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# User-focused evaluation of training programme effectiveness in a South African industrial company.

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Stufflebeam (cited in Rossi, ed. 1982) has compared the two sets of standards as follows: The ERS standards do not address valuational interpretation, balanced reporting, human interactions and context analysis, which are addressed by the Joint Committee's standards. The ERS standards are also more simple and prescriptive while the Joint Committee standards include a rationale, definitions of key concepts, suggested procedures, pitfalls to be avoided, warnings about trade off problems, and an illustration of use and abuse. The biggest difference however, is the way in which the two sets of standards are organised to serve different functions. The ERS standards are grouped by main task areas in an evaluation, while the Joint Committee standards are grouped according to four attributes of a sound evaluation.

The ERS standards enhance the use of standards in planning and guiding evaluations while the Joint Committee standards identify and explicate the underlying principles. There is therefore considerable but not total overlap in the coverage of the two sets of standards, making the documents complementary rather than duplicative.

2.3.4 Summary

As Cook and Gruder (1978) have pointed out, meta-evaluation remains a developing science and judging it by the strictest technical standards is tantamount to treating a developing science as though it were already a developed science with a large stock of accumulated wisdom. It would hardly be logical to review the art of meta-evaluation in a summative fashion which implied that it was highly developed.

Matuszek & Lee (1977) add that there is no single answer to who best can evaluate the evaluator. External persons provide relatively higher objectivity and relatively less understanding of the local context compared to self-evaluation. Therefore there has to be a trade-off between content knowledge and credibility. In a case such as this dissertation, there are obvious advantages and equally obvious problems, associated with a meta-evaluation done by the evaluator herself.

## 2.4 Strategic Human Resource Management Literature

### 2.4.1 Introduction

One of the widely accepted definitive characteristics of the strategy concept is the deliberate alignment of the organisation with its environment. This alignment can apply equally to: the relationship of the organisation as a whole with its external environment; and the relationship of the human resource function (including training) with the internal environment of the organisation. The latter is the level of focus of this study.

The changing socio-political and economic environment, demographic shifts and new values concerning workers have placed human resource professionals in a central position in organisations. As they join with top management to integrate human resource planning with strategic planning, they will need concepts, instruments and techniques, the importance of which are perhaps not yet fully appreciated; nor have these requirements been adequately identified and incorporated into academic programmes of professional development.

In this section, what strategic human resource management actually entails is first explained (2.4.2). Then the human resource development tools for implementing it are identified (2.4.3). Finally, the new education and training needs of human resource professionals are reviewed (2.4.4).

### 2.4.2 A Framework for the Strategic Management of Training

"The role of human resource management in strategy formulation represents a true frontier for human resource management" (Tichy, Fombrun, and Devanna, 1984, p24). The emergence of this field in the literature is less than two years old! Consequently concise overviews of current writings are not yet available.

The strategic concept, with its emphasis on organisation alignment with environmental conditions, is based on contingency theory. What human resources management (HRM) presently does not have is a clear and visible contigency, or contextual, approach to the management of the human resource of the organisation. "There is still a strong trend in HRM to follow a normative philosophy which prescribes 'best ways' of HRM functioning irrespective of the specific business'

strategy (Legge, 1978, cited in Pansegrouw, 1985, p28). Pansegrouw (1985) considers that the longer term result of ignoring contextual factors and practicing a normative brand of HRM, including training, is usually loss of credibility, usefulness and effectiveness in the organisation.

Strategic human resource management (S-HRM) provides the training function, for instance, with functional effectiveness criteria which can be achieved. The tendency to accept responsibility for a direct contribution to traditional organisation efficiency measures, e.g. the 'bottom line' of profitability, as appropriate criteria against which to assess training effectiveness is dooming training to perceived failure. S-HRM leads to contextual effectiveness criteria which are appropriate for the training function (Pansegrouw, 1985).

In 1981 a survey by the Strategy Research Center at Columbia University (Tichy, Fombrun and Devanna, 1984) found that most firms would like to use human resource data in the strategy formulation process, but few have successfully carved out an appropriate role for their human resources function. Previously, human resources have been considered a factor only after the strategic business decisions have been made. Where strategic human resource development has begun to happen in companies and corporations, Tichy, Fombrun and Devanna (1984, p25) report that much experimentation and problem-solving is found necessary, to decide what data are required, what issues should be included, and how they should relate to the various aspects of the business. A major question is: "How can you get line and human resource staff to collabratively integrate human resources into the strategic plan?".

The process of strategic human resource management is still evolving. So far, the major emphasis has been on strategy formulation. Tichy, Fombrun and Devanna consider that the challenge of the 1980's is the effective <u>implementation</u> of strategy:

> ...getting people to do the right things to make strategies happen. In this respect, the human resources tools become central and focus specifically on selecting the right people to run a business, rewarding them for strategic activities, and designing staffing patterns that

> match the strategic plans, as well as creating more strategically motivated development and labor relations policies. To this end, the human resource systems will need to become more flexible so that they can be aligned to drive strategy (Tichy, Fombrun, & Devanna, 1984, p26).

Devanna, Fombrun and Tichy (1984, pp33-51) have proposed a set of frameworks for conceptualising the links between human resource management and strategic corporate and/or business objectives. These conceptual frameworks aid understanding of both how the status quo operates and how required adaptations in organisational strategy will have an impact on existing systems, and which systems will have to be modified if the new strategy is to work.

Strategic management involves consideration of the following components:

- Mission and strategy: an organisation needs a reason for being (mission), and a sense of how to deploy materials, information, and people to carry it out (strategy).

- Formal structure: people and tasks are organised to implement the organisation's strategy (e.g. systems of financial accounting and information dissemination).

- Human resource systems: people are recruited and developed to do jobs defined by the organisation's formal structure; their performance must be monitored and rewards allocated to maintain productivity (Devanna, Tichy & Fombrun, 1984, p34).

The critical managerial task is to align the formal structure and the human resource systems so that they drive the strategic objectives of the organisation.

In attempting to model the relationship between the human resource system and the strategic activities of the organisation, it is necessary to add one more degree of complexity to the framework - the three levels of managerial work:

- Strategic level: deals with policy formulation and overall goal setting.

- Managerial level: focuses on the processes by which the organisation obtains and allocates resources needed to carry out its strategy and objectives.

- Operational level: the day-to-day management of the organisation is carried out (Devanna, Tichy & Fombrun, 1984, p42).

The components of strategic management and the three levels of managerial work are then combined, as they relate to training, into a framework for the strategic management of training (See Fig 2.5). The model illustrates the reciprocity which is needed between the types of activities associated with the three levels of management and the human resource subsystems. This shows how strategic decisions and policies in the area of training need to be integrated with those of the personnel or human resource function and the organisation's operational strategies.

The following proposals by Hales (July, 1986, pp65-66) identify the steps which need to be taken to link business plans with training activities.

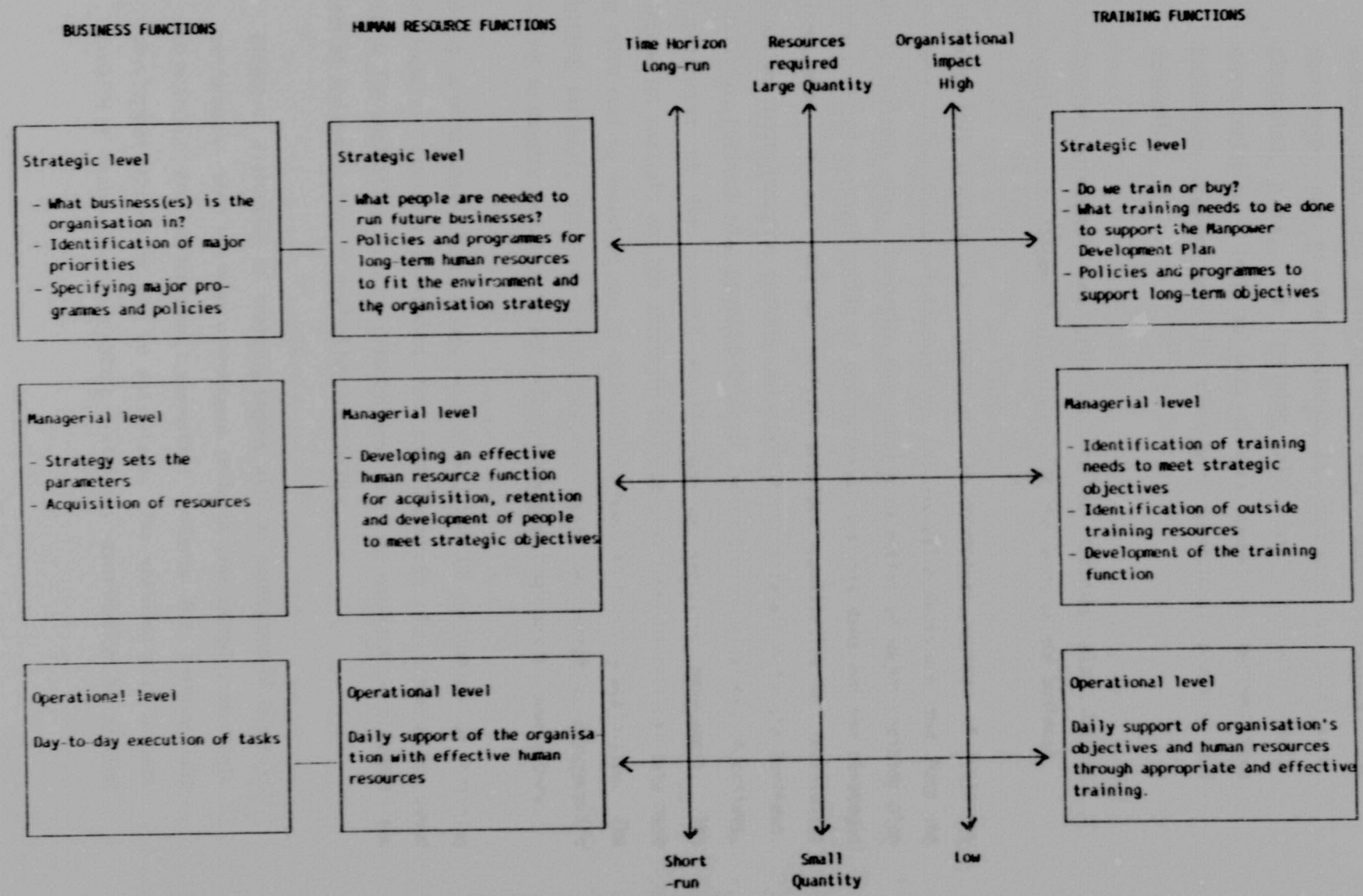
- Both the business plan and the training plan should be developed at strategic and operational levels and a strategic business plan must exist before a strategic training plan can be developed.

- Training plan drivers are then derived from the strategic business plan and environmental analysis, and are the links between business activities and training activities.

- Training plan drivers: help target training resources to meet major business priorities; assist in the selection of training needs analysis methods; and provide broad parameters to evaluate return on investment in training.

FIGURE 2.5

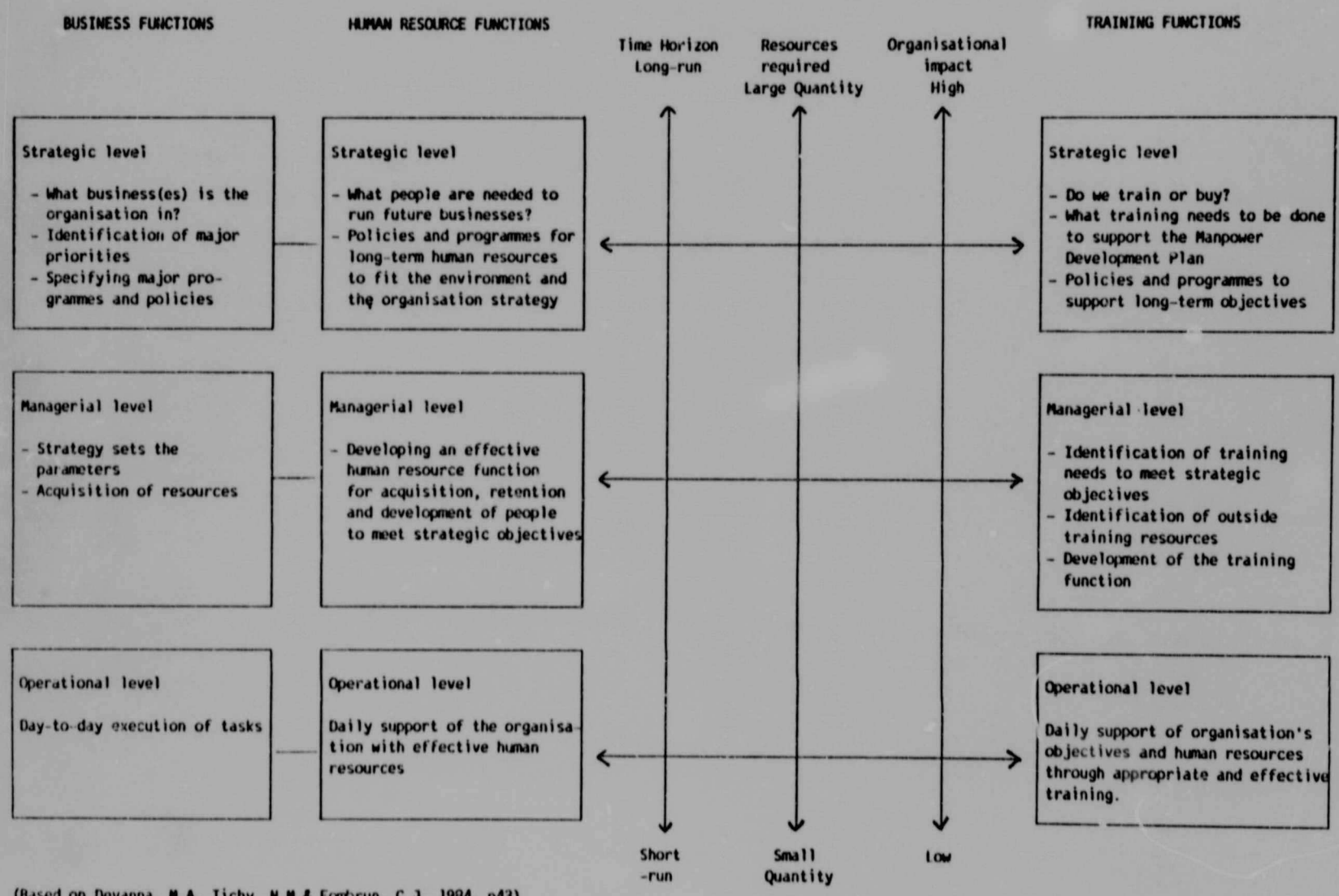
Framework for the Strategic Management of Training




(Based on Devanna, M A, Tichy, N M & Fombrun, C J, 1984, p43).

FIGURE 2.5

Framework for the Strategic Management of Training




(Based on Devanna, M A, Tichy, N M & Fombrun, C J, 1984, p43).

- If the training plan is developed separately from the strategic business plan, the training plan will remain operational and short-term, and if the business is dominated by short-term, timetabled plans, the training plan will reflect similar characteristics. Training plan drivers cannot be derived from businesses engaged only in short-term operational planning and scheduling.

- Careful assessment and prioritization of training plan drivers enables precise alignment of training with the needs of the business.

He explains that training plan drivers are the conceptual products of decisions which emerge from, and are influenced by, the executive decisions that form the strategic business plan. Executive management's selection of major training plan drivers is based on their review of environmental analysis data and the strategic business plan. The environmental analysis provides quantitative and qualitative information about industry, markets and competitors in relation to the business. The strategic business plan provides internal information on missions, objectives, and programmes of the business as directed by executive management. The environmental analysis and the strategic business plan form the critical data base from which quality decisions can be made to give focus to training activities. The resulting strategic training initiatives are based on executive management's decisions to develop certain critical internal business competencies over others.

Training professionals have always had difficulty in evaluation of training effectiveness. Business management has contributed to the absence of sound criteria for evaluating training effectiveness and have remained uninvolved in the selection and application of evaluation instruments.

> Effective evaluation of training begins with an assessment of business performance. When business performance criteria (for example, strategic objectives) are articulated, evaluation criteria for training and development activities can be established. The training plan drivers provide a context for evaluating training's contribution to planned

> business performance. Identification and prioritization of training plan drivers establishes broad parameters for assessing where training returns should be tracked. In addition, client-centered needs analysis methods, emerging from the identification of training plan drivers, provide tools for conducting assessments of training initiatives (Hales, 1986 July, p66).

As Pansegrouw (1985) points out, the value of strategic human resources management (S-HRM) lies in the contigency approach which guides the development of strategy related HRM concepts, models and practice. S-HRM follows 'if/then' rules and asks 'what/if' questions. It emphasizes diagnosis of and adaptation to the business strategies of the organisation it serves. S-HRM, in aligning training and organisational behaviour, is a form of organisation culture engineering which will enhance the probability of training being successful in achieving the organisational objectives.

### 2.4.3 Types of Change Strategies

Tichy (1983, pp7 & 395) identifies three dominant traditions which have guided thinking about organisations and which provide the necessary strategic instruments for achieving change. They are:

- The technical perspective where change is based on empiricism and enlightened self-interest, as expounded by Argyris and Schön (1978, p323): "The viewpoint is instrumental and rational... the focus is upon the acquisition and application of the knowledge useful for effective performance of organizational tasks, and the organizational world is conceived as fundamentally knowable through scientific method". The technical perspective is defined as a focus on the productivity problems of efficiency and effectiveness. Social and technical resources must be arranged to produce the desired output.

- The political perspective, where change is based on the exercise of power and allocation of resources by the dominant group or by bargaining between groups. The political perspective is defined as a focus on the allocation problem: who gets ahead, who gets and controls things, who gets what rewards?

- The cultural perspective, where change is based on the altering of norms and perceptions to create a shared organisational view. The cultural perspective is defined a. a focus on the value/ideology problem. What are the appropriate norms and values for the organisation?

Tichy (1983, pp396-397) elaborates on the technical system, which, he says is representative of much management training, writing and activity.

> The first managerial tool is mission and strategy, where we find such traditional management tasks as assessing the environmental threats and the opportunities facing the organization, assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses, and defining a mission that fits organizational resources. The strategy identifies how the major resources fit together to accomplish the mission.
>
> The second managerial tool area is organizational structure. Here management faces the traditional organization design dilemma of differentiating within the organization, that is dividing the organization into work roles such as production, marketing, finance, and R&D and then, once there has been a division of labor, integrating the organization, that is, finding mechanisms to combine the roles into departments, divisions, regions, and so on. Another organization design issue is how to align the structure or design of the organization to the strategy of the organization...
>
> The third tool area for dealing with the technical system is the use of the human resource management system. This involves the proper match of people and jobs, the specification of performance criteria for

different organizational roles, means of measuring performance (appraisal systems, etc.), and approaches to staffing and development to fill the roles in the present and in the future. All of these tool areas - mission and strategy, organization structure, and human resource management - combine in most organizations to solve the technical problem.

The change perspective adopted in this study is technical, i.e. Argyris and Schön's (1978) double loop learning strategy. Their focus for analysing, diagnosing and improving the change strategy of an organisation is on organisational learning, i.e. how organisations learn or fail to learn (see 2.5). This is an appropriate concept for a change strategy involving training.

2.4.4 Human Resource Development (HRD) Tools for Training Integration

Organisation structure follows strategy and operating objectives. It is based on the tasks to be done, technology involved, the values and attributes of employees and the relationship of the organisation to its environment. This, in the Strategic Management concept, is an iterative process where organisation structure and human resource management policy and objectives are co-ordinated into a cohesive but dynamic plan.

The five generic human resource activities of all organisations are:

- manpower planning
- selection/promotion/placement process
- reward process
- development process
- appraisal process.

In addition there is the abnormal tool of affirmative action programmes.

2.4.4.1 Manpower Planning

Manpower planning is the ongoing process of manpower forecasting. This consists of developing the manpower inventory which includes:

- an individual skills inventory
- a manpower audit describing, investigating and reporting on what the inventory shows as being the manpower resources, and
- the reconciliation of these, to establish details of manpower requirements.

This is done by functional area of the business and by skill level over time.

2.4.4.2 Selection/Promotion/Placement Process

The selection, promotion and placement process includes all those activities related to the internal movement of people across positions and external hiring into the organisation. The essential process is one of matching available resources to jobs in the organisation. It entails making input to, and taking note of the changing requirements of the manpower plan and the ongoing use of the appraisal process.

2.4.4.3 Reward Process

Good selection is essential for good performance. However, once people are in jobs and perform they should be rewarded according to their level of performance. Key tools in the reward process are job analysis leading to the production of job descriptions and job specifications (man-specifications); job evaluation to establish the relative growth of jobs for internal equity, wage and salary structuring, taking account of industry pay levels to ensure external equity; and incentive schemes to promote productivity. Job analysers, descriptions, specifications and job evaluation, also provide considerable insight and information for manpower audits, recruitment, career pathing and training needs analysis.

2.4.4.4 Development Process

The development process starts with the induction programme which is the initial orientation and training a person receives on joining an organisation. From there on it is the Manpower Development Plan which is the key to training and development. The Manpower Development Plan is the product of the Manpower Plan, career pathing, succession plans, training needs analysers, the appraisal system and assessment centres. In order to plan for the future, an accurate inventory of the current human stock is important. This should include both an assessment of current individual performance and future potential of these individuals. The appraisal process is the ideal vehicle to provide these data but is the weakest of all the human resource systems.

2.4.4.5 Appraisal Process

Performance appraisal systems are many and varied in form but are generally designed to assess the performance of employees and provide a basis on which they can be counselled for development. Theoretically such systems provide good information for the manpower and manpower development plans, however, lack of managerial commitment, training and moral fibre, often leads to poor results. Assessment centers, a group activity of both managers and candidates for the identification of potential, can very often be more effective.

In addition to these two systems for judging performance and the identification of potential, course reports and the evaluation of training should both be taken into account in the appraisal process. In any event, there has to be some means of identifying good performance and potential.

2.4.4.6 Affirmative Action

In many South African organisations, the human resources department actively encourages and tries to promote black advancement, through training and other measures, but not much is achieved as senior line management has not made its position clear and remains largely uninvolved. Top management needs to make explicit its policy and attitudes towards black advancement, when setting corporate strategy and objectives. The purpose of corporate strategic planning is to plan a direction for the organisation and unless black advancement policy and goals are built into these objectives, it is unlikely that black advancement will have the backing it needs to succeed, no matter how many Blacks are trained.

Human and Hofmeyr (1985) are adamant that the key ingredient in a successful black advancement effort is the explicit commitment of top management to specific advancement objectives and the willingness by them to measure and insist on progress. Pressure is necessary to achieve progress as in the American multinational companies in South Africa which are subject to the Sullivan code of employment practice, and in the United States equal opportunity programmes instituted by the Federal Government.

Human and Hofmeyr (1985, p57) consider that a "need for advancement programmes and the commitment of top management to actively support these programmes can be obtained if advancement is an issue which is deliberately identified in the strategic planning process. ... Human resource executives have to convince top management of the need to include development and advancement issues as part of the strategic planning process. To do this they must be able to supply accurate information on human resource capabilities and shortages, labour market trends and the like."

2.4.5 Implications for Training Human Resource Professionals

What implications does a Strategic Human Resource Management (S-HRM) philosophy have for the education of HRM practitioners in terms of theoretical foundations, curriculum content and design, and teaching methods? Baird and Meshoulam (1984 January) have pointed out that training programmes and academic curricula for human resource professionals must begin teaching the skills that are actually needed. HRM professionals need to understand not only the specialisations within human resources, but also the strategic and business needs of organisations.

At present, Baird and Meshoulam (1984 January, p78) note a concentration on specialised personnel activities.

> There is very little time devoted to management of the human resource function or analysis of its purpose and strategic contributions to the organisation. Nor are there electives in university curricula on managing the human resource function within a strategic framework. In fact, programs in management development and executive education are just beginning to provide the strategic perspective.

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This implies a need to broaden the courses and materials of academic and training programmes so that human resource professionals will be taught to be more business oriented.

If future human resource professionals are to have the skills and knowledge necessary to manage strategically, Baird and Meshoulam (1984 January, p78) believe that they must be given:

- a general introduction to the functions of business

- material on the development and implementation of strategy, both general corporate strategy and human resource strategy

- coursework on organising, staffing and managing the human resource function so that it fits the needs of the corporation

- material on developing, implementing and assessing programmes and procedures in human resource management so that they meet the legitimate business needs of the corporation

- an introduction to information systems, data analysis, research and development in the personnel function and extensive work on the techniques and procedures for managing organisational change and development.

2.4.6 Summary

Tregoe and Zimmerman (1984, May) have claimed that too much attention has previously been paid to an operational focus in human resource development. HRM professionals have conducted needs analyses, designed programmes, evaluated behaviour change and measured results without paying enough attention to management's vision of what the organisation should be.

This means that HRM managers need to assume new responsibilities to: become involved in the organisation's strategic deliberations; understand the organisation's strategy and driving force and develop an S-HRM strategy accordingly; when an organisation's overall strategy is vague, to set a clear and

specific strategy for the HRM function; play an important role in information gathering for strategic planning, (which should include user-focused evaluation of training); and accept responsibility for training others to think strategically.

These responsibilities will call for higher order capacities in the training function: conceptual thinking; holistic viewpoint; expressiveness; concern for the future; tolerance for ambiguity; and a sense of stewardship. There also needs to be an important attitude change, with HRM professionals becoming less reactive and more proactive (Tregoe & Zimmerman, 1984, May). In fact, the training function could consider performing more of an internal consultant function within the organisation, providing diagnoses, fostering awareness, aiding communication, instead of just prescribing training. S-HRM professionals need to be client driven facilitators and human resources advocates (Spruell, 1986, February).

## 2.5 Organisation Learning Literature

### 2.5.1 Introduction

There is considerable literature on organisation theory, organisation effectiveness, organisation development and organisation change, which could have been used for the purposes of this research. However, it is all divergent theory, and one simple unifying theme was sought which would provide a single, comprehensive way in which to view the training or content issues which were a by-product of the primary, process aim of the research. This unifying theme was found among ideas concerning organisational learning.

### 2.5.2 Organisational Learning

Although research on organisational learning has been fragmented and multi-disciplinary, two typologies of views on organisation learning were found in the literature (Argyris and Schön, 1978, pp319-331; Shrivastava, 1983, pp7-28). They provide a useful summary of the field of organisational learning and serve the need for a highly condensed overview of the relevant literature for this aspect of the research. There are really no rigorous theories of organisational learning, but there are interesting conceptualisations of the phenomenon. In Argyris and Schön (1978) these are summarised from the point of view of various disciplines. In Shrivastava (1983) they are summarised according to different theoretical assumptions or core ideas (see Figure 2.6). The latter classification contains a

FIGURE 2.6

Perspectives on Organisational Learning based on Different Theoretical Assumptions

| CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING | CORE IDEA | THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ASSOCIATED AUTHORS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Organisational learning as adaptation | Adaptive learning: organisations adapt to changes in the environment by re-adjusting their goals, attention rules and search rules. | Organisations exhibit adaptive behaviour over time which they term organisational learning. The behavioural theory of the firm assumes that organisations change their goals on the basis of their experience. Adaptation also occurs in the selective attention that the organisation bestows on different parts of the environment. Adaptation in the search for solutions is conditioned by previously tried solutions. (Cyert and March Cangelosi and Dill March and Olsen). |
| 2. Organisational learning as assumption sharing | Sharing of assumptions: organisational theories-in-use result from shared assumptions. Learning involves changes in these theories. | Organisational members respond to changes in their internal and external environments by detecting errors and correcting them to maintain the core organisational theories-in-use. These organisational theories-in-use or theories of action result from sharing of assumptions and cognitive maps among organisational members. The construction and modification of these theories through individual and collective inquiry is what Argyris and Schon label organisation learning. They distinguish between single-loop learning and double-loop learning. Single loop learning occurs when error correction proceeds by changing organisational strategies within a constant framework of norms of performance. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, involves involves fundamental changes in frames of reference or theories-in-use prevailing in the organisation. Weick sees organisational learning as the sharing of realities through mutual negotiation of cognitive maps. Other authors also have various interpretations of this 'assumption sharing' view of organisational learning. (Argyris and Schon Mitroff and Emshoff Mason and Mitroff). |
| 3. Organisational learning as developing knowledge of action-outcome relationships | The development of a knowledge base: learning is the process by which knowledge about action-outcome relations is developed. | The organisation is a system of purposeful actions engaged in a transformation process to produce some outputs. Effectiveness of organisations is a function of prior knowledge about the relationship between organisational actions and outcomes. Organisational effectiveness is thus determined by the quality of the knowledge base available to the organisation for making the crucial strategic choices. Organisational learning in this view is closely linked with organisational sense-making processes. Learning can be hindered by organisational ideologies, rigidity, historical factors, legitimation, justification and environmental forces. Organisational learning consists of strategic planning and management information systems. (Duncan and Weiss Dutton and Duncan). |
| 4. Organisational learning as institutionalised experience (organisational learning and experience) | The development of a knowledge base: learning curve effect extended to managerial decision-making. | These authors argue that management gains vital experience by repeatedly performing a given set of activities. It gains knowledge and expertise to do it better the next time. The gains in knowledge and experience are attributable better knowledge and anticipation of the environment enabling the firm to cope with it more effectively, better understanding of the activities involved, substitution of material, technological innovation and re-design of processes, economies of large scale production, etc. However, not all experience is easily transferable across time and organisational boundaries. (Boston Consulting Group Abernathy and Wayne Yelle). |

(Adapted from Shrivastava, 1983, pp 7 to 28).

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