



Pakistan, like many other developing nations, looks towards proper and effective use of its resources (natural and human) as an important vehicle for economic and social development. Natural resources – oil, gas, water, and coal – are precious commodities that we must conserve, not squander. The more our population grows, the more demands there are for these resources that provide for our well-being. Natural resources like matter and energy can neither be created nor destroyed – they can only be converted from one form to another, which is useful to propagate human life. However, the human resources in an organization as we all agree provide quite an exception to this time-tested law.

Resources may be wasted by neglect, depleted by consumption, destroyed by misuse or enhanced by developmental intervention. Human being is indeed the resource of all resources. No one, therefore, would ever think of wasting, depleting, or destroying this prime reserve. And yet, humans do face such a predicament. This predicament, it is argued, is primarily because of the absence of an appropriate ideology or set of values in those in charge.

Poor natural resource management over many years and continuing high population growth has had a negative impact on Pakistan's economy. Similar to other developing countries, Pakistan has focused on achieving self-sufficiency in food production, meeting energy demands, and containing its high rate of population growth rather than on curtailing pollution or other environmental hazards. As a result, "green" concerns have not been the government's top priority. Sustainable and equitable economic development implies efficient management of available natural resources and the development of human capabilities as key aspects of economic processes.

Why and how do we use these resources in our national interest? It is like asking ourselves, "Why we live?" One thing that cannot be overlooked is the fantastic level of connection in flows of information, power and resources. There is plenty of consideration and mediation about the proper use of resources. So far, we have failed to use our resources on optimal levels. We live in a time of great change. To many of us, this level of change is frightening.

This is not an unreasonable feeling. Just as some of these changes could portend great improvements in the human condition, others could spell disaster. The stakes are too high for us to be able to afford a misjudgment. Unfortunately, the easiest response to the many decisions we will have to make is to use simplistic and thus, often dangerous solutions.

Pakistan is presently witnessing a major drive to rebuild its economy. Over the last few years the major concern of Pakistan's government is to rebuild the country's physical infrastructure. Parallel to this effort, the public and private sectors have embarked on another equally challenging objective, namely the restructuring of their respective organizations and the development of their human resources.

A nation is strong only if it is economically strong. Economic strength is only possible when there is stability. This requires political strength. Political strength on the other hand requires economic strength. The two are very closely interlinked. The two must be complementary, one paying for the other. The western economies have achieved this balance and are in a position to call the shots in the international foray. The best examples are the United States of America and Japan.

We must also recognize the importance of “Human Capital” other than natural resources, not just in the sense of educated minds and skilled hands, but also as the important social processes that make us human and make life worthwhile and create a loving, caring and sharing family, which develops beauty, honor, integrity and creativity.

These are attributes of social systems, as well as of individuals. They require support and reinvestment if they’re going to keep on relieve suffering and producing happier human beings. Economies are supposed to serve human ends – not the other way round. We forget at our peril that markets make a good servant, a bad master and a worse religion.

The government and the public would attempt to solve these problems through research, study and understanding of resource management approaches at the national level, they would find that there are alternatives to the present impasse more effective than dumping money through the bureaucratic system or propaganda about the government’s support for community economic development.

Though the economy continues to decline, living cost increases, jobs disappear and natural resources degrade; but in other countries they remain well managed and conserve their natural resource base in these situations. The fact is the only thing that differentiates us from our competition is our people. The equipment, the building – they’re all the same. It’s the people who make the difference. Effective management of HR becomes an issue for everyone.

It appears that the old aphorism, "People are our most important asset," is actually true. Compelling evidence suggests that organizational success comes more from managing people effectively than from attaining large size, operating in a high-growth industry, or becoming lean and mean through downsizing – which, after all, puts many of our most important assets on the streets for the competition to get employment. But while many leaders believe that putting people first makes strategic sense, all too few of their organizations do it.

The HR Management environment in Pakistan is not dynamic. Some of the more obvious ones include globalization, changing skill requirement, corporate downsizing, total quality management, re-engineering work processes, employment involvement etc. To meet these challenges and requirements, Pakistani organizations have to upgrade their HR departments, which until very recently were often perceived as "health and happiness" crews. Their primary job activities involved company picnics, scheduling vacations, enrolling workers for health-care coverage and planning retirement parties.

That has to be changed. Today, professionals in HR area are vital elements in the success of any organization. Their job requires a new level of sophistication that is unprecedented in HR management.

The role of a human resource professional has been undergoing rapid change. In the past, personnel managers chiefly served as administrators, policy makers and maintaining the organizational status quo. However, the role of the modern human resource professionals has become more diversified, shifting in the direction of business partner and change catalyst, and focused on strategic leverage of human capital. The human resource professional's role is also moving toward an internal consulting mode in order to help line and upper-level managers better manage their people.

Functionally, human resources consist of: compensation/benefits, human resources information systems, recruitment and selection, human resources planning, organization/job design, employee assistance, labor relations, individual development, career development and organization development. Individual development is also commonly referred to as "training", while career development and employee assistance may be collectively referred to as employee relations. Now more than ever before, HR management is recognized as being critical to the survival and success of organizations as well as to face the challenges of advancement of technology.

As we move into the 'new economy', the focus on people and knowledge has steadily increased. Today, companies face new challenges in dealing with issues such as the scarcity of talent, the value of ideas/knowledge and the changing preferences of the labor market. Consequently, successful HR strategies are needed more than ever. Looking at successful HR practices today, we see a number of areas where HR professionals can make an important contribution to the overall success of their organization.

The future will show that organizations and institutions, as well as nations, which do not prioritize the training and development of their Human Resources, will be doomed to slip and recede in their ability to compete in open and global markets. In Pakistan there is an urgent need for continual Human Resource development across all sectors of the economy – agriculture, industry and services. As national borders lose their importance, companies are changing. Advanced technology is enabling employees to communicate and work together around the world. As a result, HR must have an increasingly global/local focus and the capacity to deal with diversity.

We cannot deny the importance of Human Resource development in this era of international competitiveness, but we must admit that there is lack of a national strategic plan for the promotion of such development. HR professionals presently play a 'cosmetic' role in strategic partnership. There are two main obstacles that hinder the full realization of the HR role and value. The obstacles are:

- The **prevailing organizational culture** that has so far failed to both understand and recognize the need for a more 'involved' HR role, and

- **Lack of HR expertise.** HR professionals have to impose themselves as problem solvers, business strategists and administrative experts.

HR will start playing its fundamental strategic role only when the two obstacles mentioned above are removed.

Most HR professionals in Pakistan are ‘Methodologists’ rather than ‘Strategists’. This implies that the HR function is basically limited to daily operational activities. Apparently HR roles of ‘Strategic Partner’ and ‘Change Agent’ are not yet well developed in most of the organizations.

Human resource development explores the main principles and core values, which underpin how an organization can and should manage the development of its human resources. The major resource and largest area of investment for most organizations lie in the people they employ and in the people whose services they buy. To examine the key challenge for all managers, which lies in the effective management of how people learn the skills and knowledge that an organization needs to fulfill its objectives?

Companies and individuals in the 21st century will use their money to make more money. Investing money has always concerned those who want to be financially responsible. Now, more than ever, investing one’s money is a social responsibility as well.

The government’s effort to ensure successful development of human resources must be central to any and all initiatives. The first step in designing a human resource management approach involves analyzing the organization and designing an infrastructure of positions that best represent how the organization will carry out its mandate and achieve results.

Organizations can analyze competency gaps between the profile of the organization and the profile of the individual to help them determine which individuals are best suitable for the jobs they might assume in the future. A small gap between a person’s competence and the competency requirements of a position would have implications in a successful placement or promotion. Organizations can use strength/gap analysis of competencies to define merit and help determine which employees are deployable or would be retained in a downsizing and restructuring exercise.

Human resource professionals strongly believe that resorting and human resource planning could be the two most significant business strategies in this millennium.

Organizations are grappling to address the rising skill demands imposed by knowledge work and the increasing shortages of skilled talent worldwide. Human resource planning could have a major impact on business results when used as a mean to find, place and replace talent and help employees learn more to keep up with new demands.

Competencies can play a significant role in improving the business results of an organization. Organizations can use competencies to take a balanced and systematic approach to identifying their strengths and the skills needed to close critical gaps.

The Industries of Pakistan need systematic study. They embody the complexity of forces that drive high technology industries: globalization, international trade, basic research, manufacturing-technology interface, regulation, public policy, markets and finance. The organizations face stunning managerial challenges: they must rapidly develop new technology, infuse that technology into efficient manufacturing processes that make defect-free outputs at low cost and manage workforces of wide cultural range around the globe.

We have never thought about the youth who are with no work and no program. We owe an answer to them. This is a burning problem before us and we have no answer for our future generation. Thus educating the new generation is essential to any society.

The children grow up to be the leaders of tomorrow and the foundation they get through their childhood and education will be with them for the rest of their lives. Besides this necessary technical/functional competence, human resource professionals need to have excellent diagnostic skills, an ability to listen, understanding of the internal and external business conditions, influencing skills, understanding of human behavior, objectivity, ability to understand corporate culture and a flexible style. Honestly, human resource professionals have the unenviable task of balancing the individual needs of the employee with the business needs of the organization while trying to minimize cost and increase productivity.

Times are changing now. Human potential and the need for conscious attempts to develop it are more readily acknowledged today than ever before in many parts of the world. The creation of a ministry for HRD by the Government of Pakistan is a good step towards testimony to this awareness and concern at the national level. Efforts are afoot at various quarters in the country today to devise and implement methods of developing human resources.

About the Author

Syed Imtiaz Hussain is Head of HR & Administration in one of the leading multinational Company. As a member of top management team; he develops a highly professional A-Class HR environment in the organization by utilizing his vast practical and visionary experience of HRM and HRD.

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