SMS helpline for children with disability/diseases, children's art initiative, blanket distribution program, medical treatment for poor, blood donation program, etc.

Both GP and Teletalk have lots of CSR activities in order to response to the demand of society and the nature of the activities varies depending on ever changing social demand or needs. However, it is claimed that all the companies carry out the CSR activities only to spread out their publicity of the products. These activities primarily aim not to serve the needs of the society rather they are much more concern about the interest of their organization.

Conclusion

Needless to mention that the overall condition of Grameenphone is satisfactory in the context of available facilities for the employees, health and safety issues and equal opportunity for all at workplace although some sort of dissatisfaction is found among the employees on different matter. But Teletalk is in a worse condition compared to GP in respect to all issues discussed above. Both companies have very strong CSR programs where they are, more or less, trying to serve the society, whatever their intention is behind the curtain. However, there is no chance to have or form any employee association to raise the voice of employees against any kind of discrimination they face. It was claimed on the part of each company that there was no evidence of widespread practice of discrimination within the organization, even in the working environment no option was there for any employee to be discriminated, but the real fact is that labour union is strictly prohibited and all employees are in fear to raise their voice due to extensive lack of job security especially in GP, as it is a private organization.

Teletalk is the sixth and smallest mobile operator in Bangladesh in terms of number of subscribers as well as networking system, although, it had a great demand when it started its journey. People were so crazy to get a SIM card of Teletalk that they rushed behind it and were ready to

buy a SIM card at a price of more than 3 thousands taka in such a moment when the other operators provided the SIM card almost free of cost. Due to very high demand Teletalk had to sale its SIM card through lottery system but, unfortunately, it cannot capture all over market of the country, although having less call rate than other operators, as its main demerits is lack of network frequency and extra facilities along with very weak customer services. As a result, in this high competitive market, Teletalk is incurring lose in every year or hardly makes any profit and the existence of it in the market become uncertain¹¹ while other private mobile phone companies are cashing billions every year. No government bother about the improvement of the condition of Teletalk and therefore it is in the most vulnerable position in telecom market. As no significant initiative is taken regarding the development of human resources so the quality of service delivery to its customers is highly disappointing and ineffective. So to keep the existence in the market, government has to take immediate action to improve the overall condition of Teletalk.

After a long evaluation worker issues and SWOT¹² analysis of the two operators and present condition of mobile phone markets it is now clear that there is a huge gap or difference between public and private mobile operators in terms of human resource management issues. Going through the certain facts I can conclude that although the overall condition, in all respect, of the private mobile operator (GP) is much better than that of the sole public company (Teletalk), but no operator, as many other organizations in Bangladesh, has completely compliance with the provisions of ILO convention and Bangladesh Labor Law. There are so many issues and problems to address and several measures to initiate in order to create more suitable working environment. In this regard ILO convention and Bangladesh Labor Law should be strictly followed and government should create pressure and make every organization, large or small, bound to follow them effectively.

¹¹ For details about the financial loss of Teletalk pl see: Profit & Loss Diagram of Teletalk at (<http://www.mopt.gov.bd/files/teletalk2years.pdf>)

¹² SWOT means: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat.

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