

ABC for Management and Human Resource Development

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Introduction

Today, the area of Human Resource Development (HRD) is a subject of great interest for people all over the world. HRD is one of the most crucial factors contributing to the success of any enterprise, whether it is a state-owned or a private enterprise. The prosperity of both types of enterprise affects the social and economic progress of a country.

After studying a number of modern disciplines in sociology, anthropology and behavioral science, which aim at understanding and developing people, one might begin to see that actually the objectives and contents of such studies are not totally new. Throughout the history of the human race, almost all religions, including Christianity and Buddhism, have been helping people to understand themselves and others, so that they can live and work together peacefully and productively. Buddhism is particularly important in its approach to HRD. To understand this force, let us consider Applied Buddhist Concepts (ABC) in HRD. From a Buddhist viewpoint, this must be done with awareness and acceptance that we are not perfect, so that as human beings we must be diligent in continuing self-improvement by mastering ABC and putting it into daily practice.

What is Buddhist Enlightenment

Over 2,500 years ago, the Lord Buddha was a crown prince who became a student of ideal spiritual progress at the age of 29. He began his search for spiritual

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perfection by joining the best school in the region. After completion of his study, his teachers asked him to join them in teaching at the school. The young prince was honored to be qualified equally with his top-flight teacher, but he was not satisfied with his achievement, so he left the school and started practicing what was known as "reduction of materialism for spiritual progress". This practice was the torture of oneself by not eating for several days until the body became thin to the bones. That was the prevailing belief at that time.

After attempting this practice without success, he began to realize that it was not the right methodology. He decided to return to the daily routine of satisfaction of physiological needs as a basis for development of spiritual strength.

At the age of 35, he became the Lord Buddha through successful meditation. The Lord did not claim Buddhism to be his personal creation but as the discovery of an already existing "Dhamma", which means Nature. Enlightenment is similar to scientific discovery. The content of the discovery, called the "Four Noble Truths", is:

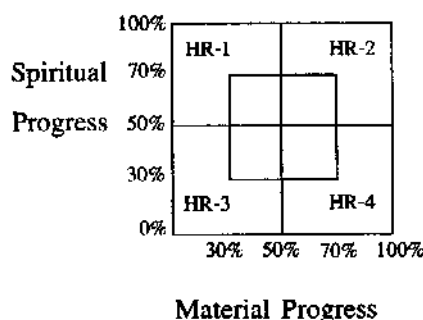
- (1) **Suffering.** This is the sign and symptom of problems in private and working life which lower the spiritual quality of a person.
- (2) **Causes of Suffering.** These are anger, greediness and inability to perceive reality.
- (3) **End of Suffering.** This is the goal or ultimate objective of "suffering management", i.e. a state of mind that is transcendently happy, an ideally crystal clear mind so that the brain becomes highly potent.
- (4) **Methodology.** Ways to end suffering must be put into practice together as a system. There are three basic ways called the three-fold study, consisting of (a) promoting self-discipline, through practice according to "dos" and "don'ts"; (b) improving the mental ability to "concentrate" through meditation; and (c) reducing involvement in problems of life by "understanding", through a bird's eye view of world problems, as if one went up to the seventh floor of a building and looked down to see oneself struggling with daily problems and suffering.

Typology of Human Resources

To develop human resources for the betterment of enterprises and society, one could classify personnel into 5 categories as shown in Figure 1. The diagram shows two independent variables: the material and spiritual progress of the Human Resource (HR) are

on horizontal and vertical axes respectively. HR-1 represents the first type of people who are relatively poor but high in spiritual commitment. The best of this type are the "Arahanta" or the practically graduated Buddhist monks.

FIGURE 1
Dimensional Classification of HR



HR-2 is the second group of people who are relatively rich in material goods and have high spiritual commitment. HR-3, the third type, is the middle class of population consisting of people who are at an average of say, 30% to 70% of the mean value on both dimensions. HR-4 are the rich but "uneasy", or those who are economically capable, making lots of income for themselves but seldom having peace of mind. Not only does their low spiritual status often cause internal unrest, but it also contributes to social evils (e.g. poverty, drug addiction and negative mental health) among their fellow countrymen, and sometimes can affect certain portions of the world population. Because they behave more like hunters than farmers, their processes for generating their income are destructive such as illegal cutting of the forest and selling of drugs, instead of creative production of economic value for quality of life for their clientele.

HR-5 are the type of people who are victims of the HR-4 class. This last type of people are poor and relatively low in spiritual advancement. The most unfortunate of this group can be found in jails and mental hospitals; or homeless, sleeping on the pavement in some of the large cities. The best people of HR-5 type might be close to or becoming HR-1, HR-3 or HR-4. But they are still far away from HR-2.

Human Resource Dynamics

Some developing countries and Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) in Asia and

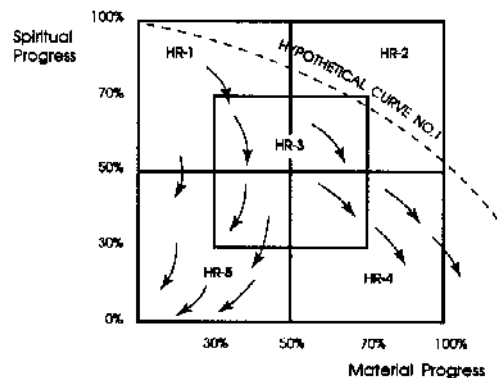
elsewhere in the world have experienced the demoralizing tide shown as a dotted curve (Hypothetical Curve No. 1) in Figure 2, when they have put too much emphasis on economic development, and have neglected the importance of HRD and quality of life for the population as a whole. In some cases, for example Thailand, this shorter-run or myopic approach to economic development creates momentum for long-run economic problems - for instance, over-cutting of forest, pollution, waste on transportation, and other waste due to corruption and ignorance. In such a situation many people want to become rich quickly, and the rich tend to become even richer with a great tendency to move to lower spiritual states as if they were going downhill (shown by arrows on the right side of Figure 2). The relatively poor, including some middle class (HR-3), tend to become poorer - through inflation, rising cost of living and social exploitation by the increasing number of people of type 4 (HR-4). As a result, they tend to be lower in spirit, moving toward the origin of the graph as shown by arrows on the left side of Figure 2. The gap between the rich and the poor becomes larger and larger as time goes by. It is possible to find a small number of individuals who have the determination to, and can, move against the demoralizing tide of unbalanced economic development.

ABC for Balancing Social and Economic Progress

The Applied Buddhist strategy for better balance of social and economic progress, through Management Development and HRD, the Buddhist way, can be considered as one feasible alternative solution to the negative impact of over-emphasis on economic growth alone. Thailand can be cited as a case study, in that, during the period of the First National Five Year Economic Development Plan, the name of the organization responsible for the National Plan was initially coined to be NEDB, which is an abbreviation for National Economic Development Board. In the beginning, about 10-30 years ago, Thai economic planners seemed to forget the human side of national development strategy. After approximately 20 years of experience of economic development, the Royal Thai Government began to realize that the need to strike a balance between economic and social development is very important. This realization was due to the fact that what had been going on in terms of HR mobility, in the two-dimensional field, resembled the flow shown by the little arrows in Figure 2. The Thai Government changed its emphasis by adding "Social" to the Board's name and practice. This was done to emphasize the need for a balance between

economic and social progress at the macro level of national development.

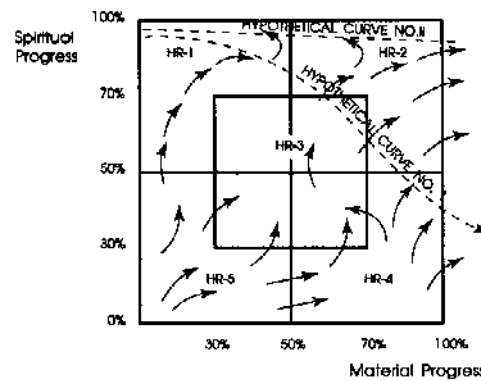
FIGURE 2
Human Resource Dynamics



The building blocks of social progress are HRD at all levels of organizational structure, for all functions and various types of HR. In most developing and underdeveloped countries we might find only a few members who are HR-2. So the micro-economic and micro-social progress of any enterprise depends on the direction of HRD as shown by the arrows in Figure 3. The Hypothetical Curve No. II indicates the conceptual upper boundary line beyond which an individual cannot develop. This occurs because, according to the Buddhist theology, when a person who has been practicing self-development in the Buddhist way until the state of mind becomes purified, or cooled down to a certain point (as when the temperature of water is lowered to 0°C and it is transformed into ice), he or she will become fed up with possessiveness and ownership. The person's view of progress will be limited to appreciating spiritual advancement only. The "Arahanta-to-be" will traditionally leave what used to be "home sweet home" for pilgrimage on the Buddhist way. The arrows on the Hypothetical Line No. II show the direction of progress for the Golden HR-1 and HR-2 who reach the "black hole," as if in space, on passing the upper boundary line and proceeding toward the 100% point on the left or to spiritual perfection, following the footsteps of the Lord Buddha. It might be appropriate to note at this point that in the modern world of technological and material progress the Hypothetical Curve No. I has become much more influential on mobility of population than the Hypothetical Curve No. II which seems to be unreachable. However, in rural areas and in underdeveloped countries, HRD activities by ABC can mainly concentrate on the advancement of HR-5, and HR-1 in the direction shown by the arrows in Figure 3. At this

FIGURE 3

Human Resource Development Through ABC



initial take-off stage of economic and social development (Stage I) mobility is similar to that of an airplane starting to move from the runway and beginning to lift off from the ground. At Stage II, or the growth period of economic and social development, more HR-3, and HR-4 emerge. Then at Stage III, negative growth can occur due to the strong sweep down of Hypothetical Curve No. I, when population mobility tends to resemble a down-turning airplane gliding toward the ground as shown in Figure 2 - the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, with destructive effects on natural resources and the environment through excessive exploitation of resources.

ABC for Management and HR Development

At the economic and social development stage IV, it is possible that developing countries will become rich and uneasy like Taiwan, or rich and revolutionary such as is South Korea. To avoid this unfortunate stage of development, ABC for management and HR development at all levels of social structure is recommended, to achieve the effect shown in Figure 3, which provides a sense of direction. This is very important for development, because if leaders and managers lack a clear and sound perception of a direction for development, a society can become chaotic under the turbulence of change. However, a good sense of direction alone is not enough: the big question left over is how to create the desirable change.

As the space is limited here, we will briefly present one of the most renowned ABC formulas, i.e. the "Five Internal Powers" (FIPs), for management and HR development in such a way that a society can have a better balance between material and spiritual

progress.

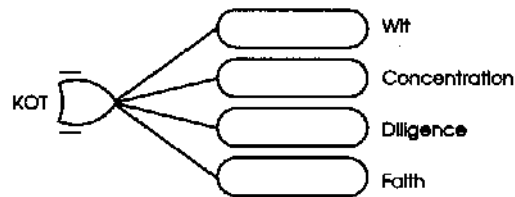
Human beings need motivation to work and to be active in all kinds of activities. In modern management theory, we discuss mainly motivation theories with emphasis on the hierarchy of human needs and drives, and similar theories which are only a component of the system or one part of the big picture. Buddhism has taken a more systematic approach, in the case of the Five Internal Powers formula. The illustration for the model is the four-horse chariot used in the movie "Ben Hur" (see Figure 4).

The Five Internal Powers of a person can be compared with the four white horses and the driver. In the chariot race, moving in an orbital motion around the racing track, the first horse on the inner side is very important because it represents Faith. The next horses in order are Diligence, Concentration, and Wit respectively. The fifth internal power is the driver of the chariot, "Ben Hur" himself who represents "Knowing Oneself in Time" (KOT).

The first and fourth horses, Faith and Wit, must run with good teamwork. Faith is on the inner side, it is the slowest horse but the most powerful in keeping the system of horses and chariot in smooth orbital motion. Without enough good faith the whole system will go off track at a turn due to its moment of inertia or centrifugal force. Wit is the fastest horse, running on the outer side of the racing track. The teamwork between the two horses is such that, if Faith is too strong and Wit becomes weak or injured, the person tends to have blind beliefs, so he or she becomes HR-5. On the other hand, if Faith is weaker than Wit it will lead the person to become HR-4, more or less depending on other situational variables that have to be considered case by case, not to be generalized. The main point is that both Faith and Wit must be equally strong in their roles and synchronize their directions, speeds and timing as a team.

Next, the second and third horses, Diligence and Concentration, must also exhibit teamwork between themselves. If Diligence is more powerful than Concentration, the person tends to do many things at a time and/or worry about other responsibilities. So he or she is relatively less effective. On the other hand, if Concentration is too strong while Diligence is lacking, the person will be unproductive, hence he or she is not acting as a Human Resource that is valuable to the respective enterprise and the society as a whole.

FIGURE 4
The Five Internal Powers (FIPs) in Action



Actually the four horses together with the driver of the racing chariot, i.e. Faith, Diligence, Concentration, Wit and KOT, must perform as a team of five members or a system of five components. This analogy also applies to a group of individuals, regardless of its size. A member can assume the roles of at least one or more of the Five Internal Powers according to personal strengths and weaknesses relevant to each of the five factors. The roles can be alternated among members as happens in a basketball team or in any team.

The team of Five Internal Powers must have all the five powers in good balance, lacking even one member can cause failure in the mission. It is rather difficult to find a perfect set of FIPs in one person but it is possible. However, in general it is more feasible to form a team of two persons or more, to create a better combination of FIPs, or even a perfect set. This will be a prerequisite to enter the world of competition successfully. With a complete set of the Five Internal Powers the team will become omnipotent and flexible in performing the roles of HR-1 and/or HR-2, which means leadership in spiritual and material progress.

Conclusion

What has been described is just one of the ABC formulas for leadership development which is crucial for successful management and HR development both at the macro and micro levels. The concepts in this paper can be considered as a basic approach for laying a firm foundation for HRD of any organization. Without such solid groundwork, one can never be sure whether the current success of organizations will lead to real material progress or illusive prosperity, with demoralization, and hence create economic and social problems in the longer run.