Strength Based HRD Audit as an OD Intervention

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Why HRD Audit?

In the last 25 years a large number of corporations have established Human Resources Development Departments, introduced new systems of HRD, and made structural changes in terms of differentiating the HRD function and integrating it with HR function. A good number of CEOs saw a hope in HRD for most of their problems, issues and challenges. HR systems are people intensive and require a lot of managerial time. There are examples of corporations where HRD has taken a driver's seat and has given a lot of benefits. In to-days competitive world, "people" or employees can give a good degree of competitive advantage to the company. To get the best out of HR, there should be a good alignment of the function, its strategies, structure, systems, and styles with business and its goals (financial, customer etc. parameters). It should be aligned both with the short-term goals and long term strategies. If it is not aligned, HR could become a big liability to corporations. Besides this alignment, the skills and styles of HR staff, the line managers and the top management should synergise with the HR goals and strategies. HRD audit is an attempt to assess these alignments and ensure the same.

HRD audit is a comprehensive evaluation of the current human resource development strategies, structure, systems, styles and skills in the context of the short and long-term business plans of a company. HRD audit attempts to find out the future HRD needs of the company after assessing the current HRD activities and inputs available.

Strength Based HRD audit is a systematic evaluation of the existing HRD strengths in terms of systems, competencies, structure, processes, practices, and culture with a view o build on what exists to what does not exists and add new strengths to a on-going organization. It uses the same techniques and methodology as HRD Audit with the main difference in perspective. It plays down what is lacking, builds on what is available. It treats what is not there as an opportunity and builds new strengths to utilize the opportunities.

In this paper an attempt is made to first outline HRD Audit with its details and at the end some perspectives for strength based HRD audit are drawn.

In the last few years Dr. T. V. Rao along with his colleague Dr. Udai Pareek pioneered in India, a methodology for auditing HRD function and implemented the same in a good number of Indian companies.

Methodology

A team of auditors visit the corporation and using a variety of methodologies assess the appropriateness and adequacy of the various HRD systems, strategies, structures, competencies, culture, processes etc. The methodology used include:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Observation
- Secondary data analysis
- And Examination of documents and communications

The audit starts with a brief by the CEO and the Chief of HR who may set an agenda and focal areas of evaluation. The interview with the top management starts with finding out details of the future plans of the organizations and uses it as a base for outlining the competency requirements of the organization. The current competencies, structures, HRD systems etc. are assessed in terms of their capability to prepare the organization for the future. Suggestions are made to improve for achieving the future business goals and plans. The HRD audit is contextual and at the same time uses the available knowledge of the potential of the HRD systems in helping the corporation achieve its goals.

HRD Score cards

On the basis of HRD audit a Score is assigned to the company which indicates the level of HRD in relation to four dimensions. HRD Systems Maturity, HRD Competencies (including the competencies of line managers, union leaders, top management and the HRD department and its structure), HRD styles and culture, and Business linkages of HRD. The score card is a form of rating of the level of maturity of HRD in the company.

Concepts of HRD Audit

HRD Audit is Comprehensive

HRD audit starts with an understanding of the future business plans and corporate strategies. While HRD audit can be done even in organizations that lack well formulated future plans and strategies, it is most effective as a tool when the organization already has such long-term plans. The HRD audit starts with attempts to answer the following questions:

☞ **Where does the company want to be ten years from now, three years from now and one year from now? (Answers to this question ensures business linkages part of the HRD score card)**

The answer to this question needs to be provided by the top-level management. If there are long-term plan documents these are reviewed. On the basis of the answers to these questions the consultants finalize the subsequent audit strategies and methodology. The consultant's make an attempt to identify the nature of core competencies the organization needs to develop in order to achieve its long-term five to ten year plans. The consultants also attempt to identify skills required to be developed by the company at various levels (example, workmen level, supervisors level, junior management level, middle management level, top management level, etc.) and with respect to various functions (finance, production, marketing, etc.). Listing all these core competencies and skills for the future is the starting point of HRD audit. The HRD audit normally attempts to assess the existing skills and the competency gaps in order to achieve the long-term business goals and short term results of the company. The competencies may deal with technical aspects, managerial aspects, and people related or conceptual. They may cover knowledge base, attitudes, values and skills.

☞ **What is the current skill base of HRD staff in the company in relation to various roles and role requirements? (HRD Competencies Score on the HRD score card)**

This is assessed through an examination of the qualifications of HRD staff, job descriptions, training programs attended, etc. Besides this, through interviews an attempt is normally made to identify the skill gap in the organization. Training needs and performance appraisal forms provide further insights. Departmental heads and other employees provide insights into the competency and other skill requirements.

☞ **What are the HRD sub-systems available today to help the organization build itself competency base for the present, immediate future as well as for long term goals? (HRD systems maturity score of the HRD score card)**

The auditors attempt to identify various HRD sub-systems that are available to ensure the availability, utilization and development of skills and other competencies in the company. These HRD sub-systems evaluated and the framework are presented in Chapter 2. All the HRD tools existing in the organization are listed and studied in detail.

☞ **What is the current level of effectiveness of these systems in developing people and ensuring that human competencies are available in adequate levels in the company? (HRD systems maturity on the HRD score card)**

Assessing the effectiveness of each system makes this. For example, the effectiveness of performance appraisal system is assessed by discussing with employees, individually and in-groups, about the efficacy of the system. The auditors look at the appraisal forms, look at the linkages between appraisal and training, conduct questionnaire surveys to assess the extent to which coaching and other components of other appraisals are being utilized and also conduct workshops if necessary to assess the effectiveness of these systems. Similarly, in relation to induction training, the consultants make it a point to meet those who have been through the induction training recently or those who are in the process of being inducted into the company and take their views to improve the induction training methodology etc.

☞ **Is the HRD structure existing in the company adequate enough to manage the HRD in the company? (Contributes to HRD competencies score)**

In the next stage, an attempt is made by the auditors or consultants to examine whether the HRD structure at present can handle the pressing and future HRD needs of the company. This examination will assess the existing skill base of the HRD staff of the company, their professional preparation, their attitudes, their values, their developmental needs, the line

managers perceptions regarding them, etc. In addition to examining the full time staff, the HRD structure is also assessed in terms of use of task forces and other mechanisms.

☞   **Are the top management and senior manager styles of managing people in tune with the learning culture? (answers to these questions contribute to the HRD culture score of the HRD score card)**

Here an attempt is made to examine the leadership styles, human relations' skills, etc. of senior managers. The extents to which their styles facilitate the creation of a learning environment are examined.

HRD Audit Examines Linkages with Other Systems

The HRD audit also examines the linkages between HRD and other systems like total quality management, personnel policies, strategic planning etc.

Suggestions are made on the basis of evaluation on the above questions about the future HRD strategies required by the company, the structure the company needs to have for developing new competencies and the systems that need to be strengthened, the styles and culture that has compatibility with HRD processes in the company particularly the styles of the top management, etc.

HRD Audit is Business driven

HRD audit always keeps the business goals always on focus. At the same time, it attempts to bring in professionalism in HRD. In keeping the business focus at the center, HRD audit attempts to evaluate HRD strategy, structure, system, staff, skills and styles and their appropriateness.

HRD Audit is not a problem solving exercise. It may not be able to provide any solutions to specific problems the organizations is facing - for example Industrial Relations problem, or discipline problem, poor performance problems etc. However, it may be able to throw insights into the sources for the problem. It will not give feedback about specific individuals. It will however give feedback about the HRD department, its structure, competency levels, leadership, processes, influence of the HRD on the other systems etc. HRD audit is against the HRD framework

HRD Audit as an OD intervention

Perhaps India is the first country to formally establish a totally dedicated HRD (Human Resources development) Department separated from the Personnel Department. This was designed in the year 1974 when the term HRD itself was not very popular in the USA. Two consultants from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad after reviewing the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system and training in Larsen & Toubro recommended an Integrated HR System to be established and the department dealing with development issues be separated out from the personnel department and be called the HRD department. Thus the first HRD department was established. The State Bank of India and its Associates to start a series of new HRD departments followed it in the banking sector. By late seventies the concept of HRD and the need for having separate HRD departments picked up momentum. In Pareek and Rao's model of HRD department the objective of this department is to facilitate learning and change in the organizations. This department is supposed to have learning specialists who facilitate change process. In their model, OD was conceived as one of the main tasks of the HRD department. Thus an attempt was made to institutionalize OD through HRD departments. As the departments picked up momentum a lot of OD work had begun to be done through the HRD departments. Infact most change interventions have been and are being made by the HRD departments (as differentiated from the Personnel departments). The HRD Managers in India do undertake a number of interventions, which may be classified as OD interventions. The nature of interventions undertaken by the HRD departments include:

- Cultural change through new performance management systems
- TQM based interventions (in most cases these are undertaken also by a separate group of professionals)
- Survey Feedback
- Role clarity and Role negotiation exercises
- Training
- Career Planning and Succession exercise

- Assessment Centers and promotion policies

- Visioning and value clarification exercises

- Performance coaching workshops

- Team building interventions

The Academy of Human Resources Development has come up with a concept of IOAC (Individual and Organizational Assessment Center) which is becoming popular as an intervention by the HRD departments. In this concept the HRD department establishes an Assessment Center with the purposes of assessing and developing the competencies of Individuals as Individuals. Individuals in relation to their current and future Roles, Dyadic relationships, teams, Inter-team collaboration and work and Organizational Climate and Synergy.

Experiences from Some Organizations

A great deal of work has been done in India regarding the use of HRD Audit as an OD intervention and is a unique feature of Indian organizations. The author's experience in initiating OD with the aid of HRD audit has shown the following results:

1. The audit in several organizations resulted in establishing several organizational systems and processes such as potential & performance appraisal, career planning, training, mentoring. Performance appraisal and job rotation are the two most frequently affected changes.

2. In a few companies it has resulted in the formulation of clear-cut policies including promotion policy, communication policy, reward and recognition policy, etc.

3. In others it seemed to have drawn their attention to issues like developing trust, collaboration, teamwork, quality orientation etc.

4. In a few others it has resulted in more role clarity and direction to the employees in terms of their work leading to higher level of role efficacy

5. In one of the organizations, as the audit started with the issues of future strategies the top management team could not identify the future plans. They indicated that the plans come from the multinational Head Office and they have no freedom in influencing the same. The turnover from Indian operations was negligible and therefore the parent office paid little attention to the corporation. AS A RESULT THE TOP MANAGEMENT COULD NOT COMMUNICATE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANISATION CLEARLY TO THE EMPLOYEES. This resulted in morale and motivation issues though of not a significant magnitude. The corporation has good practices and the employees were proud.

6. On the basis of the HRD Audit report, which indicated the difficulties in ensuring employee commitment without an appreciation of the future plans of the company, the top management team made it a point to negotiate and plan the future strategy and plans for the company.

7. In another company the HRD Audit indicated the need for developing locals as HRD Managers and the need for reorienting the HRD systems to local culture. The company recruited an HRD manager as a short-term basis who designed a number of HR systems and also trained the local line managers in HRD. The systems designed were integrated into the TPM, ISO 9000 and such other interventions.

Results of a Research Study

Jomon (1997) conducted a research study to identify the factors influencing the use of audit as a change tool. He studied four organizations that have got them audited. They were studied about three years after the first audit. He tried to assess the influence of the following variables in the effective use of HRD Audit:

- Management styles

- Organizational characteristics

- Profile of the HRD Department

- Competency levels of HRD department

- CEO commitment

- HRD Chief's commitment

Jomon's study indicated the following in each of the four companies:

Post Audit Scenario Organization 1:

Soon after the Audit, the management held a number of meetings and a final action plan was formulated. Though the action plan covered HRD at the policy making level, at the operational and departmental level and contained a joint action plan for the HRD-Training department, the report as well as the plan were kept confidential. The following changes were brought about as a result of the Audit exercise:

1. *A well-established system to assess the potential of higher level people based on key competencies.*

2. *Promotion policy is now shared with everyone*

3. *Each employee is aware of his career path*

4. *Mechanisms to help employees plan their work efficiently have been set up and employees are helped by their supervising officers to plan their work effectively.*

5. *Employees now go for training with a clear understanding of the Knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire from training.*

6. *Regular circulars and notices and bulletins give adequate information to the employees about the Company, the market situation, the changes in the environment etc.*

Post audit Scenario Company 2:

This company has come a long way since 1994 when the audit was conducted. The situation in 1997 was:

1. *Clear Personnel Policies including Promotions Policy, Communication Policy, Reward and Recognition Policy and many more.*

2. *Team Spirit at this company is of a high order as conveyed by the employees themselves.*

3. *PPRD Systems have been revamped. A well-structured feedback mechanism is in place now.*

4. *KPA's provide role clarity and direction to the employees in terms of their work and Role Clarity is very high among employees.*

5. *External training programs are chosen carefully after collecting enough information about their Quality and Suitability.*

6. *Action Oriented Research is very well established and taken seriously and acted upon.*

Post Audit scenario:

The first audit was conducted in 1993. A management Council meeting was organized to discuss the Strengths, Weaknesses and the Recommendations of the Audit. Strategic issues related to HRD were also considered at this juncture. The status in 1997 is presented below:

1. *Man Power requirements for each department are identified well in advance*

2. *Key Competencies have been identified and a system is in place for assessing the potential of people for higher level responsibilities.*

3. *Employees also participate and contribute to annual performance plans*

4. *KPA's provide Role Clarity & direction to the employees in terms of their work*

5. *A very high level of Role Efficacy as stated by the employees themselves*

6. *OD initiatives, Research orientation, Communication, Empowerment & Reward systems are yet to be established.*

7. *The HRD Staff though inadequate in number was considered highly competent.*

Company 4:

In this company some of the weaknesses highlighted by the Audit were:

1. *No Potential Appraisal system and an ad hoc performance appraisal system*

2. *No career planning system*

3. *Lack of role clarity*

4. *Poor induction procedure*

5. *Absence of mentoring*

6. *High confusion and friction in values and approach*

7. *Lack of initiative and a mechanical approach to work*

8. *Human orientation was missing*

9. *Operators were treated badly*

10. *Personnel policies were not Development oriented but discipline oriented.*

Once the HRD Audit report was submitted, the HR Chief called all the managerial staff for dinner and presented the findings. Based on the discussions an action plan was drawn up which after implementation brought about the following changes:

1. *A well established Potential appraisal system and a systematic performance appraisal system*

2. *Career planning is done upto the executive level*

3. *Role Clarity brought about through identification of KPA's*

4. *Systematic Induction and Training Program has been established*

5. *Initiation of mentoring*

6. *An increase in the level of Trust among employees*

7. *High involvement of employees at all levels*

8. *Human Orientation injected into the business process with opportunities for growth and development provided to all employees*

9. *Empowerment of operators through various mechanisms, and efforts made towards improving management -operator relationship.*

10. *Integration of all HR related activities, which now support developmental activities.*

Findings of the Study by Jomon (1998)

1. There is a direct relationship between the CEO's commitment towards HRD and the effectiveness of the HRD function.

2. An interesting revelation was that in all four organizations, the CEO was rated higher than the HRD Chief in commitment towards HRD. The reason for this could be that many communications announcing new ideas, the CEO signed practices & systems to be put into effect. This also ensured a greater acceptability by the members of the organization.

3. There is however a direct relationship between the ratings of the HRD Chief in commitment towards HRD and the effectiveness of the HR function.

4. Management styles also show a high degree of equivalence with HR Effectiveness. Companies scoring high on the average best management styles had more effective HR systems. These Companies had a dominant participative style with a backup Professional or organic style. An Altruistic management style was seen to have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the HR function.

5. As far as Organizational Characteristics are concerned, the following organizations were able to embrace change and utilize the HRD Audit inputs better, leading to a more effective HR Function

    a. Middle aged organization (Est. between 1970-1990) as compared to old or young organizations.

    b. Professionally run private organizations as compared to family owned organizations or closely held MNC's.

    c. Service companies as compared to their Manufacturing counterparts.

    d. Organizations with a flat structure as compared to those hierarchical in nature.

    e. Medium sized organizations (with 20-40 Departments and between 1000 to 2000 employees) as compared to that very large or very small.

    f. Organizations with a good employee profile the criteria for which is as given below:

6. Managerial Profile: Majority of managers is professionally qualified, average age between 30-40, and more than eight years of work experience.

7. Support Staff Profile: Majority of the support staff is secretarial certificate holders, average age between 35-45, and above 10 years of work experience.

8. Worker Profile: Majority are skilled, with above 10 years of work experience, and average age between 35-45 years.

    a. Organizations where management systems were in the process of being setup as compared to those with a well-established management system.

    b. Organizations with participative and proactive unions undertaking developmental activities had better HRD Practices for Workers.

    c. Organizations with employee development budgets as compared to those with no such allocation.

However, the following organizational characteristics did not seem to have any relation to the utilization of the Audit inputs or the effectiveness of the HR Function.

    a. Market Positioning

    b. Tendency of groupism among employees.

    c. Linkage with Industries.

    d. Collaborations with Institutions &

    e. Social Responsibility.

9. In the organizations with the following HRD Department Profile, the Utilization of the Audit inputs and the resultant effectiveness of the HR Department were far better.

    a. Department age of 7-10 years as compared to those greater than 10 years old and less than 7 years old.

    b. A separate and independent HRD function and a separate HRD Department as compared to those with departments combined with other functions such as personnel.

    c. HRD Department was structurally positioned at a higher level, headed by a Vice President (HRD).

    d. A flat structure of the HRD Department as compared to a hierarchical structure in the HRD Department.

    e. Decentralized HRD Department with HRD being considered a line function and involvement of line managers in the implementation of HRD.

    f. Adequate HRD staff (i.e. around 10% of total number of managers in the Organization.) as compared to having insufficient or the bare minimum number of staff.

    g. Average age of the HRD Staff between 30-40 years was considered good and facilitated better utilization of HRD Audit inputs. The age of the HRD Chief was also was found to influence HRD Effectiveness. A Company where the HRD Chief was young (33 years) had accepted changes better.

    h. A good professional profile with most of the staff having a professional qualification in HR and a behavioral science background.

    i. An experienced HRD Staff with many of them having 10 or more years of work experience.

j. HRD Staff who were high on initiative, were hardworking and spent extra time at the department ensured a better utilization of the HRD Audit inputs.

k. HRD Staff was members of professional bodies and undertook research activities independently.

10. The Organizations with a highly competent HRD Staff were able to derive much more benefit from the Audit Process resulting in a higher impact on the effectiveness of the HR Function.

Infact in one Company though the HRD Department was small and inadequately staffed the utilization of HRD Audit and its effectiveness on HRD Practices was high mainly due to the high competency level of the HRD Staff.

Post Audit Implementation Experiences: Experiences of Consultant Joining as Implementer

In another set of organizations one in India and another in Egypt HRD audit resulted in the top management recognising the need to drive HRD in a systematic way and further resulted in the organizations employing dedicated HRD specialists who in turn managed change. M. G. Jomon who also worked with these two companies and assisted in implementing HRD audit reports his experiences as follows:

HRD AUDIT IMPLEMENTATION: MULTINATIONAL COMPANY ABROAD

 - A Report from Jomon

(Source: Effectiveness of HRD Audit as an OD Intervention by M. G. Jomon, Unpublished Manuscript, XIM, Bhubaneswar, 2004)

HRD audit inputs: After a successful HRD audit by Dr. TV Rao and Raju Rao of TVRLS from April 2-8, 1999, HRD audit inputs were given to make the organization a world-class organization. The audit recognized the company's efforts in creating a number of records within a short time. Human Resource utilization has been very high and this has helped the organization to perform well. The competency requirements are likely to be changed in the future because of the expansion plans, competitive environment and the changing business scenario. The audit revealed that HRD has not received much attention in the past. Therefore creating systems, adopting professional work methods, developing a learning environment and making available local managerial talent to manage the future requirements and creating a performance driven culture are the challenges for the future.

The audit recommended developing appropriate HRD and OD systems to meet the above mentioned challenges. They include Performance Management Systems, Culture Building systems, Training systems, Career and succession development systems, developing empowering and Institution Building Leadership styles. In all these there should be a balanced focus of three aspects- Competence building, culture building, and commitment/motivation building. Some of the specific inputs are:

- Develop HRD philosophy and values based on national culture.

- Expatriates need to develop good work culture.

- Induction systems need to be initiated.

- Performance appraisal system should be redesigned to focus on performance management.

- The top management and all the expatriates need to go through a 360-degree feedback program.

- Training needs to be streamlined. It should go beyond TPM and focus on competence building, commitment building and culture building.

- Line mangers should be trained in basics of HRD and their role in HRD.

- Succession plans need to be developed for key and senior roles.

- Promotion policies should be made explicit and transparent.

- HRD department should be strengthened with professionally qualified and trained personnel.

- HRD department should be separated from personnel and administration.

- A taskforce may be formed to implement the same.

Implementation

The author of this report M. G. Jomon joined the organization as an external consultant in September 1999 and implemented the various HRD and OD initiatives as given below:

The initial study of the organization: It was important for the author to understand the organization in the light of the base line data. In-depth interviews with people from all levels were conducted to have a full grasp of the organizational realties. During this phase the interviewer also made an effort to put the data and findings of the HRD audit into perspectives. A number of findings were also validated during this phase.

Implementation bodies:

The author was assisted by two bodies to implement the HRD audit inputs

The implementation committee: It was a 15-member decision-making committee represented from all the functions. It is headed by the Joint-President. It meets once in every week.

The task force: The six-member task force meets everyday and actually carries out all the activities in collaboration with the functional and departmental heads. The head of the HRD department was the coordinator of the task force.

With the help of the above implementation bodies following interventions were implemented:

Organizational Development (Od) Interventions

1. Vision and mission statements were developed, manual prepared and the same was disseminated through pocket cards, displays at factory premises and at offices.

2. OD Department was established headed by a vice-president. The department has three-dimensional approach of systems development, overall plant improvement and development of all the processes in the organization

3. Rationalization of the organizational structure was done to make the organization functional oriented and flatter. The total hierarchy starting from the Managing Director to the operator was restricted to six.

4. Organizational roles were rationalized, listed and defined.

5. Man power rationalization was also done people were spared to join the OD department

6. Role interventions: Role analyses were conducted and job description for each and every role was worked out.

7. Competency mapping   was done taking into account each and every role. As a result, specific competencies required for every role in the organization are available.

8. A role directory is prepared and made available with all the information relating to the roles in the organization.

9. Training interventions: Various training inputs were given by the author on all the interventions for the top management, line managers and for the internal trainers.

10. Knowledge Management Centre was started for acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. A very good library is also being developed.

Designing and Implementing HRD Systems

The following HRD systems were designed and implemented. All the systems have their own manual and procedures.

1. The performance management systems

2. Recruitment system

3. Induction system and Mentor system

4. Implementaion issues

In this organization all the employees starting from the Managing Director was involved and contributed. Each and every implementation was done after discussion and debate. However, the top management had to change a number of things, which they were not prepared to do so. This discouraged the implementation committee and the task force. For example for any system to function properly delegation has to be done. But for this seniors were not prepared.

Hrd Audit Implementation as an HRD Functionary

The author joined the organization as an HRD manager. On his joining he was told that his mandate was to move the company from an IR driven company to that of HRD driven.

TV Rao and Raju Rao TVRLS Ahmedabad conducted the HRD during the year 2000 and gave a number of HRD audit inputs as summarized below:

- HRD need to be made business driven and all HR activities should be viewed from this angle

- Production and productivity should be improved.

- This should not be restricted to unions and their settlement

- Manpower utilization should be improved Discipline and accountability should be achieved through performance management

- Strengthen the work culture through education, training and small group activities

- Multi skilling need be achieved

- Performance Management System need to be implemented

- Training need be done systematically

- HRD competencies need to be developed among HR personnel. Current staff and not qualified.

- Line mangers need to be trained in HRD

- Union leaders to be exposed to HRD

- Culture change need to be inculcated for firmness, accountability, cost consciousness, quality orientation and commitment towards the organization.

- Personnel policies should not be changed in haste

HRD audit implementation

- Two HR professionals were inducted

- HRD initiative incorporated in the monthly MIS report

- Knowledge Management programmes started through programmes like book presentation, quiz programmes etc.

- Training system designed and implanted. Training is a thrust area.

- Plant Heads letter send to employees' residence as regular communication tool

- Company newsletter started

- Small group activities initiated

- Task forces formed across the plant help employees with problems like absenteeism

- Mentoring and counselling initiatives started

- Various programmes for employees' children conducted during vacation.

HRD Audit Failures

There are at least two cases of HRD Audit not resulting in anything. The HRD Manager was very enthusiastic in getting the HRD audited. The Audit report indicated a very poor state of HRD in the company. The staff competencies were rated as poor, the practices questioned and improvements suggested. The Benchmarking data also indicated this company to be one of the poor performers in terms of HRD though in terms of the profits etc. the company was in the forefront and was facing competition. Though the audit started with an interview with the CEO, no opportunity was provided to the Auditors to make a presentation to the CEO. As a result the audit report did not receive any attention and the auditors considered the effort a waste.

In another company, the top management commissioned the Audit but got busy with reorganization of one of their critical marketing functions. In the process and due to market competition all the energies of the top management and their HR staff got diverted to the new organizational structure and they did not even have an opportunity to know the findings of the Audit. The auditors felt that some of the audit findings directly relate to business improvements in terms of the very reorganization they were planning. But the auditors were not in a position to draw the attention of the top management. The effort did not result in any thing.

These two events make it clear that the following processes in the HRD Audit have potential in initiating and managing change:

- Initial interviews with the Top management

- Bench Marking data on HRD Audit questionnaire supplied to the company

- Presentation by the Auditors at the end of the audit

- The report itself and the way the report is handled.

Summary and Conclusions:

HRD audit is not intended to be originally an OD tool. By virtue of its diagnostic and participative methodology it seems to work as a change management tool. The interview methodology, its comprehensiveness, the audit methodology insisting on starting and ending with top management involvement all have high potential for initiating change processes. It could be further refined as an OD tool. It involves all the HRD staff and a large number of Managers in the audit process and makes them conscious of the areas needing improvements.

Strength Based HRD Audit (SBHRD-A)

Given this potential of HRD Audit how do we make it strength based. The following is a conceptualisation for strength based HRD Audit:

Assumptions:

1. Every organization some form of HRD or the other. Organizations are reasonably sensible enough to initiate and promote systems and practices that are appropriate for them at a given point of time.

2. Most HRD interventions have evolved on the basis of the thinking and the necessity of the owners, promoters or trustees.

3. The current HRD interventions are the bare minimum that are required and have been appropriate up the current situation.

4. The current practices have enough strength that enabled them to sustain and improve the organization.

5. Any change ahs to be built on the existing strengths

6. It is the job of the auditor to find out the strengths of the current systems, practices and build the future on the basis of the same.

7. By focussing on the weaknesses the auditor may induct defences which may be not so functional in change management.

8. All employees contribute to the audit in some form or the other.

9. Seeing weaknesses in the current practices and bringing them out is seen as a strength and not a weakness.

Methodology for Strengths Based HRD Audit (SBHRD-A)

The methodology of SBHRD-A is similar to the HRD audit described above. The principal difference is in underplaying the weaknesses and playing on the strengths this mean that all evaluation aims at looking for what exists and taking what exists as a positive strengths. Using the positive strengths deciding the next steps so as to create more strength in short period of time. Rather than making ambitious plans it evolves action steps for change in the next few weeks to months. The following are the thoughts of the author on designing and implementing strengths based HRD Audit. These could be treated as the proposed tenets of the SBHRD-A.

• Strengths based HRD audit also focuses on line managers as change agents rather than HRD department as change agent.

• It shifts the ownership of the audit intervention to the line managers. The HRD Manager works closely with the auditors. The auditors could be an internal team or an external consultant's ora combination of both.

• The strengths based HRD audit starts with first building on the strengths of the auditors.

• The auditors place on table their own strengths and articulate the same.

• The strengths of than auditors are then enhanced if necessary through study and benchmarking visits.

• It is only after the audit team is ready to audit they start the audit. The strengths of the auditors are circulated to all the members. The participation of all employees is ensured in the audit process.

• The reports are presented in stages to groups of employees as the auditors gather the data and feedback is used as means of evolving implementable plans.

• Strengths based HRD audit starts with the system that re strong in the company and builds on them than focussing on what is lacking. For example any form of PMS could be taken as strengths including the lack of system. The auditors extensively debate and discuss the strong points in the current state and build to improve rather than criticise the current state for improvement.

References

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