# The Generic and Pejorative Aspects of Human Resource Management

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## Abstract

This paper reviews literature on Human Resource Management and consolidates the work done on its various aspects. The generic and pejorative sides of Human Resource Management have been discussed. Various case studies and their results have been reviewed to critically analyse the various entities that are the building blocks of Human Resource Management. Strategic Human Resource Management as a breakthrough in Human Resource Management has been highlighted while debating its nuances. Abundance of Human Resource Practices drawn from the literature have been examined to debate their universal nature.

## 1. Introduction

Human resource management is used in two distinct ways, one generic and the other pejorative. Used in the generic way, 'HRM' is merely a fashionable denomination for what has archaically been known as 'personnel management', increasingly being known as 'people management'. Economists first used the term 'Human resource' in USA during the 1940s, but eventually the term 'human resource management' evolved during the 1980s and has been used ever since. Human resource department involves recruiting the right employees into the right jobs, training and development of the hired personnel, motivating employees, re-engineering the business processes and the organizational structure, facilitating cultural gaps and redesigning jobs (Armstrong, 2009). Human resource management refers to a body of management activities concerned with the people working for an organization. As companies reorganize and evolve to gain competitive edge, human resource plays a key role in aiding companies deal with fast changing environment and recruiting and retaining quality employees (Hendry, 2011).

Boselie (2010) approaches the concept of human resource management by addressing the relationship that exists between employees and the organization. Therefore, as per his analysis, work report includes four types of contracts:
• Contract law - Encompasses the formally stipulated code of conduct established in the contract. It covers the rights and obligations that are agreed upon between the employees and the organization (Example : number of holidays, terms and conditions relating to confidentiality)
• Economic and trade agreement (employer and employee determine employee work effort, reflected in the number of working days and how much the employer pays for the submission of this work, within salary)
• Psychological contract (contains all those elements that are not directly stated but are expected by the two actors - the employee and the organization. Example, employees are willing to invest additional time in a project because it can promote them in next.)
• Sociological contract (relations and networks that employees have with the organization - eg teamwork)

Two major electronic trends are reshaping the role of HR in the corporate world. The first one addresses the humongous growth in the knowledge economy. These changes are generated when an appropriately skilled, committed and prudently deployed workforce works towards developing a competitive advantage. The second change is about the struggle of transitioning from a functional to a strategic partner. Since many administrative functions such as payroll and pensions that were formerly handled by the HRD have now been outsourced, leaving the specialists unburdened and frees to aggressively contribute to an oganization's strategic direction. (Ramona, Todericiu and Anca, Şerban, 2013)

With the changing perception of HRM, more and more organizations are coming to consider it a value-added business partner. Strategic Human Resource Management System or SHRM has come to be

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regarded as a general approach to the strategic management of human resources with a view to the future the organization wishes to pursue. As is evident from the literature, HR is aggressively involved in the execution of an overall strategic plan, contrary to its slouchy involvement in the initial development of that plan. This is required to change in the new economic context. While HR professionals have the important responsibility to support and promote the value of HR within the company, it is the senior HR executives that have to demonstrate their value more assertively. It is vital that the executives, HRD and employees are in tandem to ensure that the initiatives developed and designed by the HR team is driving business performance and enabling people to achieve results. (Todericiu Ramona, Serban Anca, 2013). There exists a unidirectional relationship between HRM and supply chain, in which HRM affects supply chain management. It is conclusive of the fact that that organizations need to focuses more on HRM to not only improve employee performance, but also enhance the supply chain management and contribute to its success. (Khan et al., 2013)

Theories on lifespan development and self-regulation were investigated and two types of HR practices were highlighted : maintenance HR practices that aid individual employees maintain their current levels of functioning in the face of challenges (e.g. performance appraisal) and the development HR practices that aid the individual employees reach higher levels of functioning (e.g. training and development). Kooji et al (2013) expected and found that the relationship between development HR practices and well-being (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational fairness) weakens, and that the relationship between maintenance HR practices and well-being, and between development HR practices and employee performance, strengthen with time. Furthermore, a third type of HR practices emerged that inspired higher job performance among aging workers called, 'job enrichment'.

Dewhurst et al. (2012) in their article address the difficulties arising to acquire and retain talent due to increasing competition to hire this talent by local companies. The article discusses a survey in China that discovered that senior managers of global organizations were switching companies at five times the global average each year. The need for global businesses to boost their goodwill as an employer is highlighted and the requirement for role models in global leadership roles to inspire talented people to join and stay with the companies is felt. It talks about how executives may better understand the functioning of the market and create business networks to support

future business growth by working in emerging markets.

## 2. Case Studies

The Relationship between HR Practices and Job Satisfaction Across Selected Information Technology Companies were explored and it was found that male and female employees in the organizations under study had different perceptions of HR practices and job satisfaction. Verma et al. (2012) from the results of their study showed that three dimensions of job satisfaction, namely, information, variety, closure and pay drive 82% of the HR practices in the IT industry. In a quantitative research conducted by Khatibi et al. (2012) on Iranian Hospitals, three main HRM practices, namely, Compensation, Evaluation, and Promotion were pitted against each other. The results of the study indicated that compensation had the highest impact.

In another survey, data was collected from 5,748 Belgian employees to develop and test a theoretically grounded model. The study based on soft HRM and self-determination theory aims to examine the relationship between five HR practices and HRM outcomes and whether it is mediated by basic need satisfaction. Marescaux et al. (2013) conclude that relatedness satisfaction and autonomy partially mediate the relationship between HRM outcomes and HR practices. The study indicates that future research into HRM could target HR practices and job designs since both are expected to affect basic need satisfaction followed by HRM outcomes. Behavior of the supervisor when administering HR practices is also viewed as a contributor to basic need satisfaction. It is to be understood that the HR actors acknowledge the fact that merely implementing soft HR practices is not sufficient, attention needs to be devoted towards individual talents, interests and expectations of employees while implementing them. This study conclusively integrates soft HRM and self-determination theory into one model, shedding light on the possible pathways and conditions which lead to favourable outcomes.

Innocenti et al. (2012) links human resources (HR) practices to employee attitudes by studying the role behavioural integrity, explicitly distinguishing between intended and experienced HR practices in conducting the analysis. The managers' behavioral integrity is analysed to check whether it moderates the link between intended HR practices (as designed by the organization) and experienced HR practices (as perceived by the employees). The association between intended HR practices and positive employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and affective commitment are also tested for mediation by experienced HR practices. The survey data collected

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from more than 6,000 employees is conclusive of two major roles played by managers' perceived behavioural integrity. First that it encourages a positive relationship between intended and experienced HR practices, and employees' affective commitment and job satisfaction are boosted both directly and indirectly. An intervening role for experienced HR practices is revealed to mediate the intended practices and behavioral integrity of the two employee outcomes.

In yet another study, a survey of 4,811 employees from 32 units of 28 companies operating in India was conducted to examine the role of HR practices in the success of individuals and organizations. Employee perceptions of the effectiveness of three specific human resources practices within their firms were recorded and their perceptions regarding the contribution of the same towards career success, performance and potential were evaluated. It has been seen that the companies based in India are engaging structured HR practices in normalized performance ratings, professional development, and performance management with an aim to create strong HR climates. Stumpf et al. (2010) talk about the extent to which employees' perception of career success and organizationally rated performance and potential are influenced by the perceived effectiveness of the company's HR practices. The study is also conclusive of the fact that HR practices are differently perceived among national, international, and global companies and among the industries of information technology (IT), manufacturing, and services. It is also pointed out that perceived HR practices and outcomes are dependent on firm geographic scope and industry sector.

A study was conducted using a sample of middle level managerial and R&D workers in 11 subsidiaries of a multinational conglomerate located in East Asia by Kwon et al. (2010). This study concluded that high commitment human resource practices were positively related to the affective organizational commitment of employees. It also went on to show that it affected top performers more than lower performers.

Dorien T.A.M. et al. (2012) conducted a research study based on lifespan theories. Through their study they concluded that the associations between maintenance HR practices and well-being, and between development HR practices and employee performance, strengthen with age and the association between development HR practices and well-being (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational fairness) weakens with age. A third bundle of HR practices emerged. It was seen that 'job enrichment' HR practices elicited higher job performance among aging workers.

Elvira Nica et al. (2011) concluded that organizations must use financial and non-financial motivational strategies to create an environment that is conducive to professional succesful employees. This ensures the organization the loyalty of its employees. B.R. Ananthan and L.N. Sudheendra Rao (2011) in a study concluded that employees identified employee benefit strategies, employee ideas and suggestion strategies, total retention strategies, reward and recognition strategies and management/organizational strategies as the most important strategies contributing to job satisfaction.

Nighat G. Ansari (2011) identified three dimensions of employees' perceptions, namely, perceptions of fairness, perceptions of effectiveness, and perceptions of support (FES) of HRMPs of their organization. They further investigated its relation with their Organizational Commitment (OC).

A survey of 103 Turkish firms was carried out and the casual relationships among commitment-based HR practices(i.e. a commitment-based HR system), different types of innovation activities and firm innovation performance were examined. Ceylan (2013) opened the black box of the relationship between HR management and firm performance. Empirical results show that a commitment-based HR system has a positive effect on process, organizational and marketing innovation activities. Results indicate that product innovation activities enhance firm innovation performance. Furthermore, it has been concluded that a commitment-based HR system mainly affects organizational innovation activities and that these innovation activities are the core drivers of process and marketing innovation activities, leading to a higher rate of product innovation activities.

Using the data drawn from a large sample of Chinese establishments, Gahan et al. (2012) investigate the widespread use of a range of Western-style HR practices in China and evaluate the relationship between the adoption of these practices and three organizational outcomes: sales per employee, total labor costs, and unit labor costs. Their study yielded mixed results for the relationships between labor management practices and establishment productivity. While the introduction of a number of HR practices were also associated with significantly higher labor costs, the results indicate a more mixed result for the relationship between these practices and unit labor costs. Their findings further the understanding of the relationship between work practices and organizational outcomes, and they help clarify the effects of the changing economic context on HR management in China.

Jayaraman (2012) in his study highlights the areas where Human Resources (HR) and people practices have been impacted by BE wave. The

different ways in which BE and TQM interact with HR function to sync individual employee performance with company requirements have been discussed. This aids in targeting employees as the main focus while the company aims to excel in an increasingly competitive world.

Cherian et al (2012) in their study of Green HR Practices and its effective implementation in an organization identified the environment management initiatives that are promoted by corporations by developing human resource policies.

The relationship between the employee job satisfaction in the public sector organizations of Pakistan, a developing country, and three HR Practices, namely, Training and Development, Rewards and Recognition was analyzed. Regression and correlation were applied on the data collected from the employees of various public sector organizations and the relationship between the dependent and independent variables was studied. The study was conclusive of the fact that while training and development and recognition are key contributors to employee job satisfaction in these public sector organizations of Pakistan, rewards do not play that significant a role (Javed et al., 2012).

Mohlala et al. (2012) conducted a study on Employee retention within an Information Technology Division of a South African Bank. The results of the study indicate that due to lack of a proper employee retention and engagement strategy, the management is unable to identify the crucial skills to retain. These results are conclusive of the fact that high employee turnover within the division under scrutiny is the cause of skills shortages in the said division.

## 3. Strategic Human Resource Management

The concept of Strategic Human Resource Management originated in the United States (e.g., Brewster, 2004; Gooderham & Nordhaug, 2010; Kaufman, 2007; Schüler & Jackson, 2005) and became well known in the mid 1980s thanks to the works by the Michigan School (Fomhrun, Tichy, &. Devanna, 1984) and the Harvard School (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills, &. Walton, 1985) that strongly influenced later works.

Since its inception, the field of SHRM has advanced at a rapid pace. Drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives it has contributed to an important body of empirical results. It continues to play a key role in the current HRM scenario, and will continue to do so in the future. However, there is a lack of worldwide contributions and Anglo-American researchers and studies continue to dominate the field.

Hence the U.S. model is considered a successful format (Smith & Meiksins, 1995). North American SHRM consists of sets of clearly defined HRM practices such as high-performance work systems (HPWS), which are supposed to add value to firm performance as a single practice or as bundles of practices. These HRM practices are supposed to be independent of the context in which they are applied. These when judged from a European perspective are described as prescriptive (Gooderham and Nordhaug, 2010).

It is a universally acknowledged idea that when people and HRM unite, they contribute to the success and growth of a company (Stein, 2007). According to Anca-Ioana, Munteanu (2013), the focus should be on casting human resources as a priority for the organization. It is of utmost importance that human resources policies and programs are integrated into the organization's overall strategy. Therefore, businesses require a strategic approach to human resource management. This requires those in charge of the organization to maintain more knowledge about HR issues and activities and human resources managers to be aware of economic transactions, business contracts, the company's products, market outlets and the financial situation of the organization. In strategic human resource management, human resources department plays a key role and has a strong influence in strategic decisions at the organizational level. Human resource management at the micro level (HR policies and practices) is necessary but not sufficient for organizations to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. To be able to stand tall in the face of competition, it is vital that organizations take on a strategic approach to human resource management. The author also clarifies that the success or failure of an organization is probably not entirely affected by their practice of strategic human resource management; however, these practices are likely to be crucial to the cause.

McClean et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between high-commitment HR practices and firm performance in professional services firms through the mediator of employee effort. In addition, they also talked about strategic HRM and examined whether high-commitment HR practices should be used across all employee groups within a firm. Their study concluded that high-commitment HR practices positively relate to firm performance through employee effort for two employee groups within professional services firms. In addition to this their results also showed that the relationship between effort and performance is contingent on the value of the employee group to firm competitive advantage. This suggests that companies should only expend resources and effort on building a high-commitment

HR system for employee groups that are clearly tied to creating firm competitive advantage.

## 4. Drawbacks of HRM

The cost of 'human resource' has increased in the present scenario, what with more employment rights being granted to employees and hence a more demanding recruitment and selection criteria. Human resource management is a time and money consuming process. It takes time to successfully set up and set in motion a human resource department, hire the right staff and get the machinery running. Private equity boss, Luke Johnson criticized 'human resource management' as 'a simple expense and a burden on the productive workers' and suggested to 'radically downsize HR', stating it to be an unnecessary cost. If the Human Resource Department is removed from an organization's structural framework a large sum of money can be saved by the company. The apparatus surrounding the Human Resource policies gradually expands their roles, ultimately costing more money such as hiring compensation consultants, training advisers and appraisal experts. In case of a large business firm consisting of hundreds of employees, the resources spent on 'HR' are justified as then the managers can delegate the HR processes like recruitment and selection to the HRD and focus on their daily tasks. As long as confidentiality is maintained regarding employees' personal information and organizations are not prone to any unnecessary risks, the HRD can be very beneficial to a large company. In case the business is small and consists of a few employees, then the costs incurred by the HRD setup may not be justified since small companies function on thin profit margins (Armstrong, 2009).

Luke Johnson further scrutinizes the value that 'human resource' brings to a company and criticizes 'human resource management' as a 'necessary evil'. The age old personnel department when given a new shiny name comes to be addressed as 'Human resource management'. This new nomenclature affords the concept of providing service by managing people in an organization a certain power and status. So now personnel managers have become 'human resource management' (Berry, 2008).

Thirdly, Luke Johnson condemns HR as a 'bureaucratic hogwash'. A bureaucracy being a social system relies on order, rules and hierarchical structure in order to establish control over an organization. Meant to be logical, reasonable and highly efficient, bureaucracy feature formal rules and regulations, proficiency based promotion, clear-cut division of labor and strict hierarchy of authority (Ingram, 2012). Even though new activities like psychometrics, total feedbacks, performance appraisal etc. have been introduced, none of these activities really add value to the company (Kearns, 2009). In case a company is too rigid or slow in responding to changing environment, it allows its competitors to gain advantage in the long run and becomes vulnerable. A major drawback of bureaucracy is an organization's over dependence on rules and regulations. Alienation of employees from the upper management and feelings of being ignored and unheard can eventually cause job dissatisfaction. This can create a lot of internal frustration among employees, eventually leading to loss of innovation and creativity (Johnson, 2009).

According to a survey conducted by the Hay consultancy group in 2005, about 50% of the employees interviewed feel that 'human resource' made no difference to their job. Approximately 42% rated their job training as unfavourable and considered HR to have had a negative impact on their jobs, while 41% agreed that performance appraisals were fair (Hammonds, 2005). In a large organization where volume of staff requires specialized management HRD is an indispensable aid. Though HR is often underestimated and considered a 'bureaucratic hogwash', it is the HRD that hires and retains a well-qualified, well-cooperated and efficient workforce (Hendry, 2011).

For an organization to build a good workforce of professionals, it is vital that it has an efficient HRD. Employees form the most valued assets of any company, which is why they are referred to as human resources. The HRD looks after recruitment and selections, training and development, performance appraisal, motivation and the creation of a good working environment that is conducive to an efficient and engaged workforce. All these are conducive of growth in the organizations and increase in profitability and efficiency. HRD looks after services such as human resource administration, employee benefits administration, risk management service, payroll and tax administration (Armstrong, 2009).

## 5. The HR Manager

The Economist Intelligence Unit, Oracle and IBM conducted a global survey in May 2012 on 235 executives which confirmed that the potential negative impact of certain HR issues expected to occur in the near future had chief executives very concerned. A significant proportion of CEOs polled believe their head of HR would be able to help the company overcome these challenges.

Though HRM is agreed to function efficiently within its own domain, its commercial take on the overall business remains hazy. This is evidence that HR heads have yet not managed to completely transition from an administrative format to a strategic format despite the vital need for HR professionals to

contribute in the people dimension of corporate strategy. While 37% of the CEOs believe that HR people don't "understand the business well enough" since their heads of HR overly preoccupied with their seemingly less important HR responsibilities, 70% want their head of HR to be more aggressively involved in the formulation of their future corporate strategy.

These results clearly indicate that the top executives wish to incorporate their HR managers into mainstream business which means that HRD must employ HR specialists and managers from a business background. HR professionals could very well become the driving force for business strategy and organizational effectiveness and add value to the business by:
Ensuring administrative support services are provided.
• Helping implement business systems and practices by.
• Evaluating their performance against qualitative, quantitative and financial standards.

## 6. Human Resource Practices

The HRM practices adopted and undertaken by multinational companies (MNCs) have long been an object of scrutiny, attracting interests from various groups. Initial years into the research, ideas revolved around a footloose group of firms as the backdrop, pursuing global agenda of cost minimization and unconstrained by local contexts (Fröbel et al. 1980). After considerable research into HR practices it was established that institutional contexts like the MNC's countries of origin and the environments of the countries in which they operated were both deeply influential (Ferner and Quintanilla 2002). However, recent research has reverted back to the idea of global influences, debating that a national level framework fails to encompass the broader ideas and forces at play. They argue that firms in an attempt to maintain global standard may adopt common practices (Pudelko and Harzing 2007).

Irfan Ullah, 2013 in his study discusses the positive effects on and the statistically significant relationship of HR practices (i.e., training and development, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, compensation and rewards, and employee resources towards managerial and employee support and training.

Over time various types of HRM practices have been identified in different sectors, namely, employment security, Selective hiring, Self-managed teams/team working, High compensation contingent on organizational performance, Extensive training, Reduction in status difference, Sharing information, Careful recruitment and selection. Other major HRM

participation) with organizational effectiveness. It is observed that the effects of HR practices on organizational effectiveness yield positive results when an integrated approach is extensively used on it. Jyothi & Venkatesh, 2006 argue that once the expectations of internal customers regarding HR practices (i.e., selection, recruitment, promotion, compensation, benefits, and training of employees) are met, attitude and dedication of employees see a boost. This satisfaction contributes to employee retention by reducing turnover rate. This boosts the goodwill of the company and gives way to a constructive circle that helps the company draw talent (Jyothi & Venkatesh, 2006).

Motivation encourages workers, giving them incentive to deploy their abilities. This brings forth the skills and competencies possessed by workers. When given an opportunity, these abilities can be tapped and the resulting commitment can be put into practice (Edwards et al. 2013).

HR managers have a wide range to choose from when drafting a firm's HR policy. They have to weigh their options and reach a consensus that will meet basic requirements while contributing to competitive objectives. There may be many factors and contexts that influence and shape a firm's policy. So while a universal best practice exists, firms vary considerably in their HRM practices. Hence it may be concluded that HR managers perform a more active role than they are given credit for (Edwards et al., 2013).

Khan et al. (2013) draw from the categories of HR practices identified in traditional literature (i.e., Staffing, training, evaluation and compensation) and study the effects of integrated HR practices (selection, training, compensation and evaluation) instead of focusing on individual HR practices.

HRM makes available more effective resources in terms of trained, skilled and eager employees and boosts the value added chain. Khan et al. (2013) talk about the way HRM factors like employee training and employee support advantageously activate SCM in four dimensions, achieving a significant competitive advantage. The four dimensions here being: value added, rareness, imitation cost barrier and organizational structure. The discussion is conclusive of the fact that a greater competitive advantage may be achieved by deploying more practices include extensive remuneration systems, Team working and flexible job design, Training and learning, Employee involvement and Performance appraisals with links to contingent reward systems (Pankaj Tiwari, 2012).

## 7. Factors Affecting HR Practices

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HR practices are affected, influenced and shaped by various internal as well as external factors. Internal factors include Business Strategy, Human Resource Strategy, Organisations Size, Organisational Structure, Top Management, Line Management, History, Tradition and past practices and Power and Politics. While on the other hand external factors are those whose influence on firms cannot by controlled or altered to the firms' liking in the short run, such as: Economic changes, Technological Changes, National Culture, Industry/Sector Characteristics, Legislations /Regulations, Actions of Competitors, Action of Unions and Globalization (Pankaj Tiwari, 2012).

## 8. Conclusions

It is a universally acknowledged idea that when people and HRM unite, they contribute to the success and growth of a company (Stein, 2007). Human Resource Management is a modern time nomenclature for what is now the evolved form of personnel management, also known as people management. Human resource management involves recruiting the right employees into the right jobs, training and development of the hired personnel, motivating employees, re-engineering the business processes and the organizational structure, aiding companies deal with fast changing environment and engaging and retaining quality employees. It is of vital importance that human resource policies and programs are integrated into the organization's overall strategy so that individual employees' and organizations' goals are in tandem with each other.

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HRM is continuously looking at transitioning its role from that of a functional to a strategic partner. This has paved way for Strategic Human Resource Management System or SHRM that adds humongous value to firm performance.

HRM has a pejorative side to it as well. Human resource management is a time and money consuming process. If the Human Resource Department is removed from an organization's structural framework a large sum of money can be saved by the company. In case of a small business the costs incurred by the HRD setup may not be justified but in case of a large business firm consisting of hundreds of employees, the resources spent on HR are justified as then the managers can delegate the HR processes like recruitment and selection to the HRD and focus on their daily tasks.

The literature gives us a wide range of HR practices that can be consolidated as follows : employment security, Selective hiring, Self-managed teams/team working, High compensation contingent on organizational performance, Extensive training, Reduction in status difference, Sharing information, Careful recruitment and selection, extensive remuneration systems, Team working and flexible job design, Training and learning and Performance appraisals. These practices are affected by various internal as well as external factors but recent research shows that despite all these, universal global factors are what are majorly instrumental in shaping HR practices.

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