CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
The main thrust of this thesis was to make a critical assessment of the role played by the Personnel Department in the development and management of human resource in Indian Railways, and in accomplishing various personnel functions. Such a critical look into the functioning of the personnel department in a service sector like Indian Railways has been able to reveal as to how there has been concerted efforts by the Indian Railways to live up to the demands of the changing environment, and to provide the requisite service within the constraints of the decision environment. In an attempt to bring in some kind of professionalism to the Indian Railways a new category of officers like IRPS were brought in. In the earlier chapters of the thesis an attempt was made to highlight the current role and functions of the personnel department in Indian Railways especially in the wake of socioeconomic and technical changes taking place in the macro environment. Further, it was attempted to analyze the role effectiveness of Indian Railway Personnel Service in providing the requisite service to the stakeholders. The study, with the help of the analysis made in the earlier chapters, tries here to prescribe the measures and strategies to make the Department more vibrant, useful and effective.

All advanced economies are becoming aware of the importance of developing human resources in order to maintain competitive advantage. Considerable and increasing investment on training and developing is being made on human resource not only to absorb new technology but also to create a more efficient workforce. Techniques of 'scientific selection' have been developed to choose appropriate people in the construction of efficient teams. Motivational themes have been put to use to engender feelings of ownership and worth in employees in the hope of greater
efficiency and productivity; new ways of working, the restructuring of organisations and the cult of change has been propounded as the way to cope with an ever-changing world.

Indian Railways is a very large system and its HRD problems are unique in view of its peculiar characteristics examined through the thesis. System, however, cannot be insulated from the invading technology all around and the new HRD mechanisms being propounded and experimented elsewhere. Much attention was not given to this important area and generally mere adhocism was employed to solve manpower problems. Human Resource Development has largely been confined to the area of Managers as the target group. But in course of time, it has been realized that extension of HRD activities to the rank and file of workers in the Railways seems to have received comparatively less attention than has been its due.

Personnel Department on the Railways, which has been dealing broadly with the personnel and industrial relations functions in a routine manner for the past many decades, has to, therefore, adopt a rather pro-active role of HRD by slowly integrating personnel functions into it. A review of the role and functions of Personnel Department leads to a redefinition of the administrative boundary, separation of policy formulation and implementation, accountability, and co-operation/partnership between sectors. It also calls for redefining public service values and ethos, performance based approach, use of friendly attitudes, setting up standards for service delivery, and changing the work culture of the bureaucracy and its mindset.
In India, the quality of service has declined because the delivery of service is supply driven and not demand driven. The recipient group of beneficiaries is thankful even for the poor quality of service. It has to be energized to perceive quality and demand it. Viewed in the above context, the role and functions of the Personnel Department which also assumes relatively the new role of providing human resource development in Indian Railways were studied and the main results/recommendations that follow from the study are summarized as under by way of conclusion. The researcher's own experience with the Indian Railways for the last three decades at various decision making levels, particularly relating to human resource area, are also brought in to bear on the conclusions provided here.

1. If the human potential is to be maximized, appraisal should focus on the motivation, development and growth of employees. Employees cannot develop in a system that hides things from them. 'Appraisal' should be positive, not a faultfinding exercise. It should capitalize on people's strengths and not magnifying their weaknesses. It should put emphasis on improvement, development, building on strength, setting targets, identifying problems, difficulties and training needs and not on weaknesses, failures, promotion and pay. While a combination of self and superior appraisal is still the most common one, the involvement of peers, other bosses and even subordinates as appraisers is gaining popularity. In other words, the system has to be more open and development oriented.
2. Attempt should be made to establish career plans approximating to an open system. Three attributes viz., skill, knowledge and attitudes are quite important for the progression/development of employees. This can be achieved only by designing suitable training programmes for them, more for people at lower levels. With the availability of scientific systems of appraisals, there is a need to devise a merit-based process of promotion instead of the present focus of seniority based promotions. Simultaneously, there should be a mechanism to provide successive opportunities to those in lower groups to gain positions even in higher groups at any stage of their career.

3. Lot of importance should be given to training function. A sad fact is that as down the organisational level one descends, the less money is spent on training. There is a need to encourage individuals to recognise their training needs and more importantly seek ways to improve their knowledge and skills, which would advance their career prospects. In addition to skill training, there is also a need to give training on behavioural aspects even to the workers. Similarly, workmen and Unions should be educated as to what is the role of Union and management with reference to their contribution to productivity management. There has to be continuous education of Union leaders and office bearers of their obligations and the general decision environment rules governing the system, to enable them more participative. Also the trainer has to be one having aptitude to teach, monitor the delivery and one who is knowledgeable.
4. The present system of presenting rewards is proving to be counter-productive. It requires a review. Perhaps, a better system will be to reward the performance of all 'Outstanding' personnel, instead of only a select few of them every year.

5. Feedback and counseling are two important tools of HRD which are required to be made use of rather liberally to build up healthy relationship and a change in the attitudes of the employees at various levels. Also there is a need to experiment with the new techniques of TQM, team brief groups etc.

6. It is found by analysis that contribution of Personnel Department in functional areas viz., Recruitment, wage and salary Administration and selection was generally satisfactory but its contribution in other areas viz., Training, conflict resolution, human resource planning, Advisory, welfare functions etc. was far from satisfactory. That shows the Customer's satisfaction level in most of the areas in which Personnel Department is supposed to play its role was poor. There is thus an urgent need to refurbish their contribution in areas like human resource planning, Training, welfare, conflict resolution, Advisory functions etc. On a further diagnosis it is found that inadequacy of training for staff of Personnel Department was, perhaps, the key factor for poor delivery. There is thus an urgent need to arrange training programmes for the Personnel staff both at induction level as also refresher courses on topics relevant to them. This will also improve the will and skill of the employees working in the Department. Other factors viz., dissatisfaction with reservation policy etc. are
matters which pertain to national-policy of the Government and cannot be helped.

7. General consensus has been found in the study that the existing procedures/rules pertaining to Personnel Department have become too complicated overtime and add to the delay in interpretation and implementation. There is a need to attempt simplification of procedures. If need be, a Committee may be set up for this purpose to propose simplified procedures in various areas.

8. There is an urgent need to bring about a change in the 'working environment' by having modern furniture for the staff and make available photocopy machines, word processors, PCs etc. more liberally to the staff. Also more and more areas should be brought under computerisation progressively. The focus in the whole process should not be the reduction of the staff but achieve efficiency and reduce the drudgery element. All the staff that displays aptitude for learning/ handling the computers should be financially motivated.

9. The study has indicated that the existing manpower in the Personnel Branch to deal with multifarious duties is not adequate and there is a need to augment the strength to some extent. Suitable augmentation of the strength is also required in view of the increased workload, which is presently impinging the Personnel Branch staff. There is a sudden rise in the number of CAT cases for which lot
of spadework has to be done by the personnel department within the short span of time at the cost of other normal duties.

10. The question of whether or not to have direct recruitment of staff at the intermediary level (viz., Chief Clerk level) has been studied. With a view to have good mix of staff and attract young persons with good academic background to the emerging field of HRD etc., and also in organisational interest, it is, perhaps, desirable to introduce direct recruitment against some percentage of vacancies at the level of Chief Clerks in Personnel Department.

11. In the wake of change in technology and consequent changing systems and procedures there is tremendous scope of redundancy/reduction of staff. Thus there is a need to assess the surplus staff in various categories as a short-term measure and long-term measure and take steps to re-deploy the staff consistent with the fresh need to have staff in new categories which may come up. Also a system should be evolved in human resource rescheduling. An integrated plan should be available to redistribute Casual Labors/other staff in a phased manner well in advance in case of time bound projects. The idling of the staff after being declared as surplus should be reduced to minimum.

12. A concept of 'integrated maintenance' having unified control of various activities should be stepped up to optimize manpower resources. Similarly 'multiskilling' concept should be introduced in maintenance and operation
functions. There is at present a large number of wastage of manpower time and cost inbuilt in the existing multi-trade approach.

13. There is also a need to bring about change in age and skill profile in categories like Gangmen that devoted to arduous nature of work as also technical type of staff. If the present trend is not reversed, it may bring about inefficiency and severe problems of maintenance of existing assets. While there is a need to have revised recruitment policies in these categories, there is also a need to devise a voluntary retirement/ incentive scheme of early retirement with/without wards appointment for such categories to achieve immediate results.

14. Personnel Branch officers and staff as also other executives should be exposed to the man power planning models in vogue particularly relating to Career progression, age distribution analysis techniques, Markov models etc. The Markov model and variants of it attempt to model the flow of individuals within the organisation. The organisations have predictable wastage patterns according to length of service, and the pattern can be discerned early on in an individual's career. Once survival rates have been calculated and barring no future shocks, a fairly stable pattern of progression and replacement needs over time can be calculated. Adoptions of basic Markov model are used to project recruitment on the basis of stable pattern of both wastage and promotion and the probability that someone in a particular grade at any time will be in some other grade at a later time can be also established from the career histories of
staff. To retain financial viability, there is also a need to have a 'cost-centre' approach, manpower budgeting and control.

15. Casual labours on Railways need a more depth study and focus. The study showed that there is a need to decasualise all those with more than 3 years Casual labour service. Going by the perceptions of various groups on the aspect of retention or deletion of the names of ex-casual labours on the 'live-casual labour Registers etc.' after a few years, it is considered desirable to continue retention of their names on the Registers for more time and issue reviewed again.

16. The role effectiveness of IRPS (direct recruits) in its various facets and the extent of niche made was also gone into. The study indicates that while the Personnel Branch staff and the IRPS (direct recruits) felt that they had been able to make a dent into the system, the other groups viz., Unions, peers, other staff etc. perceived otherwise. Apparently, the divergence of perceptions leads us to one conclusion that the customers of personnel department are not much satisfied with their contribution and it may take some more time before this image gets changed. The main reasons for poor role effectiveness were generally perceived as -

i) Lack of proper training to them.

ii) Lack of grip/confidence on complicated issues.
iii) Personnel issues/rules itself getting complicated requiring simplification to avoid ambiguity and implementation.

iv) Other Departments committing mistakes due to their poor knowledge/exposure on personnel matters thus contributing to Industrial relations problems and pass the buck to Personnel Department for their failures/slippages.

Obviously, the type of training given to IRPS (direct recruits) lacks the content and extent which could equip them to deal effectively the problems or issues being faced by them on getting appointed to a working post. Linked with initial proper training which requires to be recast, he should be posted at jobs wherein his confidence-level to deal with situations gets enhanced and tendency of withdrawal from tough situations gets minimized. This in turn will also give them a good grip in dealing with complicated personnel issues. It is also true that officers in other departments who happen to suddenly get posted in Divisions etc., to decision making places are not much well versed with Personnel Rules and often commit frequent mistakes in decision making in personnel area resulting in a complicated situations wherein the Personnel Branch in turn gets a bad name. There is thus also a corresponding need to give exhaustive training in personnel matters to officers from other Departments who happen to get suddenly posted to jobs which require intense knowledge of personnel rules in addition to technical knowledge.
The general discussion on the issue whether the earlier system of manning these posts in Personnel Department by officers from other Departments or the present system of filling the same through IRPS (direct recruits) was also taken up in the study. It has been found that, of late, the general consensus is that present system is performing well within the constraints and may prove better in future years to come in heralding a new culture in HRD.

17. The all-pervasive effect of dynamics of trade unions towards HRD was also studied. Although Unions are in existence on Railways for the past eight decades, there is a Joint Consultative Machinery functioning since mid-sixties. It is based on an agreement signed by the staff Unions with the official side, on the lines of Whiteley Councils of U.K. which incidentally are no longer there; providing for consultation with Unions in matters of their welfare and securing their co-operation in bringing about efficiency in Government. At the National level, the Council is presided over by Cabinet Secretary and at Railways' level, it is in the form of PNM /JCM(DC) schemes etc. The scheme provided for compulsory arbitration in certain matters and the staff Unions in turn promised not to resort to strike to settle disputes. The system worked well till a few years ago but cracks seem to have developed. The staff and officials do not meet regularly or there is a lack of seriousness on the official side to implement quickly the decisions taken. Also the Government has not been able to bring about some much needed modifications to the scheme. It is widely accepted that one single composite recognized Union could considerably help working
of the Railways; but the present trend of multiplicity of Unions continues.
There is also a need to change the condition for 'Recognition' of unions. Union concerned should have as members at least 15% of the non-gazette staff of each of departments for recognition purposes. There is also a need for upward revision of minimum membership required for recognition of Unions. Also minimum membership fee of a Union should be revised upwards for improvement of the Finances of the Trade Unions to take up social security and social assistance measures to its members. Under the PNM scheme, there is no scope of 'Conciliation'. If the negotiation fails, the PNM envisages reference of the matter to ad hoc tribunal. There should be a provision to provide for the 'Conciliation' on the matters where the agreement is not reached. The most important defect of the PNM is that when negotiations fail, there is no other remedy to secure justice. Discretionary powers have been kept with the administration in regard to both references of a dispute to a Tribunal and acceptance of the decisions of the Tribunal. In PNM meetings, the management may also propose a few items on the agenda so that the organised labour can take a view and come to integrative decision. The Staff Councils in most of the Production Units are not in proper flow and require a review of their working. CEG (Corporate Enterprise Group) require to be revitalized to become more participative and useful forum.

Finally, an analysis of the perceptions of various groups reveals that there was a general consensus between various groups that most of the welfare measures and Acts which have come up during the past many years are the outcome of the consistent
efforts made by Unions only. However, there was a convergence on the view between staff and officers that Unions are generally 'demand oriented' and interfere in trifles for selfish interests. Unions, however, did not readily accept this viewpoint. Staff side and official side groups, however, jointly viewed that Unions spend large percentage of energy in inter-union rivalry issues rather than real issues facing the Railways. Unions have, however, tended to differ again on this viewpoint. There has similarly been a general charge against the Union members that they devote very less time towards their specific duties and are mostly busy in attending various formal/informal meetings. The staff and official group were too affirmative on this viewpoint, but Unions had once again divergent views on this subject. Sometime back a study was undertaken by South Central Railway on this issue. It was observed that on an average each office bearer of the Union is available for doing the official work for only 171 days in a year and that too not in continuous spells for productive sustained work. Obviously, rules in regard to permitting office bearers for formal/informal meetings requires a review. The view that most of the workers down the line are also not satisfied with the working of recognised Unions had a significant convergence between various groups including 42.86% of Union group; but the workers continued as they had no other alternative.

Viewed in the above context, there is general view emerging from the survey that such mechanisms, which have worked well for so many years, require a re-look to make them cutting. Another interesting point, which finds convergence, is that most of the Industrial-relation problems are not the creation of the staff/Unions but are being contributed by officers only due to belated/no decision making. Hence, there is very
much a need to bring home this perception to the officers, also to curb this
tendency/behaviour and to diagnose this malady for better HRD conditions. The
existing time-tested mechanisms viz., PNM, JCM/DC, CEG, Staff Councils have
helped all along the Railways to resolve grievances and smooth functioning. What is
really required presently is to strengthen these institutions by bringing in attitudinal
changes, participative style of management, an information sharing approach and a
focus on education of workers. Lot of stress should be on training of the workers,
which is very important, and there is also a need to even lay down a minimum
qualification for office bearers. The training of workers should not be only to upgrade
their skills/educational qualifications, but also in areas of moral value, discipline, their
obligations to the organisation and knowledge of rules affecting their working life.
CEG forum should be usefully used to study important issues viz., elimination of
redundancies of staff on account of various factors, manpower utilization problems,
quality of services, quality of working life in general. There is also a need to
rejuvenate the working of various Committees viz., Colony Committee, Hospital
Committee, Canteen Committee, Staff Benefit Fund Committee etc. where official and
staff side are both represented. In sum, there has to be a constructive, frank, honest
and healthy dialogue between the Management and Unions to avoid a demand driven
approach in the negotiation process and ensure a collective fiscal responsibility and
accountability. The workmen and Unions should be educated as to what is the role of
the Union and management with reference to their contribution for productivity
improvement. Further, the Managers, Executives and Supervisors should be educated
on human relations skills so that they empower the workmen to reach the heights of
excellence to meet the global competition.
It will be unrealistic to expect that an ideal HRD system can be realized in Administration through a directive or guidelines from the Ministry of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, though that Ministry is also required to change some of the fundamental policies of the Government in regard to rewards and promotions for employees if the HRD philosophy of Government is to be effective. What is more important is the establishment of a climate in which experimentation in HRD is given a free rein to thrive and succeed in individual units and serve as a model for others to follow and improve, if possible. The influence of such centers will be infectious.