

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The basic philosophy of Human Resource Development (HRD) underlies the fact that everything we do, including all of the tasks which led to this document, can be done better if we learn from our own relevant experiences as well as from the corresponding experiences of others. This underlies the human instinct to transfer knowledge and skills to offspring through grooming. Thus in every society parents consider it as their prime responsibility to develop their offspring into responsible, useful, and respectable members of their respective societies. Such transfer of knowledge and skills from parent to offspring or from the more experienced members of the society to the young generation predominantly takes place informally and is practiced even by certain species of mammals.

In extended families, in which arts and crafts are practiced as a profession, it is considered the joint responsibility of the whole family to bring up their youth as inheritors of their family traditions. With the development of handicrafts, cottage industry, and during the earlier phases of industrial revolution, the concept of guild and school was evolved for the more efficient and systematic transfer of knowledge and skills. This gave rise to the concept of masters and teachers as nation-builders. Human Resource Development, or HRD, refers to a more formal and systematic way of accomplishing this task. For this purpose one needs to document all significant experiences and package them for use in education and training. Such a reservoir of both individual and collective human knowledge, skills and experience forms the basis of HRD.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD)

The development of human resource is the key to the development of all other resources. Traditionally labor, land and capital have been considered as the major resources, which are needed for the development of the society. Traditionally capital has usually played a more pivotal role among these three factors as it can be used to purchase the other two resources along with the necessary machinery and technology. The ever-increasing volume of more accessible, effective and powerful scientific and technical knowledge is gradually supplanting capital as the major resource for development.

In today's knowledge-intensive economy inputs in the form of knowledge and skills have major impact on the quality of goods and services and result in drastic reduction in per unit costs. A vivid example of this trend is the fact that some 20 years ago a PC with 64k byte RAM, a megahertz speed and monochrome monitor used to cost equivalent of about 250,000 rupees. Today a thousands time more powerful branded PC with a megabytes RAM, over a thousand-megahertz speed, HVGA monitor, CD ROM drive and other multi-media features and superior in many other ways, can be purchased in less than one third of this amount.

In addition to the preceding purely economic factors, the development of human resource is necessary for much more important, albeit less tangible, reasons. High quality human resource reduces inequalities by promoting social mobility. This in turn encourages democratic values through autonomy and self-reliance. Besides, a critical number of educated citizens are a pre-requisite for the emergence of strong political and social institutions facilitating informed, enlightened and efficient decision-making, which is necessary for fairness and justice.

HRD FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

HRD refers to the career planning of individual members of society as well as the study of the developmental processes of organizations.

Individual career planning involves focussed and targeted education, training and skill development through on the job learning. This is done through an integrated systematic strategy to identify, assure, and help develop the key competencies that enable individuals to perform current or future jobs. It also

involves the inculcation of healthy job and social ethics- dedication to and pride in one's profession, a healthy blend of competition and cooperation and concern for the welfare of the society. Thus HRD aspires to facilitate the ideal of socially useful self-fulfilling employment with adequate monetary and psychological rewards to all concerned.

Formal education and training is only the first step in a comprehensive strategy for HRD. A more systematic HRD program should eventually lead to the internalisation of knowledge, the refinement of skills and the development of healthy work and social ethics. This can only come through a long process of grooming where individuals are exposed to an active environment, which provides them ample opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills for the realization of well-defined challenging and socially relevant goals. In Pakistan, such an opportunity arose in the wake of the Indian nuclear tests of 1974 and the subsequent embargoes on the transfer of strategic technologies. This led to intense, albeit limited, R&D activities in the diverse disciplines of engineering, science and technology and the consequent grooming of engineers, scientists and technicians associated with these activities.

The other facet of HRD is the integrated area of study of the development practices of organizations so that they may accomplish higher level of individual and organizational effectiveness. In this case, it uses organization development as a focus for assuring healthy inter-and intra-unit relationships. This helps initiate and manage change by facilitating individuals and groups to effectively impact on the organization as a system.

HRD also focuses on career development, assuring an alignment of individual career planning and organizational career management processes to achieve an optimum match of individual and organizational needs.

An appropriate investment in HRD can help in the development of a healthy and strong society by enabling a majority of its individual members to contribute positively through their labour, their social actions and their financial activities towards its well-being. HRD, through its various program areas and in conjunction with the rest of the educational, industrial, government and business systems, is charged with the preparation and development of young people and adults towards this end.

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE HRD

Some of the critical factors for sustainable HRD are:

1. Population explosion,
2. The rising expectations, and
3. The ongoing knowledge revolution.

Because of the first two factors educational and training facilities have to cater to an ever-increasing number of people every year. This results in the very thin spreading of the already meagre education and training resources of the countries of South, further deteriorating the quality of education services. Some of these problems can be overcome through the following steps;

- i. Giving more autonomy to institutions,
- ii. More flexible and responsive management practices which can make more efficient use of existing resources,
- iii. Public-private partnership and resource sharing among institutions, and
- iv. Stratification, allowing institutions to play their strengths and serve different needs.

The ongoing knowledge revolution provides both challenges and opportunities to the planner of HRD programs. The challenges stem from the fact that participation in the knowledge-based economy requires a new set of human skills. People need to have higher qualifications and to be capable of greater intellectual independence. They must be flexible and be able to continue learning much beyond the traditional age for schooling. Without improving their human capital, countries of the South will inevitably fall behind and experience intellectual and economic marginalization and isolation. The result will be continuing, if not rising, poverty, social unrest and even more human misery than witnessed today.

The knowledge revolution also calls for additional funds for:

1. Regular reviews of the contents of education and training to keep it relevant and up to date,
2. Updating and supplementing library and laboratory resources, and
3. Increasing emphasis on higher education.

There is, thus, a need to strike a balance between general and specialized education. The former encourages flexibility and innovation, thus allowing the continued renewal of economic and social structures relevant to the fast changing world. The latter emphasizes teaching students not only what is currently known, but also to keep knowledge up to date, so that they will be able to refresh their skills as the economic environment changes.

The opportunities are provided by the spin-off technologies of the knowledge revolution, the enabling technologies of IT and the Internet. These technologies provide convenient access to the reservoir of the human knowledge and skills cumulated over the centuries. They also make it possible to provide education and training to a much larger number of people at significantly lower costs through the distant learning and virtual university schemes. In this way the knowledge revolution, while putting additional demands on the limited financial resources, can also redress some of the problems, which arise from the changing demography and the rising expectations it fuels.

SOME EXAMPLES OF NON-SUSTAINABLE HRD

Certain aspects of the existing HRD scheme pertaining to secondary and tertiary education are not sustainable. These are;

- i. The ever increasing number of students opting for O-level and A-level examinations and other externally conducted examinations required for admissions abroad,
- ii. The requirement of certain private-sector universities to have the grades of SAT and GRE tests as criterion for admission,
- iii. The increasing number of young people going abroad for higher studies, and
- iv. The consequent brain drain of educated and skilled manpower from the country.

The first two of these, desirable as they are, are not sustainable for purely financial reasons. It is estimated that around 50 million dollars is remitted outside the country for O- and A-level examinations alone. A similar amount may be spent on the foreign admission related examinations such as SAT, GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, etc; and their related admission formalities.

Requiring students to take SAT, GRE and other such standard reliable examinations is also highly desirable. However, in addition to further straining the meagre foreign exchange resources of the country such practice is highly discriminatory in nature against the poorer section of the population. It also further erodes the credibility of local institutions and stunts their development.

A possible way out of this dilemma is to develop and strengthen credible institutions, with foreign help and assistance if needed, both for testing and for HRD in certain key areas. The foreign tests can be used for initial calibration and for establishing the credibility of local testing services.