UNIT 12   HRD IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to understand:

l   the place of HRD in government and public systems;

l   the specific context in which HRD operates in the government sector;

l   the nature of existing and desired HRD interventions in government.

Structure

12.1   ROLE OF HRD IN GOVERNMENT

The government has a critical role to play in the development of the country. It acts as a planner, regulator, catalyst, controller and investor. Its policies and practices directly determine the nature and direction of HRD activities in institutions and organisations under the direct control of government such as the administrative machinery and public sector organisations. Indirectly, the government's policies and practices set the tone and create an environment which may discourage or encourage the HRD activities of other organisations in the non-governmental sectors as well. Thus, HRD in government has a strategic role. That is, its own policies and practices have a ripple effect with wide ranging impact on other sectors of society. This is especially so in a partially controlled economy like India's where the government regulates the activities of even private sector organisations.

Broadly, HRD in government can be given two interpretations. The first can be that it refers to the HRD activities in the various ministries, departments and government agencies. The second interpretation is that it refers to role of government at the macro environmental level; policies and conditions which affect HRD in various other organisations.[1] For instance, the policies and directives of the government with respect to the employment and employment conditions of special sections of society, such as the backward classes, significantly impact HRD policies and practices at the micro organisational level. This chapter will examine government's role in HRD mainly from the former angle.

12.2 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The environmental and situational conditions under which the government operates have an important bearing on its HRD practices. By and large, the government is seen to be conservative and slow in managing and implementing HRD and its HRD activities are often constrained by red-tapism and bureaucratic delays. The government has been slow to introduce even fairly conventional HRD systems such as regular training and development of its personnel. There are a number of reasons which may explain these characteristics of HRD in government.

Government institutions are very large and complex systems. To cope with the myriad tasks of administration, government organisations and institutions tend to be very diverse in nature and are scattered across the length and breadth of the country. The sheer size, spread, diversity and complexity of the administrative machinery make the HRD function in government a highly complex one. A second factor is the historical context of government institutions. Although in a democratic system there may be frequent changes in the legislative branches of the government. The executive branches consisting of the administrative departments and related organisations, remain more or less stable. Consequently, there tends to be a historical continuity in the structure, culture, practices and behaviour of these departments or organisations.

Thus, for instance, although India has been independent of the British now for over forty years, very many of our administrative policies and practices continue to be the same or similar to what they were during the time of British rule. The sheer magnitude and complexity of bringing about change has prevented changes being implemented. Furthermore, changes in the administrative practices of the government may even cause considerable disruption and organisational turbulence not only within the government systems but also outside. This is why the introduction of even minor new HRD systems is a slow, difficult and often hazardous process in governmental systems. On the other hand, the social, economic and political environment in which governmental institutions function is often highly turbulent, especially in a democratic society which is open to influences both from within and outside. Thus, public administrators frequently find that they have to cope with changing circumstances, new problems and new tasks, while the human and organisational resources available to them remain relatively unchanged. This gives rise to complaints of bureaucratic delays, red-tapism, apathy, lack of motivation etc. Such difficulties are the most common cause of frustration and demotivation among government functionaries.

A final contextual factor of considerable importance to HRD in Government has been the sharply increased level of complexity of government administration in modern times. Such a complexity is related to the sweeping tide of revolutionary changes in different facets of society. We are witnessing an era of knowledge explosion, social and technological revolutions, and widespread changes even in political systems. In most parts of the world the increasing tendency toward democratisation has made governing systems of all kinds more visible and accountable to the common people. Consequently there are increased expectations and turbulences of various kinds.

As Mathur points out: "The massiveness of the social, economic and political changes implies the need for careful all-round planning and control of resources at all levels. An enlightened administration, dealing constantly with new situations, with economic, social and technological developments, with a constantly changing society increasing in complexity all the time, needs an equally committed, motivated, dynamic and inventive administrative service personnel to handle various levels of administration. The administration has to assume many different roles and responsibilities for effective management of various functions. The importance of manpower planning and HRD in the above context becomes quite clear. HRD in administration implies a series of organised activities of the government conducted within a specified time with

a design to produce behavioural changes in various levels of administrators. HRD programmes are concerned with training, education and development of all those people who are engaged in various capacities, in performance of various administrative jobs."[2]

12.3   BASIC OBJECTIVES OF HRD IN GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS[3]

According to K. M. Mathur, the basic objectives of HRD in government administration systems are:

1)   To equip the civil servant with precision and clarity in transaction of business;

2)   To attune the civil servant to new tasks which he will be called upon to perform in a changing world;

3)   To develop resistance to the danger of becoming mechanised by visualising what hc is doing in a wider setting and by persevering with his own educational development;

4)   To develop his capacity for higher work and greater responsibility;

5)   To develop and maintain staff morale particularly because large number of people have to deal with tasks' of a routine nature;

6)   To inculcate right attitudes towards the public, never forgetting that the civil servant is the servant and not the master of the community; and

7)   To sustain the human touch not only in direct personal contacts with the public but also in handling correspondence which demands a proper sense of urgency and due consideration of the "man at the other end".

The aim of HRD has to be to develop the administrators not just for the needs of tomorrow but even for those of the days after. The HRD programmes can reduce the consciousness gap between the leaders of society and the masses of people by training development administrators. The success of any development programmes lies in a number of variables of which training is an important factor. Training, education and development or HRD in administration are expected to provide the needed stimulus to initiate impulses of change in the administrative apparatus and will lead to improved efficiency, productivity and administrative performance. In fact, of late there has been significant enlargement of the training infrastructure even proliferation, enhancement of financial outlays and consequential increase in the number of training opportunities for administrators.

HRD in administration is an important part of macro-level human resource planning. An organisation that does not plan for its human resources will often find that it is not meeting either its personnel requirements or its overall goals effectively. There are four basic steps in human resource planning:

1)   Planning for future needs,

2)   Planning for future balance,

3)   Planning for recruiting and selecting, and

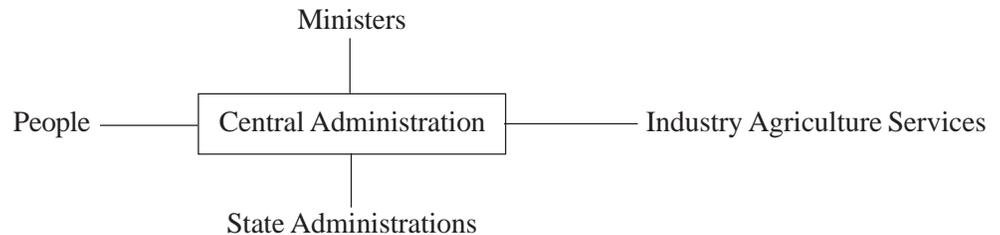4)   Planning for development.

Planning for development aims at increasing the ability of the individuals and groups to contribute to organisational effectiveness. Development programmes are designed to educate employees beyond the requirements of their present position so that they will be prepared for promotion and be able to take a broader view of their role in the organisation. How should the training and movement of individuals within the organization be managed so that the organisation will be assured of a continuing

supply of experienced and capable personnel? The central elements in human resource planning are forecasting and the human resource audit. Forecasting attempts to assess the future personnel needs of the organisation. The human resource audit assesses the organization's current human resources. In the human resource audit, the skills and the performance of each individual in the organisation are appraised. Induction and orientation are designed to provide a new employee with the information he (or she) needs in order to function effectively and comfortably in a given setting. Induction and orientation is generally followed by training programmes aimed to improve skills, techniques, knowledge and attitude of the employees. Continuous monitoring of the actual job performed will reveal changes that call for new training. Training for advancement is needed to enable the employee to climb the promotional ladders.

12.4 ROLE SET OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

With the introduction of the Five Year Plans after independence, the Government of India took upon itself a developmental role in addition to the conventional regulatory role. The assumption underlying the new role was that along with looking after law and order, the Government needed to pay attention to resource mobilization and utilization. A number of departments and agencies were created on the lines of conventional bureaucratic structures. The Government also gave a lead role to the public sector in order to provide the major thrust for development.

Over the years, the expectations from the role of the governments' central administration system have grown to a very great extent. The role set of the Government in HRD can be seen in the illustration by Athreya.[4]

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                        Ministers
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People ——————  [ Central Administration ]  —————— Industry Agriculture Services
                            |
                            |
                   State Administrations
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Such a role-set suggests the possibility of conflicting expectations and priorities which have to be fulfilled. These according to Athreya, are:

1) To forecast, analyse and advise Ministers on strategies for achieving policy objectives.

2) To help in optimising goals.

3) Approved programmes to be implemented in time.

4) Progress to be monitored and to give suggestions to the ministers for corrective action.

5) Performance comparison with other countries.

6) To develop innovations in procedures and practices.

7) To develop subordinates and themselves for the institutionalization of Government.

12.5   HRD DEVELOPMENTS IN GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Industry has used HRD in an integrated form only recently. In Government, it is more so. Some important HRD developments in Government are given below.[5]

1)   Initial attempts were made to improve organistional effectiveness in Government. Paul Appleby from the US Public Administration came and studied the Indian administration set up. One of his recommendations was the need to transform administration from a 'colonial' to a development-oriented one. However, not much was done to implement the recommendations.

2)   The Administrative Reforms Commission of 1967, emphasised the importance of better systems and training and development. This led to the setting up of an Administrative Reforms Cell, within the Home Ministry first. This later become a Personnel Department. Three activities were strengthened among others, nomination of more officers for training within and outside the country, computerization of manpower data and more systematic postings for specialised assignments.

3)   The Indian Institutes of Management, Calcutta and Ahmedabad started in 1962. By the early seventies, Indian Administrative Service recruits were given management training and management concepts were also brought into the training institutions of other public systems such as Income tax, Postal and Police.

4)   Failures in implementation of plans, projects and programmes led to an awareness of HRD. In 1985, a formal Ministry for HRO was set up.

5)   With this new emphasis on HRD, ministers and secretaries of government departments were deputed to attend a variety of training and development programmes on management and HRD at reputed management institutes like the ASCI, the IIM's, XLRI, Tata Management Training Centre, etc.

12.6   CURRENT SYSTEMS OF HRD IN GOVERNMENT

1) Training

The nature, size and variety of the plans and programmes of social and economic advance that the country has undertaken determine the training of Government and public systems. Ten years ago, there were only a few Central and State training institutions for imparting induction training to their officers. In-service training was not seen as important for the development of officers. Today, most States have their own training institutions and if they do not have, they send them to other reputed institutes.[6]

2) Job Rotation

The move away from purely generalist training on history, constitution, procedures etc. towards specialised training, has also made possible more purposive rotation and transfer. The earlier concept of the jack-of-all-trades generalist, who can handle any assignment, is giving way to better fitment of role and person. Officers who have utilised the opportunities to get Masters and even doctoral degrees in specialised subjects like Economics, Energy, Population Studies, Trade etc. are being rotated into relevant assignments.

3) Data Bank

The awareness of HRD has coincided with a sudden acceptance of computers in not only industry, where the debate has been raging for thirty years, but also in government. This has enabled the computerisation of human resource data. The data bank and its use for drawing lists for training, rotation and promotion are becoming the norm in government. There may be a lack of system discipline, and attempts at manipulation, but the system is now available.

4) Selection

Even before independence, selection in government was "objective" in the sense of being based on competitive examinations. But this has a concomitant problem of rigidity. There is a very limited acceptance of mid-career entry.[7]

5) Manpower Forecasting[8]

This goes mostly by annual manpower budgeting and ad hoc proposals during the year. But the five year plans have provided an opportunity for at least once in five years for each Ministry to make its manpower forecasts. In the past such forecasts were mechanistic extrapolations. What is more remarkable recently are the pressures for efficiency and manpower reduction, in the following ways:

a) Voluntary Retirement Schemes have been introduced, giving attractive benefits, at the end of twenty years' service.

b) Additional workload is sought to be taken without increasing manpower.

c) Information technology is helping to merge and sometimes eliminate routine jobs.

d) More autonomous, "attached" organisations are being formed, to take work out, of the bureaucracy into more flexible entities.

e) The thrust towards delicensing, deregulation and decontrol, the move from 'physical' to fiscal control etc., are expected to lessen the administrative work load further.

6) Performance Appraisal

Performance Appraisal as a HRD tool has not yet been realised in Government systems. The predominant method of performance appraisal in government has been the confidential rating system, used largely for evaluation rather than development.

12.7 A NEW APPROACH TO AN INTEGRATED HRD SYSTEM IN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION[9]

Development may be defined as the process of acquisition of competencies. Human Resource Development is the process of facilitating and ensuring the acquisition of competencies required by people (employees, their supervisors and leaders or people in general) to perform certain activities or tasks intended to achieve some desired outcomes. These outcomes are defined by that organization in an organizational setting or some public agency, or agent or leader in public settings.

Objectives of a programme or an organization can be achieved only when people do certain things to achieve them. The people who should do these things are the employees. What they do or are expected to do may be called "activities" or "task" These activities or tasks are grouped into categories and are sometimes called "functions". If the task or activities have to be performed well, certain conditions have

to be met. The following are some of the important conditions that need to be fulfilled:

l   The goals or objectives should be clearly stated and preferably in observable and measurable terms.

l   The activities or tasks required to be performed for achieving the goals should be exhaustively identified and listed.

l   Each person or employee should have a complete list of the activities he is expected to perform and should be motivated or committed to perform these activities.

l   Each person or employee should have the capabilities or competencies required to perform these activities. If he does not have them, he should be helped to acquire these competencies.

l   Periodically the list of activities, their appropriateness to achieve the goals, division or allocation of these activities to different members, competencies needed and the competencies existing in the employees should be reviewed and competency gaps should be identified.

l   Competencies should be developed in employees or people on a continuous basis to perform these activities, tasks and functions.

HRD is nothing but a planned way of ensuring that the above conditions are met. In order to ensure this a number of instruments or mechanisms can be used: These instruments include activity analysis or task analysis or role analysis exercises, critical attribute identification exercises, performance analysis, feedback and review discussions, potential development exercises, training OD, etc. Some of these mechanisms are briefly described below:

1) Activity Analysis/Task Analysis/Role Analysis

These activities aim at examining and organizing the various tasks to be accomplished in order to achieve organizational objectives. In activity analysis all the activities required to accomplish the final or intermediate goals of the organisation are identified. Task analysis is concerned with identifying the functions or categories of tasks. Role analysis is concerned with the role and role clarity of job incumbents.

The above mentioned activities are necessary for individuals to be able to perform well in organizations. Unfortunately, they are often neglected especially in public service organizations resulting in vagueness about roles and tasks and overlapping functions.

The following steps are followed in carrying out activity/task/role analysis:

l   A workshop is held in which the entire department or unit, or a group of a maximum of fifteen to twenty. People, get together under the leadership of an external expert.

l   The workshop begins with an identification of the mission of the department or organization.

l   The mission statement is translated into measureable objectives to serve as indicators of mission achievement.

l   The group then identifies the specific objectives of their unit or department which can contribute to the overall mission.

l   Every individual in the group examines how his or her job can contribute to the objectives of the department and specifies goals and activities which he or she has to fulfil.

l   Each individual then presents his or her job objectives to the entire group and makes necessary modifications after discussions.

l   Following this, each individual prepares an exhaustive list of activities which he or she has to perform, estimates the importance of and time required for these activities, identifies the competencies that are needed to carry them out and finally, arrives at the competencies which he or she needs to develop.

l   The individual discusses the list with his or her supervisors, and a final activity list is arrived at with the approval of the supervisor.

2) Identification of Critical Attributes

Critical attributes are the important qualities the job holder is required to possess in order to perform the functions associated with his job well. In the activity/task/role analysis stated above, competency requirements are identified for each job holder by himself in consultation with his supervisors. The critical competencies required to perform the job are critical attributes. In case an activity/task/role analysis is not being done by the unit, it could undertake the identification of critical attributes with the help of specialists (behavioural scientists). Such an exercise should result in the identification and listing of critical competencies required for a job to perform it well and the indicators of these competencies. When specialists undertake such work they normally start with some form of job analysis (somewhat similar to role analysis, the major difference being a relatively more focus on the job and its components and less on the job holder and his expectations and experiences) to derive critical attributes or competencies.

The same could be done by the department itself in a similar way as role analysis. The only additional step is to identify critical competencies from the list of competencies identified. For each competency, indicators of the competency (e.g. a degree, diploma, evidence of handling the function well in the past, behaviours on his job, performance appraisal reports, test data etc.) should also be stated.

3) Performance Appraisal

Performance Appraisal systems as instruments of HRD have not yet been realised in government systems. A performance appraisal system can be a powerful tool of HRD when it is used to help an employee understand his tasks and the means of achieving them, identify the strengths and weaknesses he has relevant to his job, and acquire new competencies for self development in the job.

It is possible to design appraisal systems to achieve these objectives. Irrespective of, or in addition to the performance appraisal (or confidential reporting) followed by the Government, it is possible and even desirable for every administrative bead to design and follow a performance review process in his unit or department. The following components could be used for such a process:

l   Periodically, about once every six months or a year, every appraiser meets with his appraisee for a formal discussion regarding the appraisee's work and performance.

l   The appraiser and appraisee jointly review the latter's past performance and decide on specific objectives to be achieved in the next year.

l   An analysis is also carried out of the factors which inhabited or contributed to past performance and those which are expected to inhabit or contribute to future performance.

l   Based on the above analysis, the appraiser identifies the developmental needs of the individual as well as those of the organization. These needs serve as the basis for planning the organization's training and development and organization development activities for the coming year.

The performance appraisal system described above serves the purpose not only of individual evaluation but also of providing important input data for an organization's training programmes, counselling plans, organization development activities, etc.

4) Potential Development

Every individual has some competency or the other. An organization interested in HRD needs to provide opportunities for identifying and developing such competencies so as to enable the future growth of people. The objective of potential appraisal system is to identify the potential of an employee to occupy higher positions in the organizational hierarchy and undertake higher responsibilities. Based on the assessment of potential, an organization can design appropriate training, career development, counselling and organization development programmes.

A good potential appraisal system would include the following:

l   Preparation of proper role descriptions for various job positions.

l   Identification of the critical attributes or requirements for effective role performance in the future roles.

l   Assessment mechanisms by which individuals can be evaluated with respect to the critical attributes. Psychological tests, simulation games and exercises, performance analyses, are some such mechanisms which can be used.

l   Feedback mechanisms by which individuals are kept informed about their potential and the steps they need to take in order to improve.

5) Training

Most of the training in government today is institution dependent. If training has to serve a useful purpose, the individual should feel a need for training, he or she should be sponsored for training at a suitable time, and he or she should be provided the opportunites or facilities to use his learnings from the training. It is useful for every department or organization to set apart an appropriate training budget. Training need not be viewed as classroom training alone. It is possible to have monthly meetings of all staff of a department in which information is shared by the department head, or training inputs are imparted by an internal or external expert. Training can also be imparted by sponsoring field visits to study the functioning of other effective departments or organizations.[11]

6) Organization Development

One of the most important, but also most neglected, aspects of HRD in government systems is organization development (OD). Given the traditional rigid and bureaucratic structures and cultures which tend to prevail in large organisations like government systems, many HRD activities and systems cannot be successful unless planned changes are made .in existing organizational structure and cultures. OD is a method of planned change by which an organization's health and effectiveness is diagnosed and relevant interventions made to improve it.

One approach to OD in a government system has been used and described by Vittal.[12] This involves the administration of a questionnaire to assess the attitudes of people and the climate prevailing in a department. The questions include such as:

l   What is the work we are doing, but which we should not do?

l   What is the work we must be doing, but are not doing?

l   What are your individual problems and what solutions do you suggest?

l   What are the major problems facing the department and what are your ideas to overcome them?

l   What are your objectives? Are we taking, action to achieve them? How successful are we in this?

l   What are we doing to reach our goals?

If the data from such a questionnaire survey are shared with members of the department and used as a basis for planning and implementing change, it would act much like the survey research method in OD.

Another intervention is the suggestion scheme system.[13] In this scheme, suggestions are periodically collected from department members about modifications or improvements which can be made in the department. The best suggestions accepted for implementation are displayed in a roll of honour and the winners are given cash awards.

An OD intervention which may be especially useful in government systems in Management by Objectives (MBO).[14] In this method, people at all levels are involved in identifying organizational goals and specific individual strategies for achieving these goals through their respective tasks.

Pestonjee has pointed out the need for OD interventions to reduce the role stresses which people in government departments are prone to face. Such stresses arise from conflicting tasks and responsibilities, a sense of erosion of one's role, psychological non-acceptance of one's role, etc. Role based interventions can help reduce these stresses by clarifying, redefining and enriching formal organizational roles.[15]

12.8   SUMMARY

HRD has a strategic role to play in government. The contextual and historical conditions affecting government systems give the HRD function in government a difficult and complex role to play. HRD has to provide for the development of administrators and personnel who in turn have to look after key developmental activities in the country. Hitherto, HRD in government has been confirmed to limited training activities, job rotation, selection, manpower forecasting, and maintaining of a personnel data bank. A new approach towards developing an integrated HRD system in government administration is called for.

The main components of such a system are suggested to be activity, task or role analysis, identification of critical job attributes, performance appraisal, potential development, training, and organization development.

12.9   SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1)   Discuss the role of HRD in Government and Public Systems.

2)   Write a comprehensive note on current systems of HRD in Government and Public Systems.

12.10   FURTHER READINGS

1.   M.B. Athreya,"Human. Resource Development in Government". In *Towards Organizational Effectiveness Through HRD,* unedited papers at the 1989 Conference of the National HRD Network, New Delhi, pp. 479-503.

2.   K.M. Mathur, "Human Resource Development in Administration." In B.L. Mathur (ed): *HRD: Strategic Approaches and Experience,* Jaipur: Arihant, 1989. pp.49-50.

3. Ibid, pp. 52-54.

4. M.B. Athreya, op. cit.

5. Ibid.

6. T.V. Ramanan, "Increasing Productivity of Training at the State and Central Government *Departments."]ndian Journal of Training and Development,* 13(1), 1983, pp. 34-36.

7. M.B. Athreya, op. cit.

8. Ibid.

9. Largely adapted from T.V. Rao, "Human Resource Development in Government System," *Management in Government,* XVIII (2), July-Sept. 1986, pp: 159-176.

10. Udai Pareek and T.V. Rao, *Designing and Managing Human Resource Systems,* New Delhi: Oxford and IBH, 1981.

11. Ibid.

12. N. Vittal, *"Human Resource Development in Government."* In National HRD Network, 1989 op. cit.

13. Ibid.

14. A. Singh, "Management by Objectives and the Government," *Management in Government,* 4 (1), 1972, pp. 29-53.

15. D.M. Pestonjee, *"Role Stress in Government Administration,"* In National HRD Network, 1989, op. cit.