

## REVIEWS

**Designing and Managing Human Resource Systems**, With Special Emphasis on Human Resource Development. Udai Pareek, T. V. Rao. New Delhi, Oxford IBH Publishing Company, 1981.

Organisations in India as well as elsewhere have a tendency to consider personnel management as a 'non-function' which can be, if necessary, done away with without causing serious damages to organizational efficiency. On the other hand majority of the people who are concerned with management of organization do agree at theoretical levels that human component is an important asset. In spite of this realisation, in reality organizations tend to take approaches which give most personnel departments and their staff a feeling of redundancy. This is primarily because of the fact that personnel management in most organizations is kept basically as a service activity rather than as one which is directly involved in the totality of organizational functioning.

In recent years, however, a few organizations have seriously felt the importance of this area of management and hence have started taking slightly different approaches to the area of human resource management. These differences in approach, though few in number, are to be considered as definite steps in the right direction. In the light of this the new book by Udai Pareek and T. Venkateswara Rao entitled "Designing and Managing Human Resource Systems" can be considered as a bold and pioneering work brought out

with a view to revitalising the traditional personnel management functions.

The book has 12 chapters of which the first three are devoted to detailed discussions of conceptual and contextual issues. The authors in the first chapter make a strong case for different approaches to management of people in organizations by showing the contrasts between the traditional personnel function and the suggested Human Resource System (HRS). In the second and the third chapters the concept of HRS is probed through contextual factors, and some specific issues in the area of Human Resource Management (HRM). Apart from the general contexts like size, technology etc. the authors have also elaborated the social contexts like extension motivation, dependency motivation, casteism, fatalism etc. which have direct relevance to HRM within Indian environment. From chapter four onwards the attention is focussed on some of the practical issues in human resource management. Chapter four looks at the process of matching the role and the person, i.e. recruitment and placement. After discussing a few techniques of selection the chapter goes on to discuss in depth a new technique namely assessment centre. Since it is a relatively new area, very little is written about it in Indian context. The authors have done some amount of justice to this concept by explaining the operational processes of the centre through a detailed case. Chapter five looks at the process of developing the person in the role by means of performance appraisal system, while chapter six discusses yet

another practical aspect of HRM viz. training. Chapters seven and eight deal with two dimensions of appraisal namely, potential appraisal and performance review. While discussing appraisal systems, the authors have rightly pointed out that the normal practice of Indian organizations is to promote people on the basis of their past performance. They argue that past performance does not necessarily indicate future performance and hence they prescribe what they call potential appraisal system. Details of establishing potential appraisal system are given in chapter seven. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are general in nature where concepts like QWL, OD system redesign etc. are examined. Chapter 12 is a comprehensive case encompassing the various aspects of Human Resource Development Systems. This case with ample data makes a positive argument that Indian public sector organizations have sufficient preparedness to carry out innovative experiments in the area of HRS. This is against the common belief that public sector organizations have reached a stage which is beyond redemption.

The value of the book is enhanced by the inclusion of several appendices at the end of each chapter. Some of these are real life cases carved out of the consultancy experiences of the authors and a few others are outputs of researches done in Indian organizations. There are also some "do it yourself" kits like the one at the end of Chapter 7 which tells managements how to establish potential appraisal systems for managers. On the whole the book can be taken as a useful document for the purpose of training. Since the book primarily deals with the problems of Indian organizations and gives step by step procedures to establish certain systems, it can certainly be used as a 'guide book' by the

practicing managers who are interested in bringing about innovative changes in the area of human resource management.

Though the book has considerable amount of practical value it does not however, mean that it is beyond all pitfalls. While reading it, one gets an impression that the authors have adopted appraisal as the central theme of the book. Out of twelve chapters four deal with appraisal from different angles. Besides, most of the examples right from the beginning are related to appraisal systems. Probably the authors could have de-emphasised HRD and performance appraisal to make the coverage of the book a bit more wider. In that case it would have been a solid and comprehensive material for management education in India. Yet another point that needs to be raised here also deals with the coverage aspect. On page 18 under structuring the system four classifications are made viz. (a) Job and Salary, (b) Planning and Administration (c) Human Resource Development and (d) Worker Affairs. Subsequently while discussing these in detail the last sub-system, Worker Affairs, is dealt with as a part of Human Resource Development. The rationale of including Worker Affairs in HRD is not made clear by the authors.

In spite of these pitfalls, the book should be considered as a step in the right direction of providing a better view of human resource management. Needless to say that management of human resource on the lines discussed in this book certainly is positive and distinct from the traditional 'over worked' personnel functions which mainly center around industrial relations and welfare activities.

**Jacob Mankidy**  
Faculty Member, PMIR Group