

**MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT\*****G. NANAYAKKARA****Introduction**

In this short paper, I wish to address my mind to three elementary issues: (a) as a Social Science, what contribution could management make to human resource development (HRD), (b) whether it is being achieved in Sri Lanka, and (c) what the future looks like.

**Management and HRD**

Management being the art and science of people at work, draws heavily from other social sciences. The resulting interdisciplinary character has enabled management to develop perhaps the most complex and practical perspective of HRD among those of others in Social Sciences. Let me look at these other perspectives first so that my task of describing what managerial scientists believe would be easier.

Economists perceive HRD in a poor country as a matter of the stock and rate of accumulation of critical skills against surplus labour. They focus, on the demand side, on the employment of labour for wages, and on the supply side on population policy and investment in education (also known as human capital investment). Strategies for HRD, in this perspective, are financial incentives at work, effective training, and rational development of formal education. More specifically the economic view of human motivation is based on the rationality of extrinsic rewards of monetary value.

The legal perspective of HRD, if there is one at all, revolves around the general organizational framework, with a particular interest in an assumed divorce between "Labour" and "Management" that is rather inevitable. The objective, therefore, is to resolve conflicts between the two parties - unions and employers.

The objective of education is to broaden the learning capacity, analytical strengths, and knowledge base of an individual. The perennial problem of education, and hence of the educationist, has been that of relevance, particularly when it comes to life skills.

The HRD perspective of technology has traditionally been concerned with the rather mechanical relationship between man and machine. The modern views have introduced a human face to it which has further complicated the technologist's inherent problem of appropriateness. In developing countries, the desired rate of technological change (if anyone knows it) poses the greatest challenge to HRD.

---

\* Paper presented at the seminar on 'The Contribution of Social Sciences to Human Resource Development' in 1991 at NARESA.

The last, not the least, group of social scientists that I wish to recognise for my thinking is the sociologists. Their contributions to HRD have been fundamental and specific, though they themselves sometimes find it rather difficult to assess. Sociological perspectives are fundamental in the sense that they go beyond the concerns of many other social scientists to highlight the relevance of societal and cultural formations in human development. In the specific sense, sociological contributions to the methodology of individual and group learning have been very significant.

To summarize the contributions of the various perspectives of HRD mentioned above, one could say that economics considers extrinsic monetary rewards, law ensures industrial harmony, education provides basic foundations, technology defines the range of skills, and sociology outlines the contextual boundaries. Then, what is left for management? Management decides the optimum combinations of all disciplinary contributions to work life of people at the various levels and areas of organization. Without sound decisions about optimum combinations at work place, human resource development cannot reach its potential.

I would like to elaborate on the contribution of management to HRD first by looking at the management's conception of HRD. While technology, economics, and education shape the stock of strengths of the "labour" and its price at a given point in time, management is concerned with making those strengths productive and the weaknesses irrelevant. In order to make strengths productive management has to achieve the best fit between those strengths available on the one hand and the type of work necessary to achieve organizational goals on the other. This has been the prime objective of management since the development of scientific and professional management early this century. The best fit between a person's strengths and a job is said to have achieved at the point of selection decision. This is a short-run view of "employment" of "labour" which should pave the way for further development of the initial set of strengths in the long-run. The overarching goal of management, conceived in a biological view of organization, is one of "wholeness" or "oneness" where human development and organizational development are interdependent and synergistic. Progressing on the traditional and scientific management practices of selecting strengths of people to match already designed job requirements, dynamic organizations today conceive HRD as strategic decision activity that would redefine organizational goals, attract newer tasks and resources, and redesign organizational structure as well as jobs in order to build on the strengths of personnel and avoid weaknesses so that people make their own future by way of realizing their full potential.

For the above reasons, management makes a distinction between training and development. Training is the learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of a job or occupation. The objective here is to achieve the optimum match between the individual and the job/occupation at a given time, and hence it is short-run oriented. The need for training emanates essentially from the continuing change of the work context of the job so that a gap

between the individual and job expectations is created. Further, such a gap may arise from a deterioration of the individual's knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Development (of human resources), distinct from training, is seen as learning activity which is directed towards future needs of organization on the one hand, and exploration of the unrealized potential of the individual on the other. It is concerned more with career and professional growth than immediate job performance of individuals. The latter kind of growth needs may include, for example, a desire to seek higher levels of responsibility, autonomy for experimentation, or a willingness to redesign own job around modern communication technology. Thus, management's perspective of HRD is integrative, wholistic and futuristic. It stands out clearly in the widely held, mostly mechanistic and deterministic HRD models of technology, economics, and education.

The contribution of management to HRD could be further explored, within the holistic view, on a critical domain of the interface of people and work, i.e. human motivation. Motivation, the will to work in organizations, fairly and squarely falls within the core concerns of management. Selecting people with right abilities alone is not sufficient; it is also necessary to ensure that those who are able, will perform well at work. Human willingness to excell to the fullest is a product of appropriate drives and attitudes which are cultivated and sustained in a motivational environment. In essence, a motivational environment guarantees a system by which the satisfaction of a wider range of human needs is coupled with opportunities for performance that progressively leads to greater and higher levels of satisfaction. Without being able to provide the best motivational environment, human resource development efforts elsewhere (on the supply side) could become dysfunctional.

The dysfunctional effects of unused human resource range from mere financial waste to socio-political calamity and human destruction itself. Lack of motivation is the psychological state preceding those of frustration and aggression. To the contrary, people have a (natural) right to opportunity for use of their talents, and to experience the beauty in human life. Poor management will deprive people of these rights, and thus could become a source of regressive energy in people. Its parallels (and friends) are economic deprivation, educational conservatism, and technological alienation.

Managers and managerial scientists share the economist's goal of efficiency or productivity in the use of resources for human ends. However, successful managers today would differ from the pure economic view of the exploitation of resources including humans with greater efficiency. In management too, people were treated (and continues to be so in Sri Lanka) purely as a source of monetary value, to be extracted from the human in a process of exchange between organization and the individual on a contract basis. In this process human beings are equated with other types of non-human resources, and they are subjected to basically a non-human process of utilization. Should human beings continue to be humans is a worthy question for the future generation of

man. At least we must stop seeing ourselves primarily as a "resource", a concept which camouflages the barbarian terminology of "labour", and begin to regain over consciousness lost in industrialism to value people as human beings. People are not a mere resource; they are 'members' of the organization. The organization is a family of members. The greatest contribution that social sciences could make to IRD is to stop contributing to the concept of human "resource".

### **The Sri Lankan Experience**

Decision making styles and patterns of motivation, two indicators of managerial performance in organization would be sufficient in the present context to illustrate the levels of maturity that human development has reached in our organizations. Following a brief description of these two indicators, I would like to discuss some contributory factors as well.

There are two tendencies of decision-making styles in Sri Lankan organizations that are being increasingly observed through the various studies undertaken by executives attending postgraduate courses at the Postgraduate Institute of Management. One is the tendency of decisions to centralize in the organization. A tendency to be less formal in decision-making is the other.

The tendency to centralize decisions is typified by (i) expectations of heads of organizations often expressed clearly and otherwise implied by their behaviour, (ii) reluctance to decide at levels closer to action, (iii) increasing number of committees which are inefficient in decision-making, and (iv) enhanced upward communication transmitting loads of information. The tendency to be less formal in decision-making seems to have the following features: (i) use of verbal, informal and extra-procedural means than written, and formal methods adopted hitherto, (ii) presence of a higher frequency of ambiguities in decision statements, (iii) lack of rigour in pre-decision analysis, and (iv) lack of follow-up and continuity in implementation. The tendency to centralize is a phenomenon which is more or less equally shared by the public sector and the local enterprises of the private sector. The less formal character of decision-making as a trend is observed in public sector organizations while no evidence of a trend is discernible for the private sector.

The second indicator, motivation at work for executives at middle levels, has been examined in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation. In general, professional executives consider intrinsic factors (such as recognition, achievement, and opportunity for advancement) as more important and relevant than extrinsic factors (like pay and equality in rewards). The importance attached to intrinsic factors in practice in the private sector is distinctively higher than the situation in the public sector, where the overwhelming view of meaning of work is attributed to "earning a living" and the achievement feeling ranked the lowest among four factors examined.

The above seems to be some of the symptoms of a much more serious problem of people in organizations. I believe that it is a disproportionate decay of personnel strengths at the middle level of organizational hierarchy.

The tendency of decisions to centralize together with the low level of motivation seem to be largely responsible for the disproportionate decay of human strength at the middle. When decisions are centralized middle managers are denied of sufficiently meaningful work; when middle managers are not intrinsically motivated they tend to evade responsibility by pushing it through the upward hierarchy. The circular effect is a weakened middle manager to whom the senior managers are reluctant to delegate. A weak middle manager would not risk delegating down the hierarchy either. Instead, he would try to prevent own subordinates from taking decisions at their level. A series of studies about the nature of employees shows that about 60% of middle and senior manager-level personnel consider that the majority of their subordinates belong to McGregor's X type (naturally lazy and evading responsibility) requiring superior's direction and close supervision.

In essence, we are observing the symptoms of a process that keeps the majority of people away from the kind of work that challenges their potential. In fact, the kind of work they undertake is below their ability and hence below dignity. However, those who are efficient are over-loaded with high-volume, low-dignity work, to the point that the person proves to be inefficient.

Developing people for middle level career positions in organizations requires careful and timely planning. We as a nation have miserably failed in this task. We do not seem to have a tradition of recognizing the potential in junior level executives early in their career in order to provide them with opportunity and encouragement to acquire and develop conceptual, technical, and human skills required at higher level positions. In the public sector, there seems to be a multitude of reasons for the current problem: inability to assign its due place to merit; absence of mechanisms for performance appraisal that is necessary to identify merit; neglect of training, and mismatch between training and employment; excessive dependence on seniority; promotions without considering the adequacy of preparation for the new job; and, some aspects of the structure of certain personnel services (professional level combined services) which do not promote specialization. Administrative Reforms Committee has dealt with the public sector human development issues at length in its Report Nos. 3,4, & 5.

Record of the private sector human development has never been satisfactory either. Its own set of causes, though different from that of the public sector has never received comprehensive and careful attention. Most of them emanate from two fundamental orientations of the private business organization, namely the family-based ownership and the faith in mercantilism. While the first orientation severely restricts career development opportunities, the other prevents the continuous generation of challenging work for professionals.

Thus, the Sri Lankan management experience in human development has been one of shame. Time has come for all of us to take a more serious look at the discipline of management and its role in the professional community of Sri Lanka.

### The Future

From a management point of view, every manager has a responsibility for developing his/her subordinates at the work place. This is a non-delegatable and unescapable responsibility. Developing people for middle level career positions is the biggest challenge ahead of our organizations. To identify the specifics of the need, there cannot be a better person than the boss, provided s/he knows the right questions to ask. The following is a list of symptoms that will help finding out whether one's organization has a weak middle or a subordinate level:

Manager (boss) puts in more effort than the subordinates do;

Subordinates, though competent, seldom work near their potential;

When leader tries to integrate subordinate efforts, they resist direction but no initiative is shown either;

Subordinates seldom share the larger total departmental goals and perspectives to the extent that the boss does.

Subordinates show little improvement in the quality of what they do, and promptness is lacking;

There are meetings but by and large wasteful;

Despite a sound management information system, subordinates wait for the boss to discover problems;

Subordinates often try to show to the boss more than what actually they do;

Sudden discovery of unethical behaviour, corrupt practices and irregularities;

Boss has an unfinished job of work continuing its overloading; and

It looks like that Peter's Principle is at work! People have risen to their levels of incompetence.

A careful examination of the style of management that has been practised over a long period of time would reveal that any of the symptoms above are largely the own creations of managers rather than caused by deficiencies inherent in the subordinates or in the larger system in which the organizational unit operates. They are often the creations of managers who keep important things under their hand and keep 'telling' others what to do (often in not-so-clear terms), forgetting that the subordinates are

people who have different and valuable strengths, together with a strong will to using them. Most of the common management problems begin where managers stop thinking that others around him are human beings. Managers themselves could become effective human developers if they realize that it is a managerial task, a task of leadership, and adopt a set of suitable methods such as (a) building a shared responsibility team, (b) continuous development of individual knowledge and skills, (c) developing an overarching goal for the group, (d) providing a unifying vision, (d) working as a playing coach, i.e., working with subordinates where necessary, and (e) providing total 'care' for the human being by way of active consideration of wider employee needs.

### **Readings**

- Bradford, David L., & Allan R Cohen 1984. *Managing for Excellence*, New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Braham, Mark. 1982. *Aspects of Education*, New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Francis, James G. & Gene Milbourn Jr. 1980. *Human Behaviour in the Work Environment : a Management Perspective*, Santa Monica, Cal. : Goodyear Pub. Co.
- Hunsaker, Phillip L. & Anthony J. Alessandra, 1980. *The Art of Managing People*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Jain R.B. & P.N. Chaudhuri 1982. *Bureaucratic Values in Development*, New Delhi : Uppal Pub.
- Jaques Elliott & Stephen D. Clement, 1991. *Executive Leadership*, Cambridge, Mass. : Cason Hall & Co.
- Kanter, R. Moss. 1988. *The Change Masters*, London : Routledge.
- Landy, Frank J. 1983. *Psychology of Work Behavior*, New York : The Dorsey Press. 3rd ed.
- McKibbin, Lawrence E. & L.W. Porter 1988. *Management Education and Development*, New York : McGraw-Hill.
- Meier, Gerald M. 1970. *Leading Issues in Economic Development : Studies in International Poverty*, 2nd ed. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Tosi, Hnery L. et.al. 1986. *Managing Organizational Behavior*, Marshfield, Ma. : Pitman Pub.