



# Human resource development and organizational values

HRD and  
organizational  
values

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Organizations create mission statements and emphasize core values. Inculcating those values depends on the way employees are treated and nurtured. Therefore, there seems to be a strong relationship between human resource development (HRD) practices and organizational values. The paper aims to empirically examine this relationship.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study measured employees' rather than management perspective. A sample of 239 employees from eight organizations responded to a questionnaire which measured the effectiveness of employee development practices and cherished organizational values.

**Findings** – HRD practices like potential appraisal and promotion, learning/training, performance guidance and development were positively related to organizational values of collaboration, creativity, quality, delegation, and humane treatment. However, performance appraisal system, career planning, and contextual analysis variables were negatively associated with values such as trust and creativity.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study was exploratory in nature. Further studies are needed on a larger sample to examine why some HRD practices like performance appraisal, career planning and contextual analysis contributed negatively to organizational values such as trust and creativity.

**Practical implications** – The result of the study can be useful in designing effective employee development programs that promote cherished organizational values.

**Originality/value** – Little empirical knowledge exists on HRD and organizational values linkages in the context of transitional economies like Malaysia. The paper makes a modest attempt to fill the gap.

**Keywords** Organizational culture, Human resource development, Career development, Training

**Paper type** Research paper

Most, if not all, organizations develop vision statements with a view to generating excitement and commitment to organizational goals and objectives. Unfortunately, as Williams (2002) observes these “grand statements” remain a myth when organizations confront the reality of achieving performance objectives, budget targets and organizational change efforts. This results into more cynicism than optimism (Ghosal and Bartlett, 1997). Studies have indicated that achieving the ambitious goals inherent in the organizational vision pronouncements requires a serious thinking on human resource management issues as well as an articulation of the role of organizational values at all levels (Torraco and Swanson, 1995; Lawler and Mohrman, 1996). Unfortunately, large majority of organizations have yet to recognize the strategic importance of HR and HR people have yet to be recognized as partners in the strategic planning process (Sikula, 2001). While in the new economy human capital is the foundation of values creation, this most important asset is poorly understood and poorly managed (Norton, 2001).



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### Human resource development

Human resource development is a process of developing and/or unleashing expertise through organization development (OD) and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance (Swanson, 2001). HRD is based on the beliefs that organizations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise in order to establish and achieve their goals and that HRD professionals are advocates of individual and group, work processes and organizational integrity. Several models of HRD specify a range of practices which, if pursued, are likely to contribute to human capital accumulation on which organization may build its competitive advantages (DeGeus, 1997; Currie, 1998; Willis, 1997). These models basically advocate that investment in HRD by organizations contribute to organizational and individual performances such as high performance (Sandberg, 2000), high quality of individual and organizational problem solving (Schroder, 1989), higher organizational commitment (Iles *et al.*, 1990), and enhanced organizational retention (Robertson *et al.*, 1991). Ahmad and Raida (2003) examined the association between training and organizational commitment among white collar workers in Malaysia and they reported that the availability and support for training, training environment etc. positively contributed to overall commitment scores.

HRD function is different from personnel/HRM functions. Rao (2007) outlines the following roles of an HRD manager:

- Developing enabling capabilities in individuals and the system.
- Integrating the development of the people with organizational development.
- Maximizing the learning opportunities of individuals in organizations through various mechanisms, autonomy and responsibility.
- Decentralization, delegation and shared responsibility.
- Balancing change and adaptation.
- Building feedback and reinforcement mechanisms, etc.

HRD managers are expected to be involved with the creation of learning environment through HRD tools (Rao, 2007). In that sense they are concerned with development rather than traditional personnel functions. Based on his experiences of conducting HRD audit in over a dozen Indian organizations Rao (2007) concluded that:

...the real HRD Managers envisaged two decades ago are getting practically extinct. The HRD roles are being reduced gradually to recruitment and retention roles essentially involving salary revisions, ESOPs, performance Appraisal and reward systems. There is very little effort made or time left for competency building, creation of learning environment and to aligning HRD with business strategies.

Globalization and technological advancement are compelling organizations to evolve new strategic directions. Employees are thus required to be ready for accepting new roles and must think of employability over job security. There are increasing research-based evidence to suggest that employees, particularly the knowledge workers, do not consider money as the only important reason to work for a company (Senge *et al.*, 1994). On the contrary they now expect more enriching organizational environment and an alignment of their individual values with organizational values (Finegan, 2000; Neal, 1999). When employees recognize disparity between the ideal and

operational organizational values and if the gap is too wide it erodes their trust and commitment, particularly the affective commitment (Finegan, 2000; McCune, 1998).

**Organizational values**

Values are defined as fundamental beliefs and assumptions that guide individual behavior and judgments across situations (Rokeach, 1973). Organizationally, values are indicative of the most defining characteristics of an institution (Williams, 1979). These are the beliefs and attitude that goes deep inside and constitute a collective understanding regarding norms and standards of behavior acceptable in the organization. In that sense values are considered as the essential component of organizational culture (Sinha, 1995; Hatch, 1993). According to Schein (1985) corporate values are collective beliefs about what the entire enterprise stands for, takes pride in and holds of intrinsic worth.

Organizational values serve many purposes. It sets the tone of the environment, bonds people together, facilitates work behavior and achievement of shared goals. It also represent the ambitions that people hold for the organization as a living system because values define who and what each person has to offer as a human being to the overall enterprise (Mirabile, 1996).

There is enough evidence to suggest that organizations need to promote such values as openness, trust, initiative, team work and collaboration, humane treatment of worker, creativity, quality, empowerment, delegation etc. for better results (Becker *et al.*, 2001; Huang and Dastmalchian, 2006). According to Kotter and Heskett (reported in Sullivan *et al.*, 2002) value-led companies outperform others: growth in revenue being four times faster; rate of job creation seven times higher; growth in stock price 12 times faster; and profit performance 750 per cent higher. Dearlove and Coomber (1999), found that organizations experienced significantly lower employee turnover when they valued respect and teamwork.

**Objectives of the study**

Many organizations emphasize promoting values such as openness, trust, autonomy, initiative etc. This can be seen in their mission, vision, and core values statements that they proudly display. It is expected that inculcation of cherished values among employees require concern for human resource development. The paper tries to understand these linkages. It expected a positive relationship between HRD and organizational values. The HRD practices examined were related to career, work, and development issues. The measure of organizational values included: Openness, trust, initiative, autonomy, collaboration, creativity, quality, delegation, and humane treatment.

**Methodology**

Most of the studies on HRM practices examine only the employers’ perspectives and ignore employees’ perception. As rightly observed by Legge (1998, p. 14):

...when reading accounts of HRM practice in UK and North America it is noticeable the extent to which the data are (literally) the voices of management.

Similar concern was shown by Guest (1999) who argued for examining employees’ perception of HRM practices. According to him “...from its conception human resource

management reflected management agenda to the neglect of workers' concerns" (Guest, 1999, p. 5). There is also growing literature questioning the ethical stances of HRD. For example Fisher (2005) challenges the assumption that HRD practices are necessarily good or benign. There are critiques such as Woodal and Douglas (1999) who contest that HRD practices are designed to manipulate people to adopt behaviors and values that are beneficial to their employers.

Edgar and Geare (2005) measured HRM practices in three ways in order to examine its relationship with employees' attitude. This included additive measures of numbers of HRM practices, employers report, and employees report of strength of practices. Employee attitude was measured using organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational fairness scales. The findings indicated significant relationships between HRM practices and employees attitude. However, the results were significant only when employee reports of the strength of HRM practices were used to measure HRM. This study highlighted that there are perceptual differences as to the strength of HRM practices and emphasized the importance of allowing employee voice in HRM research.

It was for this reason that the present study measured employees' rather than employers' perspective of HRD practices and organizational values.

### **Organizations and the sample**

The study was conducted in Malaysia. The sample consisted of 239 employees drawn from eight organizations located in and around Kuala Lumpur. Organizations represented different industry, size operations, and technology. Sample represented both managerial and non-managerial staff, belonged to several departments including HR, on an average, had served in the organizations for 4.31 years, and 56 per cent of them were males.

Organizations for study were selected through personal contacts and with the help of students registered for the executive MBA program at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The selection of organization was based on convenience and readiness of the organizations for such an exercise. However only those organizations were selected who had documented their mission and vision statements and whose stated core values included most of those listed in our checklist. A brief background of these organizations is presented below.

#### *Organization A*

This organization belonged to the banking sector. One of the key players in the Islamic banking business, it was carved out as a separate entity from one of the largest banks in Malaysia. The bank has a network of over 40 branches throughout the country, six service centers and an offshore branch. During the time of data collection it was servicing approximately 700,000 customers with the staff strength of 1,179. The bank has shown consistently good performance with increase in profit earnings and increase in assets value over the period since it was established in 1999.

#### *Organization B*

This is a property development, investment holding and sub-leasing company. It is engaged in developing new township and other related projects. Until the time of data collection this company had 32 subsidiary companies, and six associated companies

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undertaking activities related to its main functions. It had over 400 employees on its payroll.

#### *Organization C*

This is an IT company with its headquarter in California, USA. The company is one of the largest independent suppliers of high end packaging designs, assembly, test, and logistics supply solutions, including ball grid array (BGA) packages, the industry's most advanced, mass produced semi conductor package. The company also provides advanced packaging services that address the needs of semi conductors used in wireless and wire line communications, including flip-chip, chip-scale, and attacked die technologies. Manufacturing facilities are located in Korea, China, and Malaysia. The Malaysian unit is the biggest one and employs over 4000 personnel. The company has obtained ISO 9000 certifications.

#### *Organization D*

This is a subsidiary of an investment company having interest in infrastructure activities specializing in water engineering and water related activities. The unit is an infrastructure project company currently holding two concessions awarded by a state government to operate, maintain, manage, rehabilitate, and refurbish existing water treatment plants formerly under the management of the state government. The company has 615 employees in total. Out of them 430 are placed at the headquarters and the rest at the various water treatment plants. The human resource division is headed by an executive director and three senior managers looking after human resource development, administration, and security and training issues respectively. The company has obtained ISO 9000 certification.

#### *Organization E*

This organization is engaged in IT business. Incorporated in 1995 as an education company using IT as enabler to develop interactive multimedia and web-based courseware and customized training programs for Malaysia and the region. In January 1998, the company was awarded MSC status and now operates from within the grounds of Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). The company provides total solution in e-learning. It has forged strategic alliances with Compass Learning Inc. (formerly known as Jostens Corporation in San Diego, California) and Carlton Solutions for Education (in San Marcos, California) for research and development of its interactive software. It is advised by an international panel of educators. It has nearly 100 employees on its payroll.

#### *Organization F*

This is a group of companies primarily engaged in telecommunication business. Incorporated as a public listed company in 1996 and listed on the main board of Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE) in 2001, this company has the inherent strength of 100 per cent fiber optics network that is further complemented by an extensive cellular, pay phone and internet service networks. It is able to offer services to both the domestic and international markets. The company puts lots of emphasis on customer satisfaction and quality improvement. Employees undergo frequent training and participate in seminar and conferences to upgrade their skills and keep abreast with

the constant changes that take place within the industry. It is an ISO 9000 certified company.

*Organization G*

This is a five star hotel located in Selangore state. The hotel is owned by a Malaysia conglomerate and managed by ORIX hotels international. The hotel was officially opened in early 2000.

*Organization H*

This organization is a global player in power and automation technologies that enable utility and industry customers to improve performance while lowering environmental impact. Headquartered in Zurich, it is truly a transnational company. With a total workforce of over 400 employees the company has strong presence in Malaysia for several decades. Serving established Malaysian customers as well as multinationals, this company has established itself as market leader in the core business of power and automation technologies. The commitment to the state of the art quality and environmental standards are exemplified with the attainment of ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 certification in transmission and distribution as well as ISO 14001 in low voltage systems.

**Research instruments**

A shorter version of Rao's (1997) HRD audit questionnaire was used for data collection. This check questionnaire has been extensively used and validated by Rao and his associates in conducting HRD audit in a variety of organizations (see Rao, 2000 for details). It measured the following HRD system and practices. Responses were collected on a five-point scale (1 = not at all true; 5 = very much true).

- (1) *Career system.* An 11-item questionnaire measured career system. Information related to:
  - manpower planning and recruitment,
  - potential appraisal and promotion, and
  - career planning and development.

Employees rated manpower planning and recruitment process, mechanism to appraise and promote potential employees' from within, and career planning and development system that emphasized on establishing career development policies and programs in the organization.

- (2) *Work system.* A 19-item questionnaire collected information about work system. This included:
  - role analysis,
  - contextual analysis, and
  - performance appraisal system.

Items measured the system of identifying key functions of various roles, developing special annual (or periodic) objectives under each key function in a team/or in supervisor-employee dyads, identifying a few common attributes for all, and a few specific attributes relevant to a team/department for individual

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effectiveness, self assessment of own performance and attributes, assessment by the superiors/colleagues/subordinates, performance review and feedback, and linking review with development.

(3) *Development system.* This was concerned with planned development of competencies and included:

- training and learning,
- performance guidance and development,
- and other mechanisms of knowledge sharing and competency development.

A total of 24 items were taken out from Rao's HRD questionnaire to measure variables in this category. Items intended to measure employees' satisfaction with:

- training at transitional points,
- strategic planning of training,
- involvement of line departments in training,
- training policy and strategy,
- on the job training,
- evaluation of training,
- follow up, and training curriculum improvements,
- variety in training methodology,
- multi-skill training,
- use of other ways of training like seminars, mentoring and coaching, self study etc.

(4) *Organizational values.* Measured the perception of following organizational values on a five-point scale (5 = Very high: 1 = Very low):

- openness – openness to new ideas, feedback and criticism from outside and inside;
- trust – relying on verbal statements,
- initiative,
- Autonomy – freedom to achieve results;
- collaboration and teamwork;
- creativity – trying out new ways;
- quality;
- delegation and decentralization; and
- humane treatment – treating employees with a human touch and sensitivity.

## Results

Table I shows the mean ratings of HRD system. Most of the scores were moderate on a five-point scale. Employees gave slightly higher endorsement to manpower planning aspect of the HR system but considered development practices rather short of expectation.

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**Table I.**  
Mean and SDs of HRD systems

	Mean	SD
<i>Career system</i>		
A1. Manpower planning and recruitment	3.35	0.77
A2. Potential appraisal and promotion	3.12	0.81
A3. Career planning	2.92	0.93
<i>Work system</i>		
B1. Role analysis	3.26	0.84
B2. Contextual analysis	3.03	0.97
B3. Performance appraisal system	3.08	0.99
<i>Development system</i>		
C1. Learning/training system	2.96	0.86
C2. Performance and guidance and development system	2.89	0.86
C3. Other mechanism of development	2.78	0.81

Table II displays mean score of perceived organizational values. The ratings were again moderate to low on the nine values included in the questionnaire.

### HRM system and organizational values

Result of multiple regressions predicting organizational values from HRD system showed an interesting pattern of relationships (Table III). The three HRD variables, namely, manpower planning, performance appraisal, and learning and training significantly predicted organizational value of trust. It is interesting to note that while employees' satisfaction with manpower planning and training practices contributed positively to their level of trust, the performance appraisal system worked otherwise. Similarly, while learning and training system positively contributed to the value for initiative, contextual analysis worked otherwise. Perhaps rigorous exercise of developing annual performance plans and budgets based on environment analysis was limiting the value of initiative. Employees' satisfaction with autonomy which meant getting freedom to achieve the result was negatively related to performance appraisal and performance guidance systems.

**Table II.**  
Mean and SDs of perceived organizational values

	Mean	SD
Openness	2.92	0.98
Trust	2.73	0.97
Initiative	2.99	0.89
Autonomy	3.01	0.99
Collaboration	3.03	1.00
Creativity	2.93	0.95
Quality	3.04	1.01
Delegation	2.95	0.94
Humane treatment	2.75	1.04

Predictors	Openness	Trust	Initiative	Autonomy	Collaboration	Creativity	Quality	Delegation	Humane treatment
A1 Manpower planning and recruitment	0.09	0.20**	0.10	0.04	-0.03	-0.03	-0.08	-0.02	-0.06
A2 Potential appraisal and promotion	0.04	-0.01	0.08	0.09	0.30**	0.24**	0.34***	0.27**	0.25**
A3 Career planning	-0.04	-0.05	-0.07	-0.03	-0.24**	-0.01	-0.07	-0.32***	-0.10
B1 Role analysis	0.12	0.08	0.09	0.01	0.04	0.07	-0.05	0.26**	0.03
B2 Contextual analysis	0.03	-0.10	-0.17*	-0.02	-0.28**	-0.13	-0.01	-0.19*	0.07
B3 Performance appraisal system	-0.11	-0.23*	0.01	-0.24**	0.11	-0.21*	0.01	0.00	0.01
C1 Learning/training system	0.08	0.23**	0.17*	0.02	0.01	0.08	0.12	0.19*	0.03
C2 Performance guidance and development	0.10	0.13	-0.09	-0.17	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.10	0.30***
C3 Other mechanism of development	-0.05	0.05	0.12	0.09	0.31**	0.12	0.12	0.07	-0.03
Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.37	0.38	0.35	0.42	0.44	0.38	0.48	0.40	0.53
<i>F</i>	11.60***	12.28***	10.97***	14.40***	15.47***	12.06	17.64***	13.25***	21.70***

Notes: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table III.**  
Multiple regression  
predicting organizational  
values from HRM  
practices

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Collaboration and teamwork was positively facilitated by the HRD practice of potential appraisal and promotion, and other mechanisms of development. However, career planning and contextual analysis variables contributed negatively to collaboration and teamwork. This indicated that an emphasis on individual career growth and succession planning as well as rigorous attempts of contextual analysis for annual performance plans and annual performance reviews etc. contributed negatively to the spirit of teamwork and collaboration. Creativity measured in terms of freedom for trying out new ideas was positively related to potential appraisal and promotion system, and negatively associated with the performance appraisal system.

Potential appraisal and promotion, role analysis and learning and training system facilitated value for delegation and decentralization. However, career planning and contextual analysis variables negatively contributed to the concerns for decentralization and delegation. Finally, potential appraisal and promotion system and performance guidance and development led to employees' satisfaction with the way they were treated in the organization.

### Discussion

Ratings of HRD system yielded moderate scores suggesting that the focus on employee development is yet to come to center stage in organizations included in the study. This is not surprising as similar concerns have been reported in countries like China and New Zealand (Edgar, 2003; Law *et al.*, 2003). Othman *et al.* (2001) reported large gaps between CEOs expectations and HR role in Malaysian manufacturing sector. Employees' perception of HR system and practices also indicate the gap between employer rhetoric and the reality as experienced by employees. Kane *et al.* (1999) suggest that the failure of employers to operationalize HR practices effectively may be one of the causes of perceived HRM ineffectiveness.

The study suggested an interesting pattern of relationships between perceived HRD system and organizational values. Factors like potential appraisal and promotion, learning and training system, and performance guidance contributed positively towards employees trust, teamwork and collaboration, creativity, quality, delegation, and humane treatment. The result supported literature on the relationship of perceived organizational support with several organizational outcome variables. Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as the extent to which employees perceive that they are valued by their organization and that organization cares of their well-being (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990). POS has been found to be an antecedent of trust in managers (Tan and Tan, 2000), positively correlated with organizational commitment (Connel *et al.*, 2003) and negatively correlated with turnover intentions (Allen *et al.*, 2001). On the other hand performance appraisal, career planning, and contextual analysis factors contributed negatively to these values. This was rather unexpected. In other words if the organization established an elaborate system of performance appraisal it eroded the degree of trust, freedom and autonomy, and creativity of employees. Similarly, extensive career planning exercise diminished organizational value of collaboration and delegation. Contextual analysis which puts emphasis on developing realistic annual performance plans too contributed negatively to collaboration and delegation. The findings require further examination to answer why some HRD practices contributed positively whereas some made negative impact.

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### Conclusion and implications for research and practice

Results highlighted the importance of HRD as a means to realize cherished organizational values. Concern for employees' development through better system of identifying their potentials, promoting those potentials, providing learning and training opportunities, and performance guidance made significant impact on employees' ratings of several values that their organizations intended to promote. The study is quite significant in this respect. While organizations strongly desire to promote values such as trust, initiative, collaboration, creativity, quality, humane treatment etc. there is not much research based knowledge to show how these objectives can be achieved. The study also highlighted the importance of conducting research on HRD from employees' rather than management perspective.

Shaping organizational values is an emergent responsibility. Organizations need to be clear about what it values and how are they collectively perceived as well as practiced. Therefore, an evaluation of the current value considerations is important in determining what is needed. It is suggested that a good code of values should include both managerial and employee guidelines for making value-based daily decisions, including "principles and factors that one ought to consider before arriving at a decision" (Driscoll and Hoffman, 1999, p. 182). Assessment of operative values as perceived by employees can be used to document collectively held values. This assessment may then be used as a tool to articulate cherished values and the means to see them in day-to-day actions and decisions.

It is also important that sound mechanisms are in place within the organization to communicate and inculcate these values. Without adequate as well as effective employee development and organizational support programs the core organizational values printed on glossy paper will remain only on paper. Therefore HR managers need to step up and assume more HRD roles in form of developing enabling capacities, maximizing learning opportunities and introducing more empowerment, feedback and reinforcement mechanisms into the system. As rightly emphasized by Williams (2002) HR could play many important roles. For instance existing training program can be redesigned to include value communication and reinforcement component. New program can be conducted to sensitize employees about the organizational values and how they provided strategic advantage to the firm. In fact HR can play a vital role in incorporating a value component into several HR practices such as employee selection, appraisal, training and development, compensation and reward system etc. According to Denison (1990) organizations will achieve greater effectiveness to the extent that consistency in translation of core values is developed within human resources policies and practices. There are evidences to suggest that successful organizations, such as those receiving Malcolm Baldrige quality awards, have many innovative HRD practices (Zairi, 1998).

The study was conducted on a small sample of organizations which would limit the generalization of the findings. Nevertheless, it does provide some empirical knowledge of HRD practices in a developing economy that is Malaysia. It also explored the relationship of HRD system and practices with organizational values. The findings of the study will be useful to develop further research hypotheses on why some HRD practices like potential appraisal and promotion exercises designed for developing employees' capabilities contributed positively to several organizational values, while others such as performance appraisal system worked otherwise.

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