



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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## CHANGING SCENARIO OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: FACTS AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*Change is the only unchanged law of the green planet which sometimes offers fascinating opportunities for growth and also poses threats to be triumphed over. In congruence with the changes in the global arena, HRM departments have gained more prominence and become strategic players in the organization. Today, the new HRM requires being strategic partner in the organization by aligning all the HR functions with the mission, vision, culture and strategies of the organization. The role of the HRM for the 21st century is viewed as strategically significant in business strategy implementation by supporting and developing the cultural and technical capabilities of the work force required for the growth of the organization. All around fast track changes in the era of Globalization has posed a heap of challenges to HR professionals around the globe which are rather seen as opportunities for further growth and development in the Human Resource Management only if they are handled scientifically and triumphed over. Fascinatingly, it seems that Human Resource Management has become now, 'Management of Challenges' that demand adequate think over and actions. Currently, HR strategies should necessarily incorporate burning issues unique to 21<sup>st</sup> century like Talent Management, growing numbers of women and minority ethnic workers, management of Cross-Cultural Dynamics, growing need for worker's moral education, balance work life management and advent of robots and machines at work place so on and so forth. The present paper makes an effort to provide an overview of Human Resource Management. Moreover, it also makes an attempt to summarise some current challenges faced by HRM under changed environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

### KEYWORDS

Employer Brand Management; Leading Innovation; Human Resource Management; Talent Management and Workers-Loathsome.

### BACKGROUND OF DISCUSSION

Change is the only unchanged law of the green planet- Earth that poses both, challenges and more fascinatingly opportunities for development to a higher level than ever before when challenges are triumphed over. Changes are no exception and universal phenomenon to man, earth, animals, societies, institutions and technology etc. In fact, managing changes are seen as the inevitable task of every organization whether business, service, social or political organizations and so on and organization confirm its survival only through Change Leaders in the face of rapid structural changes and Globalization. In the context of Human Resource Management, the fact that rapid economic, legal, social, attitudinal and technological changes are posing totally new problems making current strategies proved inadequate, necessitate through understanding of emerging challenges in Human Resource Management. Anticipating possible changes and new requirements in Human Resource Management and making prior preparations are always better strategy than waiting for the changes to catch a organization unaware, or remaining in complacency or involving in what is termed as 'fire fighting'. Undoubtedly, the roles and responsibilities of Personnel Manager are becoming more dynamic, urgent and complex for a simple reason that it undergoes systematic changes to meet the present and future requirements as the approaches or strategies that worked well in the past lost functionality in the present and present operationally effective strategies may need adequate realignment to cope with future needs. In addition, in order to understand the emerging challenges in the Human Resources Management, personnel manager have to scientifically survey, understand, analyse and predict changes in the current sub-environments of the total environment within which an organization operate.

Since ever the evolution of HRM function and department (in 1920s), there have been considerable changes in both theory and practice of HRM. Managing people, the human participants in organisations are becoming more important today than other sources of competitive success like materials, machines, economies of scale and technology, etc. Experts today believe that organizations can gain competitive advantage by their valuable, rare and inimitable internal resources. It is now accepted that high qualified employees in the organization and the way how they are managed is very important to gain competitive advantage. However, the key challenge emerging today is that HRM must change as the business environment and the world in which it operates changes with respect to technology, globalization and dynamics of labour market. Environmental factors such as uncertainty, technological innovation and demographic changes also continuously affect human resource strategy. Driven by a number of significant internal and external environmental factors, HRM has progressed from a largely maintenance function to the source of sustained competitive advantage for organizations operating in a global economy (Ferris et al., 1999: 385). HRM managers have moved from handling simple personnel issues to making a strategic contribution to the future directions and development of the organization. With the evolution of HRM function from traditional to strategic, its roles and importance has gained more attention. This strategic approach to HRM has led this function to be involved in strategic planning and decision making processes by coordinating all human functions for employees. Aligning the strategies of the organization with the HR functions has become the essential part of gaining competitive advantage. The need for managing the employees strategically in the 21st century also requires the management and the organization structure to be more flexible. The work system in organisations has therefore, started to change with autonomous work groups with high qualified workforces, outsourcing some of the operational HR functions, downsizing, delayering, employee participation to the decision systems, high wages for the high qualified human resources and so on. So, in the arena of Human Resources Management the practitioners should be futuristic, visionary and a change leader.

### OBJECTIVES OF PAPER

This paper endeavour to:

1. Discuss general outlines on HRM.
2. Identify emerging facts and challenges in HRM.

## DISCUSSION

One has to admit for sure that, the current roles and responsibilities of HR professional are changing from a less administrative role to more of a strategic role whereby, they are to prove of their effectiveness and presence. HR professional must have to feel and understand international business practices and promote cultural diversity at work place. Now, they have to assimilate the core business of the organization in becoming partners with line managers. They are to prove that their initiatives and programs are result-oriented, providing specific measurable results in terms of business competitiveness that contribute positively to the bottom-line of the organization. Time has deep matured for HR personnel to restructure their attitude, strategies and practices towards men, machines, technology, organization and general public if, Human Resource Management has to book for its continued survival and significance in the realm of rapid changing environment of 21<sup>st</sup> century. All around fast track changes in the era of Globalization has posed a heap of challenges to HR professionals around the globe which are rather seen as opportunities for further growth and development in the Human Resource Management only if they are handled scientifically and triumphed over. Fascinatingly, it seems that Human Resource Management has become now, '*Management of Challenges*' that demand adequate think over and actions. Current challenges and facts that demand well preparedness and changes in the strategies of Human Resource Management are thrash out under following broad dimensions.

- A. TALENT MANAGEMENT:** The theory of '*survival of the fittest*' set a direct example in the Human Resource Management as focus of today's HR Manager is on strategic personnel attraction, retention and talents development of human resources otherwise, may find themselves in dire consequences, as their competitors may be outplaying them in the strategic employment of their human resource which is the very core of an organization's strength. The success of any organizations is equally proportional to the degree talents of human resources are managed as diverse body of talent bring innovative ideas and respond to business opportunities more rapidly and creatively. Infact, losing one talented workers to competitor may likely to bounce back in a form of potential threat to an organization.
- B. GROWING NUMBERS OF WOMEN AND MINORITY ETHNIC WORKERS:** Growing numbers of women and ethnic minorities in the total workforce is the outcome of various legislations pertaining to women and minority groups. Enactment of various labor laws, Government resolutions and mandate around the world keeping special reservations for women and minority ethnic groups in the field of employment have been consistently reshaping the labor mix and structure of organizations. This change has made HR manager to necessarily understand, accommodate and tackling special problems arising out of it at present which invite pronto and adequate realignment of HR strategies. Growing rape cases, physical assault of women workers and indiscriminate treatments of minority ethnic workers by overriding group at workplace may be offshoots of these changes which may get up manger's nose from time to time.
- C. HANDLING PROBLEM OF LOW BIRTH RATE:** In developed countries wherein birth rate is on decline which signal declining numbers of workforce is of paramount issue to be addressed through Personnel managers at present. It is understood in two ways firstly, shortages of baby boomers' workforce and secondly, growing numbers of older workforce in the organizations. In this turmoil, HR personnel are to focus more on older but knowledge workers through developing new strategy and outlook so that, they are attracted and retained in gaining significant competitive advantages. It may so happen that HR personnel are to advocate on adopting late retirement policy and recruitment of retired workers in different capacities owing to ever declining numbers of workforces especially in the context of developed nations.
- D. EMPLOYER BRAND MANAGEMENT:** Today, in the most companies where still workers are perceived as a mere commodity practicing quick replacement, relocation and termination of employees resulting into an anguish feeling of demoralization, progressive disengagement and lost of motivation of employees at work place have a profound and detrimental impact over employee's productivity. Moreover, increasing rate of employee's attrition affect the whole company's productivity for the long term. This is the reason that justifies the progressive adoption of Employer Branding Practices. Infact, global organizations under the leadership of HR personnels should develop Employer Brand Management practices. It is promoted through generating multicultural workplaces where an employee can take pride in and have sense of belonging to his organization where their aspirations and wishes are considered, respected and recognized.
- E. MANAGEMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL DYNAMICS:** Multi-cultural workforce congregations have become today's workplace realities. In the era of Globalization, there has been rapid mobility of labor across the world posing a new challenge to HR practitioner. Workplaces have increasingly symbolized multi-cultural villages, resulting in a growing need for cross-cultural intelligence. At present, in multinational business houses, the composition of labor has taken a new shape in the form of workers committed to organizational goals from different countries and backgrounds which has necessitated HR practitioner to have knowledge over cultures, languages and aspirations of varied workforce. In addition, this phenomenal change in the labor composition has also made managers to understand even business practices of the countries from where workers hailed from. Now, managers have to develop and manage an international workforce, maintain written and unwritten corporate polices for transportability to other cultures and keep top management informed of the costs of not paying attention to this transnational issues. The future competitiveness of corporations will depend on their ability to attract and manage diverse talents effectively. Cross-cultural training will give managers on international assignments the cultural understanding essential to accomplish their tasks. Cross-cultural differences are the cause of failed negotiations and interactions, resulting in losses to the firms. The strategic role of HRM in strengthening and sustaining corporate growth has assumed paramount significance, the world over. Fascinatingly, HR managers will either have to learn new languages or else they will certainly have to recruit foreign speakers for foreign workers in order to knock down barriers in communication. HR managers must be familiar with and understand other cultural norms to promote organization diversity in and around the organization because an organization that recognizes and promotes cultural diversity will only attract and retain a strong client base. Now, HR professionals have the additional responsible to provide cultural sensitivity training for the employees of their organizations. Therefore, HR manager are to be empowered and enlighten to become influential leader who could homogenize those differences mushrooming from workforce diversity so that unity of action is assured and organizational vision is achieved.
- F. TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES AND NEGOTIATION:** As a result of technological revolution over the years, rapid growth in size and complexities of organizations has been witnessed due to automation, computerization and mechanization. HR personnel has got lot to think, analyse and address the impact of techno-changes on personnel recruitment, selection, job analysis, job evaluation, compensation plans, appraisal systems and task structuring. It seems that fast track changes in technology and rapid innovation has increased workloads as well as responsibilities of Personnel Managers e.g., rapid changes in technology has necessitated rapid need of training and retraining of workforces under the leadership of Personnel Managers. Moreover, under rapid techno-changes situation, HR personnel has to develop and advocate a new strategies in making sure that, workforce have zero resistance to rapid technological changes and productivity of the workforce is not affected.
- G. ECONOMIC CHANGES AND NEGOTIATION:** The economy of 21<sup>st</sup> century exhibit myriad of features like, acute scarcity of raw materials, power and fuels with spiralling inflation, growing momentum in consumerism, ever decreasing purchasing power of money, ever increasing aspirations of workers for higher wages and other material benefits and import of foreign technology negatively affecting balance of payment status and suppression on growth in indigenous technology. The phenomenal economic changes is responsible for escalation in unit cost of production which is likely to increase in coming days than what is it today arouse keen interest of HR managers to utilize the human resources in judicious combination with other physical resources, particularly when the human factor is singularly potent in making the other inputs work realizing the fact that, at the end of all the technological innovations, the factors that make or mar productivity shall be the human factors which assumes strategic position in any range of productivity development program.

- H. LEGAL CHANGES AND NEGOTIATION:** Fast track changes in the compositions of work force in terms of their education, social background, expectation, attitude and value orientations have been making governments to enact plethora of labour laws and legislations to foster healthy industrial relation and better labour welfare. Now, HR personnel are to very cautiously handle every grievance with deep focus that workers enjoy every possible provisions and facilities conferred through myriad of labour policies and laws or else everyone get FIR, RTI or other forms of legal suits from workers whose eyes of mind have wide opened through education in one way or other. It is now very true that responsibility of HR personnel has become more sensitive and delicate and needs of hour is project and fully prepare to face any music off possible legal blows from conscious workforces apart from being ensuring complete implementation of labour welfare and workers' rights packages.
- I. LEADING INNOVATION:** Innovation is widely recognized as an important change process that can sustain organizational development in increasingly dynamic business environments. The prime role for innovation is to enable the organization to renew itself in critical competitive areas to ensure continued success for survival. Radical innovation is only made possible through the invention of new ideas, systems, packages and products. A recognized feature of many markets is the different propensity of firms to innovate within their business. A prime focus therefore appears to be on the human resources of the firm in acting as focal agents for change or the initiator of innovation within the organization. The competency of HR professionals may be a key success factor in developing innovative preparedness which creates receptivity to new ideas, recognize opportunities and assemble resources to create and deliver competitive solutions. Infact, HR managers have to initiate and lead innovations through his workforces to gain utmost competitive advantages in the current century. These may include - Crafting creative business strategies, Organizational restructuring, Creating social networks, Invoking new challenges, Enabling companies to go global leading to superior performance, Creating knowledge work force, etc.
- J. INTEGRATION OF HRM WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY:** Integration refers to the involvement of HRM in the formulation and implementation of organizational strategies and the alignment of HRM with the strategic needs of an organization. It is desirable to integrate human resources management and business for some reasons. Firstly, integration provides a broader range of solutions for solving complex organizational problems. Secondly, integration ensures that human, financial and technological resources are given consideration in setting goals and assessing implementation capabilities. Thirdly, through integration organizations must explicitly consider the individuals who comprise them and must implement policies. Finally, reciprocity in integrating human resources and strategic concerns limits the subordination of strategic considerations to human resources preferences and the neglect of human resources as a vital source of organizational competence and competitive advantage. In 21<sup>st</sup> century, degree of integration between HRM and organizational strategies undoubtedly determine the level of organizational success and failure. However, the one who is responsible to initiate integration is no other than HR manager himself.
- K. LOW LEVEL WORKS- FEW WORKERS SITUATION:** In the contemporary situation, most of the workers are reasonably literate. They have knowledge over industrial laws & labor legislations and keep on updating of latest trends and developments in this direction. The handy tools of electronic gadgets and mass media have been a perennial source of their information. Excruciatingly, they are more focused on the benefits or their rights than their roles and responsibilities. The employees are also looking for flexible work schedules, comfortable working conditions and greater autonomy, opportunities for training and development, and performance-related financial incentives. In addition, they are more conscious about their self-dignity, self-esteem and self-egos which snowballed into more intensive expectations and demands. They also become more depended on technology and prefer white-colored job that closely match up with their vocational and academic qualifications. Under this ferment condition, it may so happen that, a few workers offer to work at lowest level of the organization who might mostly work under dusty, dirty, putrid, sunny, rainy or risky conditions. Therefore, organization might experience dearth of manpower at lowest level of management which may be termed as '*Worker Loathsome*'<sup>1</sup> in the management literature. Now, it is the HR manager who has to redesign personnel policies and practices pertaining to recruitment, selection, training, motivation and determination of employees' remuneration etc in the light of this new feature especially experienced in developed economies.
- L. WORKERS AND MORAL EDUCATION:** Technology is catalyst of information generation. It may have substantive impacts on the behavior of the workers at work place both, constructive and destructive. At this age of information superhighways and high technologies, most of the workers have mobile phones and get access to internet or other means. They may use mobile porn or pornography over internet which may result into chasing, molestation, and even rape and murder of female workers at work place. Infact, at present, worker demand more for leisure and entertainment than get focused on increasing their working capacity and organizational commitment. To this menace, HR manager may put restriction on carrying mobile phones or other electronic mass media by workers at workplace. In addition, a continuous monitoring mechanism has to be evolved for office staffs who make use of computers and internet so that, it is used for the noble cause of the organization only. On the top of these, timely moral education program for workers is felt of paramount important at present to make sure that workers' behaviours is not only economically productive but, also ethically and socially.
- M. ADVENT OF ROBOTS AND MACHINES:** The supremacy of Man in the Earth is one of the well accepted 'Truths'. Man nearly takes control of both, animate and inanimate world. However, it seems like the reign of Robots and Machines has set in motion replacing men at work. Organizational activities like production planning, control, marketing, financial analysis and so on are managed through myriad of numerically controlled précised machine tools and computers replacing the traditional type of human operations. Surprisingly, lifeless robots are entering industry in a big way which would increase production but don't have emotion or common sense or accountability as man do. It poses questions like, what should be there share at work place and what type of work should be kept reserved for it etc? Horrendously, this situation has squeezed the roles and responsibilities of Human Resource Management which is of great and grave concern questioning on continuation of this important branch of management in this century.
- N. BALANCING WORK AND LIFE:** Competition and commitment for quality and speed at work place is becoming more intensive making life ever more stressful for workers. At this turmoil, organization to family life of workers approach deemed imperative so that equilibrium is established between work and life of the workers. In doing so, programs like childcare at or near the workplace, job sharing, care for sick children & employees, supervisors' training to respond to work and family needs of employees, flexible work scheduling, sick leave policies, variety of errands from dry cleaning, dropping children at schools, making dinner reservations, organizing cultural and sport activities and picnic have assumed great significance. In this century, HR managers should endeavor to make work place in such a way, it appear like homes of the workers. So, HR personnel have to make every possible attempt to coordinate work with the family affairs so that, healthy work-workers relationship is built and organization has not only highly paid employees but, also most happy workers.

## CONCLUSION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the workplace has changed in more ways than one could have ever imagined, resulting from the increase in technology, innovation and globalization and employees' education and expectation. In the era of liberalization, the competitive scenario in the business environment has changed a lot. The next decade is likely to bring even greater change, impacting all facets of the workplace which may demand major changes in the structure of HR department and qualifications of HR managers. The management of Human Resources has now assumed strategic importance in the achievement of organizational growth and excellence. As globalization advances and we move into the information age, organizations need to adapt to the changes in technology and the changing issues in management of people. In order to respond to the demands of globalization, HR managers will require new skills and competencies relating to language & culture and technology capabilities to facilitate overseas communication, methods to measure and quantify effectiveness and evaluate strategies and return on investment. Evidently, these new skills and competencies will result in an emerging new roles for HR managers, requiring them to be strategic business partner and supportive of the overall corporate strategy. Personnel functions are going to be all-pervasive and touch upon all levels of human interaction such as at the shop floor level, union management level and within and between groups. Wherever people work together for a

<sup>1</sup> Workers' tendency of Reluctance to work at lowest level of management in various capacities as sweeper, gardener, gatekeeper, luggage carrier etc. A new innovation made by the authors.



common goal, the personnel people will have to play a role in cementing human relationships. The personnel people in discharging their functions may have to do a 'tight rope walking', because they have to convince their top bosses about the need for changeover of the organizational culture from pyramidal to one of participation. This in the short run appears to erode their privilege to manage, and hence they may not be hostile to the idea. Sometimes, the Personnel Managers may have to incur their wrath unless the situations are handled wisely.

Human Resource Management has evolved considerably over the past century, and experienced a major transformation in form and function primarily within the past two decades. Driven by a number of significant internal and external environmental forces, HRM has progressed from a largely maintenance function, with little if any bottom line impact, to what many scholars and practitioners today regard as the source of sustained competitive advantage for organizations operating in a global economy. The traditional functions of HRM now need to be strategically directed towards developing and sustaining organizational capabilities, through activities that overlap with traditional business functions such as finance, marketing, and non-traditional activities, such as knowledge management. The role of the Human Resource Manager is evolving with the change in competitive market environment and the realization that Human Resource Management must play a more strategic role in the success of an organization. With the increase in competition, locally or globally, organizations must become more adaptable, resilient, agile, and customer-focused to succeed. And within this change in environment, the HR professional has to evolve to become a strategic partner, an employee sponsor or advocate, and a change mentor within the organization. In order to succeed, HR must be a business driven function with a thorough understanding of the organization's big picture and be able to influence key decisions and policies. HRM has the responsibility to maximize efficiency and profit, but in the emerging scenario, the role of HR manager is changing rapidly due to changes in government policies, unions, labour legislations and technology. The trends have taken place in the organization, human resource planning, job design, motivation, recruitment and skill development and employee relations. In general, the focus of today's HR Manager is on strategic personnel retention and talents development. HR professionals will be coaches, counselors, mentors, and succession planners to help motivate organization's members and their loyalty. The HR manager should also promote and fight for values, ethics, beliefs, and spirituality within their organizations, especially in the management of workplace diversity. The new human resources management for the 21st century should play a strategic role by contributing the strategy formulation process and being a strategic partner during the implementation of these strategies. Strategic human resources management has gained more importance for the organizations in recent years because human resources are seen as the most valuable assets of the organizations for gaining competitive advantage. The HR practices should be designed consistent with the strategies of the organization taking into consideration the essential HR needs. In parallel with these, organizations can be able to be more flexible, flat and agile in order to struggle with the changes in the competitive environment by gaining competitive advantage with their HR assets. HR professionals need to play a lead role in organizations by encouraging individuals to exercise more initiative, autonomy and accountability by providing tools and techniques that improve their effectiveness and by enabling the acquisition of critical competencies through continuous learning opportunities. Human resources departments have started to play a strategic role in the organizations and all HR functions are integrated with the mission, vision and strategies of the organizations. The new HRM perspective for the 21st century requires HRM to be strategic partners of the organization that coordinates all functions and supporting the strategies by attracting and retaining the essential qualified employees. These challenges can be faced by HRM effectively, if proper strategies are implemented. As globalization advances and we move into the information age, organizations will have to adapt to the changes in technology and the changing issues in management of people. Hence, the role of HRM will be more significant in future due to the changed business scenario.

Thus, to meet various challenges unique to 21<sup>st</sup> century, redesigning strategies of Human Resource Management is felt of utmost urgency to fit into 'Changed Business Environment' in order to retain its supremacy into the deep future.

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