

Viewpoint

Human Resources as the Greatest Assets in Work Organizations

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How do people find work and employment? One theory that explains this is John Holland's theory of vocational choice stating that an individual's personality is the primary factor in the choice of work. It is necessary to choose an occupation that is congruent with one's personality. Another is Donald Super's life-span, life space theory explaining that people differ in their abilities and personalities, needs, values, interests, traits and self-concepts. People are qualified by virtue of these characteristics for certain occupations. As educators for example, the outstanding personality traits of teachers are being nurturing, sociable, responsible and achieving.

Another theory by Rene Dawis, George England and Lloyd Lofquist (in Isaacson and Brown, 2000) called the theory of work adjustment says there are two main elements: people and the work environment. Work environments have requirements that are consonant to the needs of individuals. When the needs of individuals and the work environment are satisfied, correspondence occurs. Workers select jobs because of the perception that the jobs will satisfy their needs and the workers are selected because of the perceptions that their skills will meet the needs of the workplaces. In simple terms, this refers to job matching, which unfortunately is a problem in Philippine industries.

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After finding work, the right people must be retained and developed. According to behavioral experts, human resources are the greatest assets in the workplaces, and developing human resources is necessary for the rapid growth of enterprises and the nation's economy. This involves educating and training the workforce to acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes for their professional and personal growth. Human resource development, according to Gilley and Eggland (1992) is a comprehensive learning system aimed to enhance individual performance to improve organizational efficiency. There are three types of learning activities:

- on-the-job learning when individual instruction is used such as on-the-job training or OJT
- off-the-job learning includes college and university courses, as well as workshops and seminars conducted by outside consultants and instructors
- through-the-job learning refers to new assignments such as job rotations and job enrichment programs

These learning activities practised in both the private and public sectors also point to varying behaviors of humans, including dispositions for human resource development that are guided by a set of values and attitudes. Values are specific types of beliefs that are central in the human system and act as life guides. Instrumental values such as hard work and loyalty are guides for living on which we base our daily behavior. Attitudes are organized around a focal object and predispose a person to behave in a particular way toward that object. Attitudes towards work, for instance, are said to be socially constructed. This principle suggests that a recruit's job attitudes arise from the elements of the work environment that co-workers make salient through their everyday talk, according to Milton Rokeach (in Steers and Black 1998).

In today's parlance (in the business process outsourcing industry, to be specific), two or more workers interacting closely at the lowest level are called a team, a democratic structure where rank and other distinct roles are defined but not so evident due to prevalence of multi-tasking or collaborations. Nonetheless, capability for team leadership is crucial to gain the support of the members. In this era of downsizing,

mergers and acquisitions, there is a concern that employers have little regard for the welfare of workers. This corporate insensitivity can be reversed by purposely being humanistic starting at the level of teams. This should translate to showing interest in non-work aspects of employees' lives without neglecting good performance. Thus, it is important to delegate some assignments, give and solicit feedback and promote the team throughout the bigger organization.

Even in teams or small groups, experts emphasize the need to have a nurturing leader described as one who actively promotes the growth of members in terms of skills, knowledge, and emotional cohesion. The reason for this is that everybody has a need for self-fulfillment, although the degree would vary. This means showing genuine concern for the welfare of the members. This should translate to listening to work concerns as well as personal problems, helping them solve bothersome issues and congratulating members when they demonstrate skills development.

In the workplaces, organizational culture is created through years of interactions. To begin with, Filipino culture is characterized as high context making communication ambiguous. Communication is so implicit, including the verbal messages. "Ambiguity in Filipino interactive patterns is a function of the very high degree of complexity and elaborateness in Filipino social relations." (Padilla-Maggay 1999, p. 10)

It is interesting that Tomas Andres, in his writings about Filipino values and social relations chooses to focus on the positive polarity of Filipino values, among these are "*lakas ng loob*", "*kusang loob*", "*utang na loob*" and "*tapat na loob*". A renown Filipino author and truly patriotic, Andres (1989, p. 8) believes that focusing on the positive and countering the negative polarity of "*nasiraan ng loob*" or "*walang kusang loob*" is the way towards development for the Filipino work organizations and for the entire nation.

There are observable dynamics in organizations, especially in large complex workplaces (Newstrom & David 2007) that become part of the organizational culture. Organizations are living systems, primarily composed of people interacting, influencing or contradicting one

another (Morgan 1998). It is inevitable that power play happens between superiors and subordinates, between peers, between social groups. According to David Buchanan and Andrzej Huczynski (in Thompson and McHugh 2002) to motivate subordinates and institute changes, people in leadership positions must learn to use power without threat or violence. Otherwise this will result to conflict situations. River Watkins (in Littlejohn, 1995) wrote that conflict arises when there is an objective desired by both parties but which both parties could not achieve because the parties may have different values or perceptions. Conflicts also arise as a result of misperceptions and the formation of factions.

Murphy (1994) advised that managing conflict will require anticipating conflict situations, giving feedback and defining expectations. In interpersonal relationships, there are options to resolve conflicts: employing no communication, sending negative messages or utilizing open and positive communication. Conflict ends only when each party is satisfied that he or she has won or lost in the situation.

Conflicts are inevitable no matter how much we avoid or even anticipate or manage them. This all the more necessitates a new strategy, new ways to introduce change through Positive Organization Development (POD). Conflicts may arise between management and the workers which could be due to workers' non-representation in the organization's decision-making processes. Within the workplaces, there are various ways to resolve conflicts and disputes. In both the private and public sectors, unionism may be exercised wherein the union bargains with management for appropriate salaries, benefits and other conditions of work.

In capsule, a workplace must be an organization not only of structures but of capabilities to execute new strategies appropriate for utmost human resource development. Old perceptions and misperceptions about work organizations and outdated practices must be rectified.

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