

# Contemporary Management Issues (A Generic HRD model)

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**Abstract** — This paper focus on Human Resource Development (HRD) has some complex and challenging components. It has a strategic purpose: to demonstrate the point that strategic human resourcing issues arise whenever any kind of human enterprises are set up to complete the job tasks cooperatively i.e., seeing it as a broad term for what has variously been called ‘labor management’, ‘personnel management’, or ‘human resource management’. It is interesting to see the whole logic of this issue is that we do not use the term ‘HRM’ but rather HRD, which essentially is the theme for developing human resource in an organization setting. The paper explains those ‘essential components’ and practices as one variant of ‘HRD’ in the generic sense.

**Keywords** - *sustainable competitive advantage, cross-cultural relations, bureaucracy, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy appraisal system.*

## 1. Introduction.

In the twenty-first century, people are more educated, equipped with the pace of technology and as well as they need to be trained and retrained to meet the challenges and opportunities of managing if their organizations want to succeed. As such, people are going to be even more crucial to the success or failure of organizations. Michael Armstrong defines human resources management (HRM) as ‘a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization’s most valued assets, the people working there who are individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives for sustainable competitive advantage’ Source: ACCA (1995, Pg. 381).

When organization shifts towards a globalized environment and in a diverse workplace, the human resource professionals plan the process whereby people enter, move through and leave the organizations, in accordance with the overall business objectives. Management’s choice of a human resource strategy will depend on the values held by those in positions of power within the organization. In most private sector companies employment policies are usually geared to corporate goals of profit and growth. Therefore, the planning of human resources becomes a search for those individuals who are at now and in the future will contribute

most to the success of the organization. By contrast, some organizations have developed equal opportunities policies and practices. These have considerable implications for the planning of human resources in that they aim, over time, for the population of an ethnically diverse workplace to come to understand the culture of the local community and which the authority serves.

## 2. A Generic HRD Model

In designing a generic HRD model, well-defined policies, practices, guidelines, accountability, reporting structures, job descriptions, and the firm’s culture and management style, are equally important. Next, the comparison of its present human resources with the demands of the firm requirement that needs to be examined in the areas of the existing organization climates or culture including leadership style and employee participation mechanisms; the types of people required in terms of skills, attitudes, and performance capabilities, motivation and rewards systems; current and anticipated skills requirements, management succession programmes; and training and employee development capabilities.

Further matters requiring examination include potential obstacles to the efficient use of the current human resources, the quality of internal communications, techniques for measuring performance, and general personnel policies. Gaps between actual and desired situations will become apparent. Measures for bridging these gaps should now be defined. A company’s success or failure depends to a large extent on its ability to select, train, motivate, develop and manage its human resources, policy matter and practices and it is inevitable that no business can attain its mission without employees who are competent to complete the necessary work. Foot-note<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Human resource strategy involves a central philosophy of the way that people in the organization are managed, and the translation of this into personnel policies and practices. It requires personnel policies and practices to be integrated so that they make a coherent whole, and also that this whole is integrated with the business or organizational strategy.’ Torrington and Hall (1998, Pg. 22).

Therefore, the more specific reasons for having that human resource strategy should include: the organization's with the most productive workforces that possess a competitive advantage over its rivals; expenditures on personnel typically represent a proportion of total company spending; the firm's capacity to adopt new technologies, enter fresh markets or if current situation in Singapore not viable due to saturation or low demand or small market, then undertake overseas markets for opportunities and undertake different lines of work frequently depend more on the availability of appropriate people than on capital investment; the increasing complexity in a firm would require a suitable mix of specialist skills, which cannot be obtained overnight; fair and equal treatment of employees as part of the organization policies in alignment with employment protection legislation in Singapore; it is only through having coherent HR strategies will a company be able to provide its employees with career prospects, job security and a reasonable quality of working life; computerization of manufacturing and administrative processes has greatly influenced the nature of work and the structure of employment within an organization setting.

### 3. Human Resources Development Strategy

A good example in this case analysis would be Singapore International Airlines – (SIA) which employs more than 16,000 people worldwide. Its human resources strategy is to integrate all HRD activities into a coherent and fully integrated whole, aiming to create shared values, a common work culture, targets that are understood throughout the organization, and a simple and straightforward system for allocating work. The firm employs many specialists and other professionally qualified staff in numerous nations and from widely disparate cultural backgrounds. Thus, a global HRD strategy generating standard policies and procedures subject to local variation in appropriate ways. Overall HR targets are included alongside other key objectives in the company's strategic plan.

Singapore Airlines is one of Singapore largest sector company, contributing nearly four per cent of this country GDP. Its human resources strategy focuses on the provision of continuous training and staff development and the encouragement of innovation, especially in relation to customer care. This fits in with SIA's overall corporate strategy, which is to position the airline at the quality end of the market – emphasizing excellent service, the provision of first-class in-flight facilities, and use of the very latest information technology. Concern for customers is promoted via teamwork and an appraisal system based on group rather than individual achievement. There is much job rotation intended to help employees develop a wide range of skills. The company is organized into units no larger than the minimum necessary to complete the tasks assigned to them. This reduces bureaucracy and facilitates fast local decision-making.

Recruitment procedures for cabin crew are stringent, although Singapore's tight labor market sometimes creates difficulties in this respect. Stewardesses are regarded as key employees which is the firm's corporate image then is heavily reliant on the sarong-clad "Singapore Girl" figure and "You're A Great Way To Fly" slogan from a highly successful advertising campaign broadcast throughout the world and senior managers participate in the final selection of this category of staff. Long service with the company is highly valued, and recognized via gifts and medallions. Staff turnover is low by Singapore standards, at around six per cent per annum.

### 4. The model arising in a HRD policy and guidelines are as follows:

Guidelines in cross-cultural relations in a company employees' relationship.

This is an issue in which the HR professional involves by getting people together to work harmoniously. In the work place, learning and understanding from the diverse ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds that differ from the rest and working effectively with people are key to effective teamwork and teambuilding. A culture is comprised of the values, beliefs, customs, and norms shared by people in a society and it varies from country to country. Foot-note<sup>2</sup>

For example, a gesture that is friendly in one culture may be interpreted as hostile in another; an innocent gesture can be an insult. Therefore, the HRD manager should communicate within the frame of reference in one that is not their own.

' Organizational culture consists of the values that its members – leaders and employees alike – bring to the work environment.' Kossen (1991, Pg.12)

A variety of factors influence the culture and operations of organizations of global organizations, would include: Customs, Language, Communication styles, the Work force, Attitudes toward time, Labor laws, Standards of ethics and Political climate. Essentially, when people communicate in hidden languages of time, space, agreements, touching, and friendship, the language used, can vary from culture to culture, are often incredibly complex, and are usually as important as the spoken language in establishing good communication and human relations abroad. For example, in Singapore or Hong Kong, or even in the US, a delay in answering a communication can mean to the person waiting that the decision is of low priority to the other person. And in Ethiopia, the time required for a decision is directly proportional to its importance: The more money involved,

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<sup>2</sup> The shared customs, beliefs & social structures of human society make up its culture. Many components of culture, languages, rules, myths, family, patterns, & political system determine the way people behave and communicate.-Source: Boone, Kurtz, Block (1997, Pg.65)

the longer it will take to arrive at a decision. Similarly, in Japan, the Japanese are relatively successful in the third world because of their cooperative efforts and also when comparison was made between an arrogant American executive and a humble Japanese executive, the Japanese usually got the business. From observation, if a global organization was to establish good business relation with any other foreigners to achieve its organization's business target, it needs a certain degree of tolerance in such a way to modify its own arrogance or aggressiveness and to fine-tune its prospective view and adjust towards the level of social consciousness towards foreign culture to achieve its own business objective.

### 5. Spirit of cooperation

The element of conflict is ever present between union and management of HR; perhaps an equally omnipresent spirit of cooperation can be developed. Many sensitive observers increasingly call for attention to the fact that human beings are not machines, that they have feelings and emotions that must be respected to get the highest degree of cooperation in the workplace and in labor management relations. The present emphasis on the study of individual and group relationships is a recognition that, along with the solution of technical problems, there must be increasing concern for human elements in production as well. A clear recognition of each employee's psychological needs is valuable both to the person and to the company. Foot-note<sup>3</sup>

Guidelines involving social and technological change in a global organization.

'As technology changes so there will arise the need for new skills in the business and people who are recruited possessing those skills will tend to import a pay level with them.' Torrington & Hall (1998, Pg. 604).

Although it is true that technological innovation paved the way for the standard of living that many are enjoying in Singapore today, it is also true that the quality of our life has not always been enhanced by those changes if the technologies is not utilized here or limited manpower with various field of experience are not deployed in that particular sectors of business. The environmental and ecological movements that have sprung up in the past decades are but one indication that growing numbers of people believe that unchecked technological growth is the wisest course to follow depending if people have the right attitudes, willingness to be trained, creativity in areas of

concerns, and upgradable for the growing number of working people.

Possibly, in the near future we may see the entire direction of change may focus less on technological innovation and more on technological "containment" and on interpersonal, intergroup changes in human behavior or toward using technological improvement for the business advantages. It is also interesting to note that the major issue in information technology is not technology based; it is management based in which it is used for the betterment of the business performance throughout the global business environment.

The shift from an industrial to an information society is centered on five points as highlighted; the information society is an economic reality, not an intellectual abstraction; innovations in communications and computer technology will accelerate the pace of change by collapsing the information float which is the amount of time information spends in the communication channel; new information technologies will at first be applied to old industrial tasks, then gradually give birth to new activities, processes, and products; in this literacy-intensive society, when we need basic reading and writing skills more than ever before, our education system has to be superior in quality in terms of training, research, and teaching; the technology of the new information age is not absolute. It will succeed or fail according to the principle of high tech / high touch. Examples: touch-screen, i-phone, i-pad, i-pod, MacBook Air, with global connectedness, etc.

"High tech/high touch" means that in the age of technological information, where individuals work alone at home or in office or telecommute, there must be corresponding human responses. Work environment changes are not all based around information technology. There are changes in the type of work that people want and are capable of doing as in a global business environment. Continual reassessment of both individual goals and organizational objectives results in a dynamic, changing, responsive work unit towards a globalized business organization. It is therefore, applicable and beneficial when a globalized organization converts to automation processing and / or using the state-of-the-art technology to compete globally. Foot-note<sup>4</sup>

Guidelines involving discriminatory actions – characterized by age discrimination.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Employee benefits are forms of tangible compensation given to employees other than direct pay. Employees will make sacrifices for and be loyal to a company when they feel that the company, in turn, will make sacrifices for and be loyal to them. Thus a utility crew may take great personal risks to keep telephone service open during a flood, or the employees of a store might accept a pay cut when the store is faced with a financial crisis..' Benton (1998, Pg.400).

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<sup>4</sup> The author –Douglas A. Benton in his Applied Human Relations (6<sup>th</sup> Edition) book Pg. 532 puts it this way; ' They recognize that business must become more efficient to compete in today's market. They recognize that industry must automate or they will be out of business.' Benton (1998, Pg 532).

The age of the employees carries many connotations, some positive and some not so. What is commonly found is that positive connotations form the basis of perceived age attributes while negative connotations shape age prejudice. Both are problems when they become the predominant foundation of employment decisions. There are also other dimensions of the age of the employees that can become problematic for the human resource manager (HRM). The issues of workforce age, and age bias, and approaches to solving these problems are the primary focus point in the next few pages.

The fact that people pass through many life stages throughout the course of their adult years has been the subject of considerable study by psychologists and sociologists. What has become most evident has been that people are likely to experience certain kinds of events, will react differently to those events, and they will undergo considerable, sometimes predictable change in the way they behave, the way they view themselves and their environment, and the way they attempt to influence the course of their life through each life stage. For the HR manager whose charge is to maintain productive relations with an age-diverse workforce, the task can become very complicated when they consider all of the possible influences that tend to shape individual behavior.

Some of the more pertinent influence consist of adolescent development and value systems, personality traits, genetic differences, reinforcement experiences, and the entire complexity that influences, controls, and restrains human behavior. The fact that much of our behavior is intricately connected to age as a measure of our role, productivity, and overall performance at work, makes the HR a fair game-and a highly influential ingredient in any discussion of age. In this case, the focus is on discrimination due to age, but the real underlying issues are much greater.

From a business operations point of view, recognition must be given to a few hard facts about the age of our workforce. First, most employers would not likely hire those under the age of 18 due to local child labor laws. Second, the law prohibits employment-related discrimination against those who are over the age of 40. Third, it is not reasonable to assume that all people are equally able or disabled to continue meeting work demands forever, and certainly not the way they could when they were younger.

Guidelines of some underlying issues about employees' age.

Perhaps the largest and most pervasive influence upon age discrimination in employment has to do with our socio-economic orientation towards people in certain age groups, and in particular the elderly. In US, it is one of the few countries having a negative stigma attached to what Harry Levinson referred to as "youth worship" in his profile of corporate America's attitudes toward middle age managers.

Given the fact that working life usually begins at age 18 which is what the laws allowed, so does life begin in the real world at 18, and if so, how does one go about getting that first opportunity? Moreover, is it appropriate for employers to reject applicants because of their youthful inexperience? Most of us would probably agree, largely based on our own retrospective youth, that many young people lack basic skills, having little concept of monetary worth, are undisciplined about work routine and self-responsibility, and are often resistant to authority. We could likewise find exceptions to these characteristics within this age group, as well as find examples of them in older age groups.

In a case of an 18 year old, raised by both parents who have professional careers and some college background, and who was given a salient orientation about a wide range of vocational, social, and other life matters during earlier years. This person did well throughout school and views college as a natural extension of this stage in life, along with part-time employment of nearly any kind that will serve a temporary need for money to acquire basic necessities.

## 6. The HRM practice in solving age discrimination

The HR department would provide an ongoing training opportunities to update or provide new skills to all employees but may target those over age 40; conduct a minimum of five year forecasts to project changes in the number, type, and nature of jobs including attrition and the need for new skill; use older workers to conduct training programs and to assume a mentorship role with workers who are designated to various job scopes; remove or ease pension and other benefit plan provisions that discourage continued employment past a specific age or service length. As for younger workers; adopt flexible benefit programs that allow employees to select a variable arrangement of benefits that meet their changing life circumstances; adopt a flexible income plan permitting employees to place some of their income into tax deferred savings, annuities, or other income yielding investment plans; or to place pre-tax earnings into a benefit expense account; change policies on part-time employment to allow flexible hours and job assignments, even if employment benefits are reduced accordingly; open up opportunities for older workers to work as-needed, special assignments, or to fill in during periods of peak work-loads, vacations, and other casual employment situations rather than paying exorbitant fees to temporary help agencies. Foot-note<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 'Other employers have begun to recognize the value of hiring the older worker. Partially as a result of a shortage of willing teenage help. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Macdonald, Burger King alike have been employing older workers...Older workers are more mature, responsible, and have lower rate of absenteeism.' Kossen (1991, Pg. 359).

Guidelines based on race, color or national origin of employees

It is the oldest form of societal discrimination is that based on the differences in the physical appearances and that this problem of racial and ethnic discrimination is found in the workplace. In the US, and as well as in Singapore, it has continuously fostered an open-arms policy to any person or group desirous of freedom and opportunity. But yet in the workplace problems associated with race and ethnic discrimination can increasingly happen particularly in those large MNCs where you see senior officials having the same ranking but limited in terms of authorities and benefits due to the different race and ethnic groups.

### **7. The HRM practice & guidelines in solving race, color or national origin's discrimination**

The HR manager should take into consideration that employment should be based on ability and continuing fitness of an individual is what makes the contribution to organization. If it believes that business is to succeed as an economic way of life and a morally conscious segment of society, it must hire, promote, and otherwise deal with all people based on their individual abilities, and upon their performance outcomes. Below are a few specific ways in which this can be achieved, and race-related problems either prevented or solved without undue repercussions. We can make our organizations color and racially blind by adopting firm philosophies that communicates the organization's commitment to employing any individual who demonstrates desired abilities; hire and promote into supervision and management jobs only those people whose inclinations toward others is positive and without strong proclivity toward adverse forms of discrimination; provide thorough and regular training of supervisors and managers on human relations, legal issues associated with employment discrimination, organization policies, and how to handle discrimination problems; make it clear to supervisors and managers that it is their jobs to ensure a discrimination free workplace, and that they are to confront and promptly resolve acts of discrimination including jokes, harassment and investigate rumors and complaints; ensure that job descriptions, recruiting standards and selection examinations, and all job conditions do not arbitrarily create artificial barriers for minority employment; review personnel policies and operating standards periodically in light of the potential for a discriminatory effect, particularly with regard to hiring, pay, promotions, benefits, layoffs, and other practices that often give rise to discrimination events, however unintentional they may be; determine if English Only rules serve a legitimate business interest. Establish them only where they are valid and can be defended from a business necessity point of view, then communicate the policy to all employees but allow some forgiveness for minor infractions; require that all personnel actions are

centrally reviewed and approved by the HR professional or other knowledgeable person to ensure objective and consistency of decisions, particularly as they relate to new hires, pay setting and increases, performance appraisals, promotions, disciplinary actions, layoffs and terminations/resignations; use the HR department as an internal consulting service, or external sources when qualified staff is not available, to obtain advice and assistance on vulnerable personnel actions prior to deciding or acting on them. Foot-note<sup>6</sup>

Guidelines in a mixed workforce, gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Foot-note<sup>7</sup>

Psychologically, humans are social animals that require particular kinds of treatment and activities to feel nourished. In that process, our behavior tends to be shaped by our personality traits, experiences, and how we perceive things. Biologically, humans differ by sex and gender make-up characteristics. The combination of psychological and biological conditions that exist within each person makes them uniquely different from any other person, and it is this difference that translates to some very complex interactions between people, decisions made by individuals, and reactions to varying situations. On occasion, the result will look like discrimination but it isn't; it may look like it but it wasn't the intent or purpose to do so; it may be unavoidable discrimination; or it may be the vestiges of coveted bias and unconcerned prejudice.

We would all find ourselves in a more equitable work atmosphere if we would merely support and utilize those positive differences rather than wasting time criticizing what each views as negative differences about the other. It's a condition to be reckoned with rather than avoided as if it will not affect operations or that it will be one of those things that, given time, will resolve itself. Women have come into their own as a very real, worthy, needed, and permanent contributor to the workforce. As managers of the organization's HR, it is time to begin the inclusion process by more thorough use and development of this source of labor supply, to identify and alter those barriers to the

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<sup>6</sup> 'Anyone who discriminates against an ethnic group or someone with a disability obviously acts unfairly to them and that's against the law...however, on the other side of the coin...it's good business sense not to discriminate, law or no law, because the person who makes false assumptions and discriminates loses the chance to get the widest range of skills and talents available.'  
Willcocks & Morris (1996, Pg 72).

<sup>7</sup> 'Sexual harassment may be defined as any unwanted conduct with sexual connotations, physical or verbal; conduct that denigrates or ridicules or is intimidatory or physically abusive of an employee because of his or her sex, such as derogatory or degrading abuse or insults which are gender related and offensive comments about appearance or dress.' ACCA (1995, Pg. 470).

equitable employment condition of both sexes, and to create an organizational model in which both sexes can identify comfortable patterns of behavior, opportunity and ultimately equality to the extent that is possible, not improbable. Solving gender discrimination problem and sexual harassment.

There are two ways to solve the various forms of gender related discrimination in the workplaces: by legal reaction or managerial pro-action. The formal approach is one which the organisation and its managers either transform only those practices deemed unlawful by statute or some relevant case decision, or they are postured to carry out known illegal employment decisions until caught, then defend it the best way they can with little future regard for the spirit and intent of such laws. Both are reactionary and treat only the effect and not the cause of such problems.

The managerial approach, on the other hand, acts proactively to first prevent problems from arising, but when they do then have ready an effective resolution that eliminates its continuance or exaggeration into formal, counterproductive recourse such as arbitration, litigation, or other outsider involvement.

The HR should address this problem of workplace conduct openly by stressing its unacceptability, the complaint, and investigative methods, and types of corrective action including possible termination, in written policies, communications with employees, and training for those in positions of authority. Failure to do so will only perpetuate the problem, leaving the employer with a greater potential for unproductive employees: loss of credibility, respect, and trust in those with authority; and the persistent threat of litigation. Prevention has always been the best solution.

Develop a strict and complete policy that explains, provides examples, and prohibits sexual harassment. The policy should also include a complaint mechanism, preferably with direct access to a highly placed neutral manager such as the HR director; a requirement to investigate and reach a finding on each matter; and that offenders will be dealt with through the disciplinary process based on the evidence of each circumstance. Finally, it should provide assurance to employees that reported incidents will be treated with the greatest possible degree of discretion and confidentiality, and that any form of apparent reprisal will be dealt with under the policy and procedures. A possible severe action by handing the matter to the authority of the police. Foot-note<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ‘There may be no emotion known to man stronger than lust. Yet the law requires men and women to suppress their lust while on the job. It’s the law. Those who cannot control their libido are simply not suitable for employment...’Kaplan & Kunreuther (1996, Pg. 222).

## 8. Guidelines related to employment rights.

If we viewed the above issue in a more objective way, employers are more likely to see that they still obtain the fundamental and important rights to operate their enterprise and make business decisions. The manager who sees the challenge will be the one who finds a solution when problems arise. This manager knows that both employee and organizational rights must be protected for the mutual benefit of both; that objectivity in the actions and decisions of managers is tantamount to judicious problem solving; and that managers must practice humane and precise methods of dealing with a more complex, informed, and idealistic workforce.

Some areas in which employees have legally protected rights, and that they are discussed as to collective representation of their employment interests by affiliation with, and membership in a recognized labor union or employee organization; or to represent their own interests before their employer; to file claims such as discrimination, wage and hour, workers’ compensation, and safety with administrative compliance agencies to have a complaint or alleged employer wrongdoing adjusted without coercion, harassment, retaliation, or recrimination by the employer; to have their employer treat personal information about them with the utmost confidentiality; to not be the victim of arbitrary or capricious decisions that affect their employment or life in an adverse fashion; to receive fair and reasonable treatment in their employment relationship with their employer; not to involve in violation of laws, public policy, or perform any illegal, unethical, or otherwise harmful employment obligations in their employer’s interest; to be treated with the same dignity and respect that would reasonably be afforded to any human being.

Guidelines with the privacy of personnel files and employment records. (Internal access to files).

As it has been known, company’s files is confidential and the property of the employer. That requires certain security measures. There are particular individuals in any organization that may have legitimate need-to-know what to access, review, and modify (add, delete, correct ) file documents during the normal course of transacting a variety of employment matters. This internal company representatives, aside from the employee, consist of the human resources manager/director who has ultimate internal responsibility for establishing and maintaining personnel files; human resource staff whose job requires access to files for analysis or records processing purposes; senior, officers who have some stated or relevant purpose for access like the controller, GM, executive director, or president; each of these individuals must have a legitimate company or employee interest in order to establish their right-to-know, and they ought to have a special purpose in seeing or doing

anything with the file. Under most circumstances, the file should never leave the area in which it is kept.

To accommodate internal access then, there should be a desk or other review station within eyeshot of the person who is responsible for monitoring those allowed access. No co-workers or indirect managers should be allowed access to an employee's file even if the co-worker is a union steward trying to represent the employee's grievance interest, or the manager is a high ranking official but lacks a direct relationship to the employee and has no relevant purpose. Example, a marketing director who gained access to an attractive secretary's file in another department to ascertain if she was married and, if not, to get her home telephone number since he couldn't find it in the telephone directory. He called, she questioned then objected, and she now probably owns a few shares in the company with the proceeds from her suit.

Whether or not to allow employee access if not required by law; and if so, where, when and how often it can be reviewed. Should the employee be allowed to copy, challenge, or supplement its contents. Also involved is to what extent of documents should be excluded from review; mishandling such as file records and that who will observe to ensure nothing is removed; and can the employee authorize someone else to review the file? There are doubtless other questions that will be come up when deliberating this matter but beyond statutory requirements it is a matter of management discretion. So as care and reasonable caution is exercised by the custodian of personnel files, most statistics have shown that employers' experience have shown that an open policy of employee access contributes to higher level of employee trust, confidence, morale, and general employee relations; while a non or overly limited access position breeds suspicion, paranoia, and mistrust. The mishandling of file records is specified in the next paragraph. The mishandling of file records such as in providing employment reference information; determining what constitutes relevant information in a file in conjunction with a disclosure process such as giving only applicable information in relation to the needed source of disclosure; placing, or allowing the placement of, false information in a file; providing others false information about the employee even if the information is not particularly damaging to the employee; failure to keep records accurate and current; failure to keep consistent records among employees; providing information to any person who does not have a legitimate right to know.

When establishing an access policy, each employer who truly desire a forthright and open approach to matters concern employee privacy rather than leaving the issue subject to quizzical and suspicious minds, it can prove very worthwhile to publish and disseminate a company policy. When employer's development of a policy on access to personal files and related information may well be different because of unique conditions of the business, different local or foreign laws, or management philosophy. To establish a

mean of at least starting the process of deliberating what components and conditions might be included in an access policy, the following are some preliminary items to consider: Identifying the kinds of information obtained and maintained by the company on employees. We may mention specific information about the contents of file A ( which is the routine and ongoing personnel documents) and only generally about the contents of file B ( sensitive and highly confidential documents); What information the employee can access file A, or review and how often; The employee's right to have copies of what kinds of documents; Where, when and under what circumstances the employee can review their file or any other limit will be monitored; Whether employees have the right to rebut or challenge certain document statements; if so, by when and how; What other internal or third parties might have access to personnel file; What information will be disclosed to a verified prospective future employer upon a reference inquiry; with or without , the employee's signed authorisation to do so; How long after employment separation the employee has to request in writing a review of their file. Foot-note<sup>9</sup>

## 9. HRM integration

This strategic approach to a HRM model in any firm would involve the integration of personnel and other HRM considerations into the firm's overall corporate planning and strategy formulation procedures. It is constantly seeking to discover new ways of utilizing the labor force in a more productive manner thus giving their business a competitive edge. The very practical strategic approach to HRM might include incorporation of the firm's basic HRM policy into its mission statement and the explicit consideration of the consequences for employees of each of the firm's strategies and major new projects. Besides the human resource department involves in major strategic contribution and improvement others departments involving in the economical or strategic marketing factors need to be taken in consideration for analysis which is emphased as follows:

There are the five possible trends, which will be critical in determining whether organizations survive the ever growing competitive markets that challenge the organizations profitability and growth. First there is the quality imperative of which there is increased competition, not only from the European counterparts but from other parts of the world as well. The quality of goods and services will be the criterion for competitive advantage, so if the organization which makes quality a top priority is more likely to succeed. Many

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<sup>9</sup> "There may be no emotion known to man stronger than lust. Yet the law requires men and women to suppress their lust while on the job. It's the law. Those who cannot control their libido are simply not suitable for employment..."Kaplan & Kunreuther (1996, Pg. 222).

organizations are now conforming to the quality standards set by the British standards institute and to more specific industry or sector related standards as well as the international quality standards – ISO 9000.

Second there are the information technology imperative of which is the trend on the impact of business today, particularly in the area of providing informational support for decision-making. The growth of on-line data, accessible to everyone in the organization, will improve the quality and speed of decision-making at all levels, which will have an effect on traditional staffing levels. As everyone has access to essential information, people in the organization gain more power and take on greater responsibility. This has an effect on the hierarchical structure of the organization and on the types of people it recruits and on their development and retention.

Third, an evolutionary imperative is the catalytic effect of the increasing number of mergers and take-overs. Like for instances small and medium-sized organizations tend to merge or be taken over in the interests of corporate survival. Examples are the merging of two local Banks in Singapore which are Keppel and Tat Lee Banks and Post Office Saving Bank and DBS Banks. As these conglomerates acquire more businesses, they tend to decentralize and create new divisions, producing different goods and services, requiring diverse and new skills and competencies in the people who work in them.

Fourth, a communication imperative; that this links to the growth in information technology, the knowledge of this organization's external environment is much more accessible than ever before. For example, there is instant access to world money markets through on-line data; communication is fast and efficient by electronic means; world wide media coverage provides the organization with the knowledge of events as they take place. This enables the firm, and people, to be more responsive to changes in national and international contexts.

In the fifth stage is the imperative of change. With the external environment constantly changing, bureaucratic and big organizations like those of the S.T groups (Singapore Technologies and the Herriots groups in 1989) are not able to respond quickly enough. So, in order to survive and succeed, and if possible, the organization will need to move away from highly structured spans of control, long lead-in times and endless discussions in committees to a more responsive structure which may involve redundancies and streamlining. The implications of these trends are important for managers, particularly in the management of people. It is more essential than ever before and part of the manager's role in forecasting and planning to recruit, develop and keep the right people.

The recommendations to the HR department as highlighted below is for further enhancement of manpower to ensure greater efficient and effective contribution to organizations.

## 10. Recruiting the right people

This is the concern with defining future staff requirements and determining the specifications necessary to recruit quality people, particularly in those areas of responsibilities. Foot-note<sup>3</sup>

Ideally, it should include identifying, defining and assessing the competencies of the people who are currently working in any organization, department or team depending on the level of managerial responsibility. Analyze the content of the current jobs under the HR control and draw up detailed job descriptions for each one. The determination of future competence requirements in relation to current and future work demands and job roles. For new jobs or for vacancies in existing work, it is necessary to draw up an employee specification, taking into account the role of that job in my team (for instance) and organizational structure. Also, consider the financial position of that person's area of responsibility relating to salary / wage costs. Inform and consult with other people in the organization about any recruitment problems and proposals and encourage them to offer their ideas and views.

There will always be a need for people who operate in different level of working environment; such as engineers, scientists, computer people, professionals, managers, technicians, designers and marketers and salespeople. And for managers familiar with the use of information technology; for people who understand the environment in which the organization operates; for people who are willing and able to acquire new skills and knowledge; for people able to make decisions as the context and environment change. Organizations and their managers will need to be involved in human resource auditing and planning to determine their future needs. Planning for the future is no longer easy as the future becomes less and less predictable. We can no longer afford to recruit staff on job descriptions that have been around for years; we are going to need people who can be adaptable and respond to new challenges. This would mean that we should look beyond our normal sources of staff since these may no longer be appropriate for our needs. Besides, we also need to be aware of current and new legislation governing the recruitment of people in a wider local or overseas market; in particular, to avoid

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<sup>3</sup> 'Recruitment is the part of the process concerned with finding the applicants: it is a 'positive action' by management, going out into the labor market, communicating opportunities and information, generating interest.' ACCA study text, (1995, Pg. 394).



discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or disability as discussed earlier in question one.

## 11. Selecting the right people

In Singapore, people are an expensive resource; it is worth taking time and effort to find the right person for the right job. Foot-note<sup>10</sup>

In a UK management resource, 'The Director of Recruitment and Training with National Air Traffic Service has been quoted as saying, "If the Civil Aviation Authority was able to improve its selection rate by just 1%, it would save \$700,000.00 annually." 'Attwood and Dimmock (1996, Pg. 9). Selection can be defined as choosing the best person for the job from among candidates who come from within the organization or from outside. It involves setting up fair selection processes, which, as far as possible, are designed to predict how an individual will behave at work and whether he or she can perform a specific range of tasks adequately. This involves short-listing candidates from application forms, rejecting unsuccessful applicants, interviewing candidates on a one-to-one basis and by a panel interview, questioning techniques, alternative methods of selection including, psychometric and psychological tests, the use of bio data and assessment centers, legal and regulatory advice on non-discriminatory practice in selection.

If there is a high possibility that we have too many applicants for the job and that we are going to have to decide upon appropriate ways for selecting the right person, then we would probably have to make an initial selection on the basis of the written applications we have received, matched with the employee specification. Thereafter, there are ranges of selection techniques from which we can choose for carrying out the next stage. Finally we have to make a decision on the basis of whichever selection techniques we have used. This process will help us to assess and select candidates against team and organization requirements. The first stage will be concerned with evaluating all the information available to us prior to selection, including the job description and employee specification, application forms, CVs, references and, where available, results of any tests which candidates may have undergone in the selection process. We will have to determine the cost effectiveness and suitability of applying particular selection methods in choosing the right person for the job and agree the selection criteria. We will also have to agree who will be involved in any interviews we plan to hold and make arrangements for briefing and discussing the process with other interviewers. During the process, there

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<sup>10</sup> 'Select the right one – not just the best one because that could be the best of a bad bunch; the successful candidate has to meet at least all the 'must' criteria you drew up.' - Willcocks & Morris (1996, Pg 11).

will be a certain amount of record keeping, including communication to successful and unsuccessful candidates, and we will need to be familiar with current legislation concerning selection, salary levels within the labor markets, commencement dates and other financial details related to the job vacancy. Also, the amount of care and effort we have put into all the stages of the recruitment and selection process should be reflected in the quality of the person we finally select.

## 12. Building the team and team spirit

In a globalized organization, teams create better results than individuals. Effective teams are characterized by their ability to establish, and work towards, clear goals and by supportive membership, mutual trust, skillful leadership, good relations with other teams, work groups and as well as team spirit. They depend on effective recruitment, selection and training of team members, high morale and creativity, clear aims and appropriate reward systems. Also, managers of the team need to be aware of the particular problems facing multicultural teams where members do not share common experiences, working practices or even in language. The HR manager can build effective team spirit through improved job satisfaction, which is discussed below:

Improving job satisfaction - A large part of the manager's time for instance a HR manager is involved in planning, allocating and evaluating work carried out by his subordinates or members of his team. This is a far more complex and sensitive process than many people realize. First we have to consider the demands of the specific job and the individual and component tasks it actually entails. Having done this, we need to take into account the requirements of the person performing that job - the skills and abilities that person will need as a minimum to achieve the expected level of performance. Given with the list of priorities, we can help to minimize the negative impact of work experience by looking for any symptoms of low job satisfaction in the area of responsibility since dissatisfaction with work can be a major source of absenteeism, sickness, lateness and low morale.

As a HR professional, he would need to consider the potential benefits of well-designed jobs; the characteristics of a well-designed job and designing or redesigning the jobs of the subordinates and alternative methods of organizing work to bring about improvement in the firm. Changing the design of certain jobs can increase job satisfaction and benefit the individual, management and the organization as a whole. Well-designed jobs are characterized by the amount of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback they involve. There are a number of ways in which existing jobs can be made more satisfying through redesign. These include job rotation, job enrichment and the creation of autonomous working groups and quality circles. Each of

these methods can be used to increase one or more of the characteristics of well-designed jobs. Another way of reorganizing work is to consider changes in working hours and practices. Changes can include the introduction of flexible working hours, job-sharing, home-working and adaptation of work methods for people with disabilities. When these changes have been introduced it is found that job satisfaction not only has increased but that they have widened the scope of their recruitment net, reduced staff turnover and absenteeism and provided greater opportunities for work among some minority groups. Foot-note<sup>11</sup>

Programs of training and development for staff need to be related to individual training needs and aspirations. Induction training and mentoring are two methods of providing training for new staff, although mentoring arrangements often continue beyond the initial training period. Foot-note<sup>12</sup>

### 13. Conclusion

Human Resource Development is an important personnel activity both for an organisation and an economy. At the national level, it helps to ensure optimum utilisation of the country's human resources, to maintain employment and to develop human assets. At the firm level, human resource management planning warns management of upcoming shortages and surpluses. A human resource plan helps to avoid the sudden disruption of an enterprise's activities due to a gap in workforce. By anticipating the need for human resource management, it enables efficient recruitment, selection and promotion programmes. Proper matching of manpower needs with business plans enables control over labour costs by eliminating wastage of human resource. By keeping in inventory of existing personnel it becomes possible to use their talents more productively in relation to job requirements before further manpower additions are made.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Improvement teams stimulate creativity through group interaction and participation...' Galpin (1996, Pg. 22).

<sup>12</sup> 'The effectiveness of appraisal systems hinges on the extent to which performance criteria are appropriate for the jobs for which they are used, and that the system itself is appropriate to the needs and culture for the organization.' Torrington and Hall (1998, Pg. 329).

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