



HIV/AIDS fight focuses on workplace

A new code of practice on HIV/AIDS, which was launched by the International Labour Office (ILO) at a special session of the United Nations General Assembly at the end of June, focuses specifically on the workplace. And a declaration of commitment adopted there also extends the responsibility for combating the virus into the workplace.

Of the 36 million people infected with HIV/AIDS, said ILO Director General Juan Somavia, at least 23 million are working people aged between 15 and 49 – “often our most productive people in the prime of their lives”.

Of these, according to new ILO data, about 17.5 million are in 43 African states, 3.5 million are in Asia, 700,000 in North America, 543,000 in Europe, 416,000 in Latin America and 226,000 in the Caribbean.

Providing guidance on such issues as testing, screening and confidentiality, non-discrimination in employment and gender issues, the code is designed to help prevent

infection rates from increasing in relatively unaffected countries, as well as seeking to promote prevention in countries where the epidemic already has a strong grip.

“AIDS and HIV has a profound impact on workers, their families, employers and national economies,” said Somavia, “reducing earnings, productivity, skills and experience, while imposing huge costs.”

Key principles of the code, which Somavia described as the most wide-ranging and comprehensive blueprint for workplace policy on HIV/AIDS ever developed, include:

- Treating HIV/AIDS like any other serious illness or condition;
- No discrimination or stigmatisation against workers on the basis of real or perceived HIV status;
- No HIV/AIDS screening or testing of job applicants or those already working; and any routine medical testing for fitness should not include mandatory HIV testing. Where voluntary informed consent is given, testing for HIV should

be performed outside the workplace by qualified personnel only and in conditions of strictest confidentiality;

- No asking job applicants, workers or co-workers to disclose HIV-related personal information; access to personal data relating to HIV status to be bound by rules of confidentiality;
- HIV infection is not cause for employment termination, and those with HIV-related illnesses should be able to work for as long as medically fit in available, appropriate work.

The UN declaration includes the commitment that by 2005 prevention and care programmes will have been established and implemented in public, private and informal work sectors and that measures will have been taken to provide a supportive workplace for people living with HIV/AIDS.

ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, International Labour Office, Geneva; ISBN 92-2-112561-0.

The search for HR excellence

The end of January 2002 is the closing date for nominations for the next WFPMA Georges Petitpas Award for the most outstanding contribution to international HR management. The judging panel, under the chairmanship of Immediate Past President Mike Losey, will be looking for an individual or team whose work has made the greatest global impact on the profession and practice of international personnel/human resource management and development.

The work can be research, teaching, writing and/or organisational practice,

but the key criteria are:

- the difference it has made to the success or effectiveness of one or more employing organisations,
- the degree to which it is

CONGRESS CHAIR

Luis de la Fuente Pantoja, an HR professional with more than 30 years experience in the field, 22 of them with Bacardi, is to be the new full-time chairman of the WFPMA's 9th World Congress, to be held in Mexico City at the end of May 2002. See www.hr2002.org.

readily recognised by HR professionals around the world and

- the extent to which it has advanced the international state of knowledge and understanding of people management and development.

Assuming the judging panel agrees on a suitable winner for 2002, the award will be presented at the World Congress in Mexico City at the end of next May.

For nomination forms and further information, contact the CIPD on +44 (0) 20 8263 3272 or email L.Byrne@cipd.co.uk.

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E-learn global

E-learning expert Martyn Sloman highlights some of the efforts which are being made to ensure that new materials developed are both usable and the content applicable around the world. He also raises some challenging questions for company training managers wherever they are based

Despite the recent problems with dotcom share values, the message at the recent American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) conference could hardly have been more positive. E-learning continues to be the hot topic in training. In her opening address Susan Burnett, Chair of the ASTD's board of directors and Hewlett-Packard's Director of Enterprise Workforce Development, predicted a rapid increase in e-learning; in her view it will soon supply just under a fifth of an organisation's training requirements. E-learning, Burnett argued, will allow "learning anywhere, any amount, any style at considerable cost reductions."

John Chambers, Chief Executive of Cisco, in a filmed acceptance speech of an ASTD award for championing workplace learning, told delegates that e-learning will be the next killer application for the Internet: "we are early in the life cycle, but the implications are huge."

E-learning concerns learning activities that are accessed at the individual's personal computer.¹ Since there are currently estimated to be 268 million computers connected across the world, a large and attractive market is available. All that is required, it seems, is that learning content is produced by experts in one location (say the Harvard Business School or the UK's Open University or Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and distributed through the electronic network of the internet to learners.

If learner support is required, it can be provided locally, whether that support involves technical assistance to access the material, individual coaching or group support in facilitated sessions held in a nearby classroom. Thus the social aspect of teaching, which is important to some aspects of effective learning, can be built into the process.

This model of learning has immense attractions. Global businesses can roll out similar information and processes to employees throughout the world; they can update them rapidly and deploy new or revised versions almost instantaneously. All

learners, irrespective of location, can gain access to the best teachers: we can all learn strategy from Porter or leadership from Kotter. The costs of distribution (but not necessarily the initial production of material!) are negligible, provided the technology infrastructure is in place.

Given these obvious attractions, it is not surprising that there is a great burst of business activity by commercial interests, educational institutions and governments, who are all seeking to capture a portion of the market. The



Susan Bennett:
learning anywhere

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has recently announced its intention to make all its teaching materials freely available on-line. Cardean University in the US is a venture which offers business customers access to courses developed with Columbia, Stanford, Chicago, Carnegie Mellon and the London School of Economics (the importance of a quality brand should be apparent!). The UK Government has established an e-university initiative designed to make the cream of British university courses available throughout the world. Ernst & Young, my former employer, is adopting a global e-learning system developed by its US practice to make content available in the UK.

New standards

One of the most important developments is taking place outside the public view. This is the backroom effort to create new standards for e-learning. The detail is unbelievably complex: the principle is straightforward. The intention is to set protocols so that technologies in e-learning can work together irrespective of who built them. Email would not work without such standards.

ing's going – or is it?

In e-learning, standards will allow 'learning objects' to be developed by a company, educational institute or individual trainer and accessed by users in another organisation. 'Learning objects' is a precise, if clumsy, term defined as any entity, digital or non-digital that may be used for learning education or training. An example might be a training module consisting of text and illustrations designed to teach people a particular computer skill, such as Excel spreadsheets.

Initially the US Government provided the first impetus for the development of e-learning standards; now it has gained momentum through the support of providers of e-learning systems.

The committees working on the development of SCORM (an ugly acronym for Shareable Content Object Reference Model) deserve all our thanks – though, if successful, the greatest tribute to their work will be that nobody will remember that it was necessary. We will take the movement of e-learning across systems for granted.

Significant problems

So is that it? Do we simply sit back and wait for global e-learning to arrive?

A more balanced view suggests that it will not be that simple and there will be some significant problems to overcome along the way.

The first and most important of these problems can be described as the global digital divide: this concerns the international disparities surrounding access to technology. Jeffrey Sachs, Harvard Professor of International Trade, writing in *The Economist* last year, argued that divisions based on technology could prove more intractable than the cold war.² Moreover, unless action is taken, the current divisions could become greater. Regions of the world with the advanced technologies are best placed to innovate further and have access to larger markets. One consequence is that the small part of the globe which accounts for some 15 per cent of the world's population could dominate technological innovation and, hence, e-learning.

The next set of problems are inter-related. They concern the cultural acceptability of learning materials produced for a global audience. A first question is how generic is the content – will it travel? How will an interviewing skills module produced in the US be received in India or Finland (or China or Cuba)? Business strategy or technical computer skills may be generic, but the softer skills such as feedback, listening and assertiveness must surely be grounded into social mores and cultures.

A second question concerns how people prefer to learn. A specific, if somewhat anecdotal, example from Ernst & Young may assist here.

One feature of Ernst & Young's e-learning system is what is called the desk-top channel. Learners access a pre-designated Internet site and dial into a specified telephone number. They can then receive a synchronous (all learners participating at the same time) lesson consisting of a series of powerpoint slides and audio commentary from the expert presenters. They can ask questions either by email or by telephone.

In a pilot held this year in the UK all the questions came by email; in an earlier pilot in the Far East all questions came over the telephone. This result could have occurred as an accidental consequence of the way in which the instructions were transmitted to the learner. However, this illustration helps to identify some important questions which will demand an answer.

The critical questions for all trainers who are likely to be involved in global e-learning projects are:

- If learning content (for example, lectures, presentations, questionnaires, video clips) were produced elsewhere in the world,

how acceptable would they be in your country and organisation?

- If learning content produced internationally was distributed to learners in your country, what sort of learner support would be required and who would deliver it?

It would be a brave training manager who said that he or she could answer these questions with confidence now. We are all on a learning curve and need better research information. We must also be prepared to share our thoughts, ideas and experiences.³

One possible route for developing some answers could be to examine some of the models of global culture and speculate what they could tell us about the acceptance of e-learning.

At the ASTD conference this problem of cultural differences was put to one of the leading experts on e-learning, Sivasailam Thiagarajan.⁴ He originates from India but is based in Ohio, and has a wealth of practical international experience. His answer began: "There are cultural differences; we have a lot of data on cultural differences; we need to know what differences make a difference in the acceptance/use of e-learning; we do not yet have enough data on this topic."

His suggestion was, when designing e-learning that is going to be used in different cultures, to make the programme as lean as possible. Particular care must be taken with examples and illustrations. Where possible, there should be a facility to develop any extra additions locally, so that they can find cultural acceptance.

This sounds eminently sensible. My only concern, having recently returned from the ASTD event, is that this message may not have been received by the companies predominantly based in the US who are producing e-learning content and material. It may well be that training professionals throughout the world, will be rectifying some of the mistakes. ○

Martyn Sloman is the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's Adviser on Training and Development. His latest book 'The e-learning revolution' was published by the CIPD in April. It is available from www.plymbridge.com.

Footnotes

- ¹ There is as yet no generally agreed definition of e-learning, but the CIPD and ASTD define e-learning as learning that is delivered, enabled or mediated by electronic technology for the explicit purpose of training in organisations. It does not include stand-alone technology-based training such as the use of CD-ROMS in isolation
- ² Sachs J. 'Sachs on globalisation: a new map of the world', *The Economist*, 24 June 2000 pp 113-115.
- ³ The CIPD has established a discussion website, 'The e-learning debate', to provide a forum for the practical issues in implementing e-learning. It can be accessed at www.cipd.co.uk.
- ⁴ www.thiagi.com

Employment relations trend

BY GREG BAMBER AND CHRIS LEGGETT

By the year 2020 eight of the 12 largest economies in the world will be within the Asia-Pacific region. This article reviews recent developments in that part of the world: first, in three advanced market economies – Australia, New Zealand and Japan; secondly, in the four 'tigers' – the newly industrialising economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan; and thirdly within the next group of Asian industrialisers – Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the People's Republic of China. This third group is in danger of being caught in a 'sandwich trap' of cheap labour competition from below and exclusion from higher value-added markets above. In earlier years, the four 'tigers' faced the same trap.

Australia and New Zealand

Since 1993, legislation in Australia has encouraged employers and workers to negotiate individual or collective industrial agreements at the workplace. This enterprise approach has been given legitimacy by some influential employers trying to improve their people management, although evidence of the extent to which employing organisations have adopted sophisticated HRM policies is inconclusive. Nonetheless, there has been a significant and continuing decline in unionisation, paving the way for the decentralisation of employment relations and greater employer autonomy.

A significant factor in New Zealand's programme of employment relations reform was the Employment Contracts Act 1991, which abolished the Arbitration Court and the award system and de-emphasised collective bargaining. Both the size and the role of unions were severely curtailed so that most employers were no longer confronted by much countervailing power from that source. Something of a reversal has been presaged with the return of a Labour-Alliance government in 1999 that has formulated legislation to encourage 'good faith' collective bargaining involving legally recognised unions.

The attempts to transform employment relations and people management in Australia and New Zealand have been induced by governments and employers influenced by product-market considerations and by assumptions about micro-economic reform based on rational economic theories. In contrast there has been greater continuity in Japan.

Japan

Japanese employment relations and personnel practices have long been of interest to observers from other countries, particularly during the 1980s when they helped to explain the superior competitive performance of Japanese products on world markets. Since the early 1990s, however, the Japanese economy has been sluggish and some stereotyped-Japanese phenomena like lifetime employment have come under pressure. This is against the background of the adoption by Japanese firms of cost-cutting measures like downsizing and re-engineering that are given the credit for resuscitating competitiveness in American industry in the 1990s. In spite of such pressure, most core employees in blue-chip Japanese companies still enjoy a form of lifetime employment. Unlike many of their counterparts in western countries, such companies have been reluctant to lose their investment in human capital and have continued to invest in training and development. There have been remarkably few redundancies in blue-chip Japanese companies.

Despite Japan's political, economic and corporate woes, western managers and scholars still have much to learn from Japanese management styles. Japan may not be Number One in terms of economic and business success and reputation, but Japanese management styles are especially appropriate as we move into an economy where the importance of 'tacit knowledge' and organisational on the job learning is increasingly recognised.

Japanese approaches to *kaizen* (continuous incremental improvement) and employee involvement are especially important. A fascinating book by Cutcher-Gershenfeld shows that the emphasis of *kaizen* on employee-driven problem solving is a strong counterpoint to the top-down notion of 're-engineering'.^{*} Most western managers seem to believe that employment security restrains managerial flexibility. However, Japanese managers tend to see employment security as essential to the flexibility associated with promoting *kaizen* and teamwork. Contrary to conventional wisdom, there can be competitive advantages in diverse, older, unionised and urban workforces.

^{*}Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld et al. 'Knowledge-driven work: unexpected lessons from Japanese and United States work practices', New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan

Achieving high levels of employment early along their paths to industrialisation led the newly industrialised economies (NIEs) to take an interest in HRM as a means of obtaining workforce commitment to increasing productivity. In Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, moves towards democratisation since the late 1980s and a growing dependence on foreign labour alerted public policymakers and corporate managers to the importance of HR policies and practices.

In Hong Kong, a tradition of bureaucratic personnel management inherited from colonial Britain has long been a feature of

DEVELOPING CO-OPERATIVE ER

Like many other companies in South Korea, LG Electronics (LGE) experienced a dramatic increase in industrial disputes in the 1980s. In 1989, it suffered 23 strikes. Preventing strikes, therefore, became a major priority for such companies. But LGE came to realise that merely avoiding disputes is not an adequate objective for corporate employment relations. After much research and reflection, LG management adopted a far more proactive strategy, which they called 'Developing co-operative ER'. Since 1998 the company has facilitated the voluntary participation of employees and union leaders in management activities.

This strategy appears to have been successful. During the post-1997 financial crisis, for example, management and labour agreed on a wage freeze and drastic cuts in fringe benefits. On the other hand, LGE increased its investment in training. (This

large organisations. This 'benevolent enforcement' regime over unions has generally been continued so far under the Special Administrative Region (SAR) government of Hong Kong.

The state has played an important role in South Korea, but so too have the large family conglomerates, the *chaebol*. Spurred by the government, the *chaebol* initiated the industrialisation of South Korea and have played a dominant role in the country's economic development ever since. There remains a struggle between the state, the

s in the Asia-Pacific region

chaebol and the unions over the control of employment relations. In December 1996 the Kim Young-Sam government amended the Trade Union Act and strengthened employers' workplace prerogatives. This precipitated much worker and union discontent.

Singapore followed a rather different route: it aimed to industrialise by attracting multinational corporate investment and underpinned it with public sector infrastructure and a disciplined workforce. With the government's decision in 1979 to restructure the economy along high technology, high value-added lines, it initiated proactive national labour market policies in an attempt to enhance the quality of Singapore's

ATION AND REFORM

contrasts with many firms with an Anglo-American heritage, which, typically, cut the training budget when there is a hint of a recession.) Further, LGE improved product and services quality, partly as a result of the partnership between management and labour.

At LGE, four important conclusions have been reached about employment relations reform:

- 1 Co-operative employment relations cannot be achieved without management innovation.
- 2 Much time and effort is required from top managers to develop a constructive employment relations culture.
- 3 The company should support increased independence and professionalism on the part of the union and provide education for union leaders.
- 4 Such activities need to be conducted systematically and simultaneously.

workforce. The government has intervened to supply a range of remedies, including at one time the provision of ethics (religious and Confucian) education programmes. Singapore's pragmatism and the government's capacity to fine-tune employment relations enabled the city-state to weather the Asian economic crisis better than most of its south east Asian neighbours.

Again in the NIEs, many of the changes appear to have been led by employers and governments reacting to changing product and labour markets.

Malaysia and Thailand

The Malaysian government tried to follow Singapore's example and avoid the low wage trap by attracting high technology, high value-added production through proactive national labour market policies. However, abundant supplies of cheap labour, including migrants, have inhibited the transition of Malaysia's economy. Also, unlike Singapore and Korea, Malaysia has not organised its unions into a federation closely associated with the government.

In Thailand trade liberalisation exposed labour-intensive manufacturers to cheaper labour competition and led to the adoption of a range of cost-cutting measures. In the absence of government backing, only a few employers have adopted long-term strategies of flexibility and quality enhancement. Product-market considerations and aspirations for economic growth in the context of particular socio-cultural traditions have generally driven the impetus for change.

Indonesia and China

In terms of their large size and stage of economic development, Indonesia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are awakening giants. Both countries have had strong authoritarian governments and relatively low-cost labour. But in recent years, Indonesia has experienced more political instability and it suffered much more severely from the Asian financial crisis.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. After the Asian financial crisis it asked the International Labour Organisation to help it to reform its labour market policies and employment relations laws. In an effort to reduce unemployment and increase foreign remittances (emulating the Philippines), Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower is pursuing a strategy of placing its labour force in the global market. Compulsory three-day courses for would-be overseas workers aim to help them understand their rights and avoid exploitation, and a private sector insurance scheme provides some further protection. There remains the problem of illegal and unscrupulous recruitment agents at home and advocacy groups have pressured for tighter regulations.

In the PRC, central planning originally determined the national labour market policies, but recently these policies have been driven increasingly by product market considerations too. Employment relations reform has not been straightforward. There appears to be considerable latent labour unrest in China. About half of all reported labour disputes arise

from workers being transferred from lifetime to contract employment; moreover, rural migration has created high urban unemployment. Thus, the PRC provides some of the cheapest labour in the world to the factories being developed by expatriate Chinese entrepreneurs in the Special Economic Zones. Structural reforms have been accompanied by large scale redundancies – estimates range above 20 million people – and workers still employed are often not paid.

Although government intervention is no longer public policy in the main English-speaking countries and union memberships have been in decline – in the USA, Australia and the UK, for example – this has not been the case in some Asia-Pacific countries, notably Taiwan and South Korea. Further, some Asian governments are still interventionist in their labour markets, playing an important role in determining the legal framework of employment relations and in defining the role of unions.

But there are significant differences. The survival and militancy of oppositional union leaders in South Korea has not been matched in Malaysia, and the gains of Taiwan's trade unionists have no parallel in Singapore. And, while the enterprise union structure in Korea is a cause of tension in that country's employment relations, it has been a contributor to industrial harmony in Japan.

Those with operations in all these countries would be well advised to keep an eye on such developments. ○

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For further information, see: Greg J. Bamber, Funkoo Park, Changwon Lee, Peter Ross & Kaye Broadbent (eds.), 'Employment Relations in the Asia-Pacific: changing approaches', (Sydney, Allen & Unwin/London, Thomson), 2000.

● *The LGE case study draws from the chapter authored by Young-Kee Kim in the above-mentioned book. For their kind help, the authors gratefully acknowledge all of the contributors to the book, and Ken Lovell.*



Hunting Latin American heads

Cristina Mejias shares some current challenges of executive search in South America and not least in her own country, Argentina

Over the past decade Argentina has gone through a radical transformational process. Privatisations, mergers and acquisitions, downsizings, outsourcing (not least of HR services) – all these have significantly changed the economic panorama and the mindset of most people. And one aspect of the employment scene on which such developments have had a major impact is executive recruitment.

We could say that Argentina in particular and South America in general are affected by the same 'globalisation' trends as any other part of the world. But, if we had to point out some difficulties in the headhunting process derived from particular economic reasons like recession, we should mention that people currently in work are tending to show reluctance to move, preferring to stick to their present 'secure' job.

Despite some awareness of the end of the 'jobs for life' culture, years of paternalism and company-driven careers make it hard for executives to come to terms with concepts like

the 'new employment contract' and being responsible for their own career development. There is still a natural inclination to stay put. And, indeed, so unfamiliar are they with the notion of marketing themselves that, when questioned about their work life to date, they tend to present a list of the jobs they have held rather than their achievements while holding those jobs.

Fear and reluctance on receipt of the call from the headhunter, therefore, means an offer needs to be really tempting to motivate candidates to shift to another company.

In contrast to the situation you would have found, say, five years ago, however, executives these days seem to value job satisfaction, career prospects and work/life balance more highly than a big leap in their compensation package. Partly because of a negligible inflation rate in recent years, a salary that is perhaps only 15 per cent greater than their current pay – which may not have been raised for five years – is enough to attract someone who in inflationary times would

have been looking for at least half as much again as their current package.

But in general Argentinean executives are loyal to their employers and rarely respond to advertised vacancies in newspapers or other media, which means executive search really is the way to recruit new people at this level.

Consultants need to devote long hours to screening the market and conducting face to face interviews. Unlike in the US, where we understand telephone interviewing is common practice, the average Argentinean will refuse to participate in this method. My own company makes considerable use of videos of shortlisted candidates for presenting to clients with their resumés.

Another local difficulty is reference checking. Because of the culture that prioritises friendship, references can be less than reliable as a source of information.

In terms of what companies are seeking in new recruits, and particularly international and multinational corporations, the most common requirements are international experience and expertise in dealing with cross-cultural issues; Latin Americans still have some way to go in these areas. Only 15 per cent of managers are really fluent in

EAPM CONGRESS REPORT

Geneva, Switzerland, June 2001

Formulating policy on expatriate management, management development and succession planning are the top three preoccupations of the international HR professional, according to early findings from new research commissioned by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and announced at the EAPM Congress in Geneva.

Intended to establish the importance of international HRM and its impact on organisational effectiveness, the research is being conducted by Professor Chris Brewster and colleagues at the UK's Cranfield School of Management and Professor Paul Sparrow at Sheffield University.

In addition to a survey of 732 British and Irish HR professionals, FTSE 500 companies were asked about their business structures in relation to international HRM. Half of the companies were represented in more than 10 countries and a similar number had an HR professional responsible for global operations; of these just over a quarter (27 per cent) were on the main board of directors, and just over a third (35 per cent) were directors reporting to the main board.

As well as the areas of policy-making mentioned above, all of which were cited by at least half the sample, the role covers policy on performance management (mentioned by 45 per cent), HR planning (44 per cent) and compensation (43 per cent).

Asked what they saw as the keys to success in international HRM, respondents most frequently mentioned communication, alignment with business strategy, top management support, the capability of HR staff, a global mindset and diversity management.

Meanwhile another Cranfield survey conducted for online search consultancy Jobline International and also unveiled in Geneva looked at the international work ambitions of young highly educated professionals in 10

European countries. Of the 6,500 employees who responded (on line), 75 per cent believed international experience was important for their career, and 57 per cent wanted it in their next job. But only 35 per cent thought it likely their current employer would provide this; 17 per cent said they would leave in order to gain an international opportunity.

But managing people of different nationalities, ethnic origins, ages, educational and functional backgrounds is very difficult, and efforts tend to be undermined by a number of factors, according to academics Susan Schneider, Professor of Human Resource Management at Geneva's University of Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC) and Phil Rosenzweig, Professor of Strategy and Management at Lausanne's International Institute of Management Development (IMD).

Schneider said that the potential benefits of diversity tended to be lost because of the pressures to conform to the culture of the



NEW PRESIDENT Christoph Schaub of Switzerland, long-time treasurer of the European Association of Personnel Management, was last month elected EAPM president in succession to Pál Bóday of Hungary. He will serve for two years. He also becomes a member of the Board of the WFPMA. A former HR director of a multinational Swiss Bank, Schaub is now an executive director and partner of executive search consultancy SUP AG.

English. While 60 per cent of them have studied the language for years, they still find it a challenge to communicate orally, often due to inhibition or self-censorship.

The average Argentine citizen frequently goes abroad for business as well as for holidays, but many of them are unused to business negotiations with international companies. This can be considered another remnant of the old protectionism that determined a style and a culture.

The 'porteño' (people born in Buenos Aires; the word derives from 'puerto' – harbor) is quite reluctant to relocate, whether within Argentina or to neighbouring countries such as Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru or Chile. Buenos Aires, as indeed many other capital cities in South America, has always been the centre of all activities in the country. Fortunately, this tendency is changing now and a more balanced development of the region can be expected.

In short, we have excellent professionals with outstanding academic backgrounds and relevant experience, but there is still some way to go in terms of a global concept of the world of business. ○

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dominant majority. And yet at the same time it was a myth, albeit a nightmare for some, to think everyone would think and act alike.

Diversity was a strategic necessity, she said, a source of competitive advantage, and vital for innovation and learning. Getting it right was not mere altruism, nor should it be treated as 'political correctness'.

Rosenzweig listed three main reasons why companies find it hard. First was lack of agreement on the objectives; there needed to be a candid discussion of the elements sought in a workforce and the benefits of diversity. Secondly, 'political correctness' tended to cloud recognition of the limits of diversity; there needed to be consistency in policies and practices, particularly in start-ups in new countries, and it had to be 'safe' to discuss these. It was not a case of *either diversity or consistency*.

Finally, so many actions and initiatives in the name of diversity management were ineffective. Organisations should conduct regular surveys of the composition of the workforce, tracking career progression, who gets promoted, who leaves, etc; address unwanted patterns, redressing practices that lead to them; train people in working effectively across differences and evaluate performance and competence in this regard.

China's WTO prospects trigger HR awareness

REPORT BY HANS BOHM



Wu Yongke, addresses China's first international HRD conference

With the likely forthcoming entry to the World Trade Organisation of the People's Republic of China, chief executives in that country are beginning to regard the quality and talent of people in their organisations as a key factor in the implementation of the modern management systems essential to improving the competitive power of Chinese enterprises.

Addressing China's first ever international HR development conference in Beijing at the end of April, Wu Yonke, Director of the Training Department of the State Economic and Trade Commission, told over 300 HR professionals from Chinese and joint venture organisations that: "More and more enterprise leaders see investment in HRM as the driving force behind their organisation's

sustainable development." The conference was supported financially by the UN Development Programme and sponsored by governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Personnel, the HRD sub-committee of the China National Committee for Pacific Economic Co-operation, China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchange and Wu Yonke's department.

Chinese speakers came from both public and private sectors, but in addition a number of overseas academics, consultants and practitioners had been invited – including me.

We particularly noticed the number of young people attending the event and especially young women. And we were surprised at how lively and fearless were the discussions in the plenary sessions – the so-called 'ice-breaking' questions were never needed and the moderators could not get through all the questions and comments from the audience.

As we foreign speakers finished our presentations, we were surrounded by crowds of Chinese wanting to thank us, continue the discussion or just exchange business cards. For me personally it was an experience of an extraordinarily agreeable, relaxed social learning atmosphere.

We would hope that the organisers and sponsors will co-operate with our colleagues in the Hong Kong Institute in order that a professional Chinese HR organisation can be integrated within the structure of the WFPMA.

Hans Bohm is director of the DGFP (German HR association) and Board member of the WFPMA.

ILO sets standard for agriculture

The first ever international labour standard on health and safety in agriculture, progress in the effort to eliminate forced labour in Myanmar and a new initiative to eliminate child labour were among the key outcomes of the 89th International Labour Conference held in Geneva in June.

In addition, what the ILO describes as a 'spirited debate' took place on reducing the world's deficit in 'decent' work. By this the ILO means work which respects individuality and dignity, which provides sustenance, including provision for the uncertainties of employment, health and old age, and gives life social meaning and identity.

In the latest ILO annual report Director General Juan Somavia describes the shortage of such employment opportunities as the world's 'fault line', and at the Conference he called on workers, employers and

governments to move 'from aspiration to action, from design to implementation and from a vision to a policy' on 'reducing the decent work deficit'.

The labour standard on agricultural safety and health, which aims to protect the world's 1.3bn agricultural workers, will come into force once ratified by two ILO member States.

On Myanmar, the conference moved to send a high level team to conduct an objective assessment of the situation in that country, which has been repeatedly condemned for its use of forced labour.

The child labour initiative aims to accelerate the removal of millions of children from the most abusive forms of child labour in Tanzania, Nepal and El Salvador.

Also during the conference it was agreed that an authoritative report be prepared on the social dimension of globalisation.

THE WORLDLINK HR CALENDAR

July 25, 2001

Tokyo, Japan

JSHRM 2nd Annual Conference

Tel: +81 3 3409 1162
Fax: +81 3 3409 1165
Email: info@jshrm.org

August 14-17, 2001

Sao Paulo, Brazil

CONARH National Conference

Tel: +55 11 256 0455
Fax: +55 11 214 0858
Email: abrh@abrhnacional.org.br

September 7-9, 2001

Barranquilla, Atlantico, Colombia

ACRIP National Congress

Tel: +57 1 545 9466
Fax: +57 1 210 0961
Email: acrip@col.net.co

September 12-14, 2001

Wellington, New Zealand

HRINZ Annual Conference and Expo

Theme: 'The future of work: talent, balance, results'
Tel: +64 4 499 2966
Fax: +64 4 499 2965
Email: hrinz@hrinz.org.nz

September 12-14, 2001

Swakopmund, Namibia

IPM Namibia conference

Tel: +264 64 248383
Fax: +264 64 248407
Email: corpconn@africaonline.com.na

September 16-19, 2001

Sydney, Australia

Labour Management Studies Foundation Conference

Theme: 'People management and leadership'
Speakers: Wayne Cascio (USA), Danah Zohar (UK)
Email: lisa.purser@gsm.mq.edu.au

October 1-2, 2001

Caesars Gauteng, South Africa

IPM 45th Annual Convention

Theme: 'Time to deliver results'
Tel: +27 11 482 4970
Fax: +27 11 482 6589
Email: karmen@ipm.co.za

October 3-5, 2001

Caracas, Venezuela

ANRI 17th National Congress

Tel: +582 762 8355
Fax: +582 763 2001
Email: informacion@anri.org.ve

October 10-13, 2001

Baguio City, Philippines

PMAP 38th National Conference

Contact: Gerardo Plana
Tel: +632 726 1581
Fax: +632 726 1530
Email: pmap@pmap.org.ph

October 17-21, 2001

Lima, Peru

FIDAP Congress

Tel: +511 265 6700
Fax: +511 472 5827
Email: adiezcanseco@grupocyber.com.pe

October 24-26, 2001

Zaragosa, Spain

AEDIPE 36th Annual Conference

Tel: +34 91 420 0612
Fax: +34 91 420 0894
Email: aedipe@aedipe.es

October 24-26, 2001

Harrogate, England

CIPD 54th National Conference

Tel: +44 20 8263 3434
Fax: +44 20 8263 3223
Email: training.hotline@cipd.co.uk

October 25-26, 2001

Lisbon, Portugal

APG 34th National Conference

Tel: +351 21 352 2717
Fax: +351 21 352 2713
Email: apgrth@mail.telepac.pt

May 27-29, 2002

Mexico City, Mexico

WFPMA 9th World Congress on Human Resource Management

Contact: Luis de la Fuente Pantoja
Tel: +52 5140 2201
Fax: +52 5140 2227
Email: information@hr2002.org

BACK TO THE PERSON

The Human Resource Function's
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MEXICO 2002

9th Human Resources World Congress

Mexico City, May 27-29

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