

How to develop and better utilise human resources

"In a capital-short country, productivity gains is the main source of capital formation or profitability. No industry or establishment can serve the economy usefully unless the management is in a position to generate funds for reasonable wage increase, tax and reinvestment after making profits higher than the bank interest rate. The way out is improving, in the first instance, the performance capability of workers through pre-and post-employment training."— So writes A. M. A. H. Siddiqui, a former Director General of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, and now, Chief Technical Adviser of Bangkok-based ARPLA ILO. Siddiqui critically looks at the human resources situation obtaining in the country. The first part of the article was printed yesterday

Another lacuna is the wages and incentive structure for the production process workers. The public sector salary scales put the production process workers at near bottom of the scales with no attraction for the workers to attain higher skill. The first entry point, both in private and public sector, is usually that of a helper, who in most cases are illiterate, unskilled and without any sense of motivation, belonging and aptitude for the work. Promotions are not based on any objective assessment. There is thus no reason, except non-availability of alternative opportunity, for a literate able-bodied young man to aspire for a career in manufacturing trade. Hence the low quality and frequent unreasonable demand. The overseas employment has shown that the same worker transplanted from local to overseas labour market show better performance, earn promotions, learn the language of the country and upgrade skills through evening courses and other means. In the local labour market, the mobility is extremely limited and there is very little scope for a skilled worker to become a professional worker.

The professional worker enjoys a salary at least five times higher than that of a skilled worker. In the public sector, this may be even 10 times higher. Relative contribution to the production process is not taken into account while determining salary differentials. Consequently, well literate, articulate, degree or diploma holders, with no skill to repair, overhaul or even operate a machine, get premium mainly because of the certificate obtained or because of his command over language to deal with buyers, bureaucrats and owners of establishments.

The recruitment process, therefore, needs much closer scrutinising, both in the public and private sector and much more in the private sector. The utilisation of the manpower should be much more for productive purposes rather than servicing the production or recording the sales or extracting work from those who know the job. The productivity of labour is basically a management function and skill development, wages and incentive structure, and recognition of importance of production process workers are basic management responsibilities, neglect of which has resulted in inferior investment climate in Bangladesh.

MANPOWER PLANNING AT PLANT LEVEL

Manpower planning at plant or enterprise level is partially unknown to the management in the public or private sector. In more than 300 project

proformas approved by the Planning Commission, the section on manpower requirement and ways of meeting them is either left blank or statements like "locally available" are written in these spaces. In the public sector, at any point of time, more than 70,000 posts remain unfilled due to procedural bottlenecks. On many occasions, project staff face retrenchment on completion of

ways and Foreign Affairs. In late sixties, Cornelius Commission report advocated reforms in this structure. In other former British colonies, with unitary form of government, like Sri Lanka and Singapore, such wasteful set-up is not seen. Non-profitability of public sector corporations have been largely blamed to this type of set-up.

Public sector planning has avoided these issues so far. In the five-year plans, the planning process has ventured estimate of unemployment, employment creation, shortages and surpluses with no reliable basis. Huge training complexes have been set up with World Bank money for management training, while the system has remained almost entirely clerical. An officer of the Government, however, well-meaning he may be, is helpless, if the clerical support in providing the relevant file in time or to type out the relevant letter promptly, is not available. The human resource planning and utilisation has remained counter productive, with volumes of manuals, thousands of circulars and hundreds of annual foreign training facilities, mainly because of the multi-stage decision-making process, poor documentation and record keeping and negative attitude among officials who are more interested in playing safe to re-

grounds that quality of SSC has gone down. If this argument is accepted, very soon an MA degree will be needed for the job of typist. While Secretaries can be a university graduate, an Assistant Director in some departments must possess a post-graduate degree with honours at BA level. University education is expensive. There is no reason to work out measures to upgrade the quality of educational streams at SSC or BA/B.Sc/B.Com levels. The post-graduate education should be a requirement only for research, technology development and teaching at higher institutions.

POST-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Post-employment training is virtually non-existent except for BCS Cadres, where also the training is not related to the jobs to be performed. What is more harmful, no training of any significance is available for clerical workers, who are still the main core of functionaries in the delivery of services. Very few ministries produce annual report of activities, properly analysed in the context of services to be delivered. The 'paid unemployed' in the research and planning units are a frustrated lot of human resources, as their services are not utilised and policies are determined without any analysis of current and foreseeable situations.

'Human resources development is a continuous process and can be completed in an educational institution, without supplementary manpower planning programmes including systematic training at various stages of employment.'

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