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Prioritizing HRM and Apprenticeships for Enhanced Productivity

Anjay Kumar Mishra¹, ⓘ **Tanka Prasad Bhattarai²**

Editor-in-Chief, Kathmandu College of Management
Consultant, Organizational Development and Innovation (ODI) Nepal Pvt. Ltd.

Abstract	Article Info.
This editorial critically examines human resource management (HRM) practices and apprenticeship readiness among industries in Nepal's Bara-Parsa Industrial Corridor, emphasizing their pivotal role in enhancing workforce productivity and sustainability. It explores the interaction of organizational cynicism, job burnout, and perceived organizational support (POS) within Nepal's socio-economic context, highlighting their impact on employee morale and performance. Addressing challenges such as policy gaps, gender disparity, and skill shortages, the editorial proposes actionable strategies grounded in national legal frameworks and international best practices. It calls on industry leaders and the Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BiCCI) to formalize HR systems and institutionalize apprenticeships as strategic tools to cultivate skilled, engaged, and high-performing labor forces aligned with Nepal's development goals. *Keywords*: culture, cynicism, job burnout, apprenticeship readiness, productivity	**Anjay Kumar Mishra** ◆ PhD, Post Doc, D.Litt.(s) *Email* anjaymishra2000@gmail.com

Introduction

The Bara-Parsa Industrial Corridor epitomizes Nepal's industrial and economic advancement potential yet faces significant HR challenges. Despite rapid growth, critical deficits in HR infrastructure, policy formulation, and apprenticeship execution persist. The accelerating skill shortage and evolving labor market demands make workforce development a strategic corner-stone for industrial productivity and competitiveness (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022).

Organizational realities such as cynicism, burnout, and diminished perceived organizational support (POS) exacerbate workforce risks by undermining employee engagement and increasing turnover (Dean et al.,1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986). This editorial synthesizes insights on these psychological and operational dynamics, underscoring apprenticeship programs and comprehensive HRM frameworks as key levers to revitalize productivity. It offers a strategic guide for BiCCI and stakeholders to upgrade HR systems, ensure compliance, and embed apprenticeships, thereby cultivating resilient industrial workforces.

Conceptual Foundations: Understanding Workforce Psychology and Productivity

Organizational Cynicism and Its Impact on Productivity

Organizational cynicism, characterized as employees' distrust, detachment, and critical attitudes towards their employers, commonly arises from mismanaged change and toxic work climates (Dean et al., 1998). Manifested through negative communication and emotional exhaustion,

cynicism significantly impairs morale and reduces operational effectiveness. Such disengagement diminishes collaboration and elevates turnover, directly impacting profitability and output (Morf et al., 2019).

The Role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Job Burnout

POS represents employees' perception that their organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). High POS correlates with increased job satisfaction and psychological health, fostering engagement (Caesens et al., 2014). Conversely, low POS precipitates job burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment—which fuels cynicism and undermines performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Burnout acts as a mediating mechanism between POS and organizational cynicism: employees perceiving insufficient support experience detachment and exhaustion that escalate cynical attitudes (Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009). Addressing POS deficits is therefore vital for safeguarding human capital and sustaining organizational productivity.

Strategic Implications for HRM

High POS instills trust and fairness, mitigating cynicism and cultivating positive engagement essential for productivity (Caesens et al., 2014). Apprenticeship programs, by investing in employee development and clear career routes, offer practical means to enhance POS and reduce burnout, representing robust pathways for workforce optimization.

Contextual Workplace in Nepal

Nepal's workplace environment is characterized by significant challenges related to occupational safety and health (OSH), workforce management, and human resource capacity, which collectively impact employee well-being and organizational productivity.

Mishra et al. (2019) highlight that many Nepalese industries, including construction, face critical gaps in preventive and control safety measures, with inadequate implementation of safety protocols contributing to high risks for workers in hazardous environments. These workplace safety deficiencies expose employees to physical injuries, chemical hazards, and health risks, undermining worker morale and productivity.

The recruiting process in Nepalese industries often grapples with conundrums related to workforce planning and capacity building, revealing systemic challenges in aligning human resource strategies with operational needs (Mishra & Aithal, 2022). This is particularly salient in sectors requiring skilled labor, where shortages and mismatches persist (Mishra, 2018).

Assessments of human resource capacity in Nepalese construction firms reveal major deficits in formal HR structures and expertise, with many companies lacking dedicated HR departments or comprehensive policies. This undermines effective employee management and hampers compliance with evolving labor regulations (Mishra, 2018). Such HR management weaknesses exacerbate workplace vulnerabilities, including safety hazards and workforce dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, Mishra (2022) notes the imperative for comparative evaluations and adoption of best practices from regional contexts to uplift Nepal's workplace standards, emphasizing the urgent need for systemic interventions in HRM and occupational safety.

Together, these findings depict Nepal's workplace as one marked by high risk exposure, fragmented HR capacities, and safety shortfalls, highlighting substantial opportunities for improvement through enhanced safety regulations, human resource development, and apprenticeship programs to boost worker welfare and organizational resilience.

Nepali workers often endure unsafe conditions, limited progression, and inadequate managerial

support, compounding stress and burnout risks (ILO, 2022). These conditions suppress motivation and retention, eroding workforce stability and, consequently, output.

The rollout of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) by initiatives such as Happy Minds and MantraCare, alongside improved communication protocols, offers promising strategies to combat workplace stress and enhance mental well-being (MantraCare, 2025; Qualtrics, 2023). Integrating such initiatives within comprehensive HR systems amplifies productivity through healthier, more engaged employees.

Cultural Dimensions Affecting Engagement and Productivity

Research from Egypt, Turkey, Ghana, and India demonstrates that cultural norms regarding authority and fairness impact organizational cynicism and employee engagement levels (Mousa, 2017; Yildirim, 2022; Alhassan, 2020). In Nepal's sectors education, banking, healthcare cynicism linked to broken trust hinders service quality and institutional reputation. Tailoring HRM and apprenticeship strategies to local cultural realities is imperative to drive positive workforce outcomes.

Apprenticeships: Strategic Drivers for Enhanced Productivity

Apprenticeship as a Catalyst for Workforce Development

Apprenticeships directly address skill shortages while strengthening employee engagement through demonstrated organizational investment in personnel development (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2025). Structured apprenticeship programs create efficient talent pipelines that reduce recruitment costs, improve retention, and connect training with clear career advancement, cumulatively boosting productivity.

Institutionalizing Apprenticeships within HR Frameworks

Embedding apprenticeship clauses into HR manuals, employment contracts, and association bylaws formalizes support structures, ensures legal compliance, and aligns workforce development with evolving industry needs key factors for productivity optimization (Government of Nepal, 2015).

Evaluating HRM and Apprenticeship Readiness in Bara-Parsa

HR Infrastructure and Its Productivity Implications

Surveys reveal half of Bara-Parsa companies lack formal HR departments, leading to fragmented workforce management and compliance gaps that compromise productivity potential. Where HR exists, operational focus often remains reactionary rather than strategic, limiting organizational growth.

Legal Compliance and Its Operational Importance

Despite a majority maintaining HR policies, under 40% comply with labor authority registrations, exposing operations to legal risks, undermining employee trust, and jeopardizing business continuity.

Gender Disparities and Innovation Deficits

Extensive male dominance (95.4%) in optimal apprenticeships and technical roles hampers inclusiveness, which limits creative problem-solving and adaptability traits essential to high-performing organizations (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018).

Proven Apprenticeship Benefits and Placement Strategies

o **Skill Gap Closure:** Accelerates acquisition of crucial technical and interpersonal competencies.

o **Stable Talent Pipelines:** Reduction in hiring costs and attrition rates.

o **Productivity Enhancements:** Evidence links apprenticeship participation to improved operational outcomes.

o **Compliance and Branding:** Enhances regulatory adherence and employer attractiveness.

Effective apprenticeship systems integrate contractual clauses, develop technical institute partnerships, appoint qualified mentors, document progress, recruit diversely, and embed career progression pathways (Maslach et al., 2001).

Nepal's Apprenticeship Legal Framework and Implementation Models

The Labor Act 2017 and CTEVT guidelines govern the Dual VET Apprenticeship Program (24 months, 80% practical training) and the Leading to Apprenticeship Model (LAM) (6 months), both demonstrating strong employment outcomes when supported by coordinated stakeholders (Government of Nepal, 2017), Apprenticeship Training Implementation Procedure (CTEVT, 2018).

Barriers to Maximizing Apprenticeship Productivity Impact

Challenges include weak public-private linkages, outdated curricula, SME reluctance citing cost, shortage of qualified mentors, and gender imbalance, all restraining apprenticeship scalability and efficacy (Rafiee et al., 2021).

Recommendations: Enhancing HRM and Apprenticeship for Productivity

Assess and Strengthen Readiness

- o Evaluate HR competencies, mentor availability, and infrastructure.
- o Secure executive commitment and allocate necessary resources.
- o Develop systematic apprentice tracking and performance documentation.

Structured Apprenticeship Deployment

- o Establish formal educational partnerships and co-developed curricula.
- o Provide mentor training inclusive of pedagogical skills.
- o Implement objective apprentice selection and monitoring.
- o Pilot programs with continuous feedback mechanisms.

Continuous Program Enhancement

- o Define productivity-aligned key performance indicators.
- o Regularly evaluate outcomes and incorporate stakeholder insights.
- o Adapt programs responsively to evolving industrial demands (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Role of Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BiCCI)

BiCCI must champion policy formalization, procedural standardization, promote diversity targets, administer mandatory reporting, and develop HR advisory services, thereby creating a supportive ecosystem for apprenticeship-driven productivity growth.

Strengthening Member Industry HR Configurations

Member companies should:
- o Institutionalize or strengthen HR functions focused on strategic workforce planning.
- o Comply with legal mandates including Social Security and Provident Fund registrations (Government of Nepal, 2017).
- o Develop comprehensive employment contracts aligned with labor laws.
- o Conduct mandatory HR audits.
- o Appoint dedicated apprenticeship coordinators.
- o Invest in dual-competency mentor development.
- o Enact gender-inclusive recruitment and retention policies fostering innovation (Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014).

Conclusion

Organizational cynicism and burnout compromise morale, engagement, and productivity, while lack of perceived organizational support erodes workforce stability. Prioritizing strategic HRM practices and embedding apprenticeship programs constitute indispensable business imperatives for

Nepal's Bara-Parsa Industrial Corridor. The path to sustainable industrial competitiveness lies in industry-wide commitment to formalizing HR policies, investing in apprenticeships, and nurturing inclusive, resilient workforces. Such proactive human capital investments will unlock productivity gains and secure Nepal's economic success for generations.

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