

Planning HRD Strategy

HRD is concerned with personal development. It is more than skill development or preparing an individual for a job. Development has a much wider context than job training. It includes, besides job training, developing self confidence, greater awareness of the environment, ability to relate to people, and providing meaning in what one does. It is meant to improve the estimate of self worth for the individual. The concern is to deal with an individual as a person, and not merely as an employee. HRD policy and practices would therefore have to have people orientation. Experiences of successful organisations suggest that HRD orientation would have to be widely spread throughout the organisation, and cover all levels. People should 'experience' what is claimed by the company during orientation in the organisation at entry level. The new comers should feel the intended approach of the management. Leave rules, for example, in CMC Ltd., which had strong belief in people development, left it open to the individual to decide when and for how long he could be away taking into consideration the requirements of the work in hand, or anticipated. Medical facilities were given according to the circumstances and not on the basis of a rigid rule based on the status of the person in the organisation. They believed that individuals were responsible and practices should both reflect and reinforce this view of a person.

In turn, the practices followed by the higher management influenced the behaviour of employees at work. McGregor (1961) had emphasised that underlying a policy decision or practices is the manager's assumption about people. If, for example, he believed that people shirk work, he would institute close supervision and detailed inspection arrangements of the subordinate's work. When he observes that the subordinate shirks work as soon as his back is turned, he interprets this behaviour as confirmation of his assumption that people indeed shirk work. It is possible, McGregor thesis suggests, that

shirking work is a reaction to the close supervision and inspection procedures and is not an inherent characteristic of the person. McGregor thesis further suggests that if the manager believed that given the condition that people like to work, the policy and practice would consist of creating conditions of work where the individual could do his best. CMC's approach was guided by the consideration that the management should create suitable conditions for people to work and, in turn, they would behave in responsible ways. Attitudes and values develop from the totality of experiences that people have at work and the meaning that they attach to these experiences. It follows that a change in the nature of experiences are needed for change in the attitude and values of employees.

The HRD policy and practices would have to be 'experienced' by people in the organisation, and not merely articulated in a policy document. The policy maker in an organisation would have to be concerned with the following two kinds of questions while formulating a strategy for HRD interventions:

- (a) How do employees acquire values about work, and how do they change them.
- (b) What organisational approaches are needed for employees to acquire new attitudes, and internalise them. The new attitudes should be reflected in their behaviour, especially in the way they perceive their work, and the way they relate to other people.

Acquiring Values About Work

An individual acquires attitudes about work in a variety of ways. He ascribes meaning to his observations about what is happening around him, and to his personal interactions with superiors, peers and subordinates. The meaning he ascribes to the events are partly influenced by his own personality, and his basic social and psychological needs. They are, however, influenced greatly by his peer groups. His views about the organisation, the people at work, the work itself etc. are formed when the same experience is reinforced in a number of situations. He acquires a frame of reference which guide his observations. This frame of reference is his attitude towards work. It is internalised. It becomes a part of his subconscious mind and his observations are influenced by this attitude. Often the responses of most employees become common because the factors that influence work attitudes are common, and new people learn these patterns of behaviour from their peers. These patterns constitute organisational culture.

Let me give some examples from organisations to highlight the process. Taken out of context, the situation may appear somewhat simple, but they illustrate how work related attitudes and values are formed.

- In one organisation committees were appointed to look into operational problems. The idea was that people drawn from related functions would be better placed to resolve the problem than any one person. However the committee reports were rarely discussed and acted upon. The delays in submission of reports were common and no serious note of such delays was taken. These features of the working of committees in this organisation were generally true for committees that were manned by senior people as also the junior. It was noticed that most committees stopped taking their work seriously. And as this happened the recommendations seemed casual and imprecise. The lack of depth was often given as a reason for ignoring the report of a committee. Hence committees in this organisation became dysfunctional. Contrasting the experience of this organisation, another organisation used the committees differently. The reports were invariably presented to the top and the senior management, and revisions were carried out where necessary. The pattern of behaviour relating to collaborative effort to resolve common problems differed markedly in these two organisations.
- In another organisation a somewhat similar process may be of interest. A new market analyst from a prestigious business school carried out analysis of a product which was to be discontinued by the organisation. On his own initiative he prepared a report which led to the conclusion contrary to the one the top management had reached. He gave the report to his supervisor. The supervisor took the report without any comment. He never heard what higher management thought of the report. The supervisor in passing mentioned that the higher management were not satisfied with the profit figures. His colleagues who witnessed the scene asked him how did it feel. They said he would get used to the situation in due course implying that they too had taken initiative in the past but their efforts were ignored and now they do what they are asked to do – carry out the instructions-but do not take initiative on their own. Everyone waited for instructions to come from higher levels and did their work in a routine manner. The employees used their talents by taking up assignments outside the organisation. Most of the talented people became cynical about the job they did.

In both instances mentioned here, individuals learnt about what is expected of them from the experiences at work, and their interactions with other people. CMC Ltd conducted a three day induction programme for all new entrants. The chairman and senior management personnel participated in this programme. Through their interactions they conveyed the values they considered as basic to their organisational culture. When these values were reinforced at work, the employees began to accept and practice them. Other organisations in our study also followed similar practices (Dayal, et. al, 1996). Individuals derive meaning from what they experience, or learn from those in whom they repose confidence, and these values are internalised by them. The practical implication of the process of learning is that work values, attitudes and sentiments are developed as a result of interaction with people and through reinforcing experiences. As mentioned earlier, they do not develop from the statements made by management unless the essential features of the statements are reflected in the experiences that the individual has and reinforced in doing what he does as also in relationships with peers and superiors.

The process discussed here is basic to learning in organisations, though the process is highly simplified. In fact the social learning is far more complex. It is influenced by the individuals personality, the pressures of the group to which he belongs, the social environment and many such factors. Multiple factors would have to be seen to derive the precise meaning that an individual may give to a particular experience.

The process of learning, however, indicates that certain minimum conditions should exist for change to come about in the attitudes towards work and people. The most important conditions are the following:

- Employees should be able to place new meaning to their experiences at work, i.e. they react differently to the work related situations than they may have done in the past. These patterns are obtained generally by work redesign, new pattern of interaction where an employee gets the feeling that he ‘matters’, that he can in some ways influence things around him.
- Employees perceive that senior people do what they say, and the change is observed over a prolonged period of time.
- The positive experiences are reinforced or repeated in a variety of situations.
- The change is wide spread and not confined to a limited area or people.

- Employees understand the reason why a change in their attitudes or behaviour is required.

Briefly, the discussion would show that new attitudes and values change as a result of a network of interactions and not through discussion alone. Training may develop awareness, provide skills, encourage introspection, etc. and these may initiate a change process but the change in behaviour would come about when interactions on the job confirm what is learnt in the training programme. While training is essential in a change process, it is not sufficient to bring about change in attitudes, behaviour and sentiments.

The goal of achieving change in work attitudes would have to involve the total organisation, and begin at the top level of the hierarchy. In our study of five organisations (Dayal, et. al. 1996), we found that in three organisations the chief executive personally initiated HRD interventions and approaches. In the other two, director in charge of personnel initiated the proposal but the need was discussed by the chief executive and they were constantly involved in the formulation and the implementation of the initiatives. In all five organisations the operating managers were heavily involved in the exercise. The development of people was seen to be the responsibility of the managers, and this aspect was considered while evaluating their performance. When managers are involved in this kind of an exercise, the approach is internalised, and it becomes a part of the style of doing things in that organisation. Hence the first step towards changing attitudes is the clarity in the minds of the top and the senior management on what their beliefs are about people. Rarely do organisations articulate clearly whether they consider people as means to achieving a purpose, or consider them as resource that needs appreciation as any other resource. Are people important as individuals or do they represent an aggregate? What is it that they want the people in the organisation to become? What are the implications of their beliefs for themselves as individuals and as the organisation?

These kinds of questions may be raised by the chief executive, or some one else such as the personnel or the HRD manager. These questions are however important to examine. The answers to these question are rarely found in one time discussions. In CMC Ltd. the chief executive himself raised these issues because he believed that managerial behaviour and organisational policies would have to relate to the answers to questions of this kind. The management have to be concerned with evolving a management philosophy, quite apart from developing performance budgets

and profitability. They need to be concerned with the process of management, e.g. how they wish to go about developing an organisation that can achieve sustained results. It has to be both self generating and responsive to the factors that critically influence its performance such as the market, the technology, the socio-political environment, etc.

The second step is to evaluate the management practices that influence relationships. These may be called leverage points or anchors for the change initiatives. Anchor points are needed especially in large organisations to keep the programme focussed, and for monitoring it effectively. They have to be identified in a way that they influence all aspects of behaviour as they have a spread effect in the organisation. Life Insurance Corporation chose four areas that they felt could significantly influence the pattern of interaction among all levels of people in the organisation. They believed that change in these four areas will help in changing attitudes about work and relationship. These areas were the following:

- Supervision—developing supervisory practices that would give considerable autonomy to the individual to function independently, and also provide effective control to the supervisor. They developed supervising through results as against close supervision based on functional controls.
- Decision making—developing data based decision making and communicating in appropriate cases the rationale of the decision taken by the supervisor. The idea was to develop greater confidence in the decision and bring a higher measure of transparency in the decisions taken. The habit of using data should spread at all levels. This practice would also bring a larger measure of objectivity in decision making.
- Problem solving—analysing what is causing a problem rather than what may appear to be a problem. It is necessary to deal with the cause and not the manifestation of a problem. This would help in effectively solving a problem and preventing its recurrence.
- Counselling—helping people to analyse and solve their own problems. It is necessary to develop greater competence among people to analyse and solve their own problems. They should become self reliant in dealing with personal and organisational problems.

LIC believed that these are concrete areas where change in practices will bring about a change in organisational culture. By concentrating on these areas, the management would be able to also measure how effective is their programme of action.

A third step would have to do with measures that lead to individual growth. They would consist of tools that identify and plan development needs. Some of these are appraisal, career and succession planning, identification of training needs etc. Enhanced training inputs are often necessary. Most organisations plan repeated training inputs for individuals rather than a single exposure. CMC, Modi Xerox and several other organisations stipulate that every employee will go through one week of training every year. The needs are carefully identified by these organisations and training plans are made to meet such requirements.

Successful applications of HRD in organisation (Dayal et. al., 1996) shows that the approach is experimental. While the goals of people-orientation are clear and specific, the programmes designed to serve these goals are experimental. They are constantly reviewed and appraised. If a particular approach does not serve the purpose, new approaches are initiated. The emphasis of the programme also undergoes a change depending upon the situation. Indian Oil Corporation, for example, emphasised role-analysis at the start and as they found the initiatives useful, they reviewed many managerial practices and personnel policies. They integrated corporate planning and HRD. They developed career paths, appraisal policy, transfer policy and training. Many of the developments were implemented in parts of the organisation, or among a limited category of employees. After careful review and modification of the programme wherever necessary, the programme was extended further.

Our study brought out one other characteristic of successful HRD interventions. In all such cases, the operating managers assumed full responsibility for the programme. The HRD specialists were concerned mainly with design, planning, monitoring of the programme and provided specialist support wherever required but the responsibility rested with the operating managers.

Briefly, HRD interventions have to involve the total organisation. The planning of HRD interventions would have to include plans to prepare the people for their particular role in the task of changing attitudes, values and sentiments of people in their organisation. These sentiments should be reflected in how problems are solved, what considerations guide decision making and in establishing relationships.

REFERENCES

1. Dayal, I, et. al., (1996), "Successful Applications of HRD: Case Studies of Indian Organisations", New concepts, New Delhi.
2. McGregor, D, (1960) "The Human Side of Enterprise", McGraw-Hill, New York.
3. McGregor, D, (1966) "Leadership and Motivation", MIT Press, Cambridge0, Mass.