

New Perspectives on the Role of Human Resource Professionals

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Abstract— Human resource management and development has been witnessing changes which have far-reaching implications on the way people are hired, managed and serviced. The traditional role of just sourcing personnel, payroll management, and welfare has now been transformed to more complex role playing in a competitive globalized world. This paper examines the emerging roles performed by human resource professionals in such a dynamic environment where organizational growth is a critical game changer.

Keywords— Emerging roles, Human resource management, Organizational change

1. Evolving Human Resource Scenario

Human Resources Management (HRM), and Human Resource Development (HRD) approaches has been seizing the attention of professionals, especially in the new millennium.

Widespread changes in business environments, employee-management relationships, emergence of generational and cultural diversity, have given an interesting twist to management of human resources within organizations in India.

This has fostered a new thinking whereby managements are cautiously treading on sensitive issues carrying their workers with them. Humanization of work environment in countries like Japan, quality of work life movement in countries like United States, and the quality circles approach in India itself has initiated action to attain better organizational commitment among the work force.

The human resources approach is in consistency with these movements. Changes in business environment have substantially affected the approach to manpower. Technological changes are also prominent and automation of office operations, quick communication systems, electronic revolution, and such other new developments have revolutionized the vital areas of business. Operational efficiency or manpower must cope with such a revolutionary change in the technology which has necessitated a new approach to manpower.

Political philosophy has also undergone substantial change not only in India, but elsewhere in the world, which has necessitated a renewal in approach to human side of enterprise. Globalization of business is another important aspect of change which takes place in the business environment of today, necessitating a human resources approach to manpower. Gone are the days when Indian firms operated and competed abroad, for now they have to compete with trans nationals in India itself.

Business philosophy, skills, expertise, efficiency and particularly global corporate citizenship philosophy fostered by internationally successful firms necessitate Indian firms to deliberately update their perspective to suit the internationally emerging trends. Indian managers must also foster a human resources philosophy to guide their management practices in a global setting.

Large scale production, increasing effects of recession, technical and technological developments and soon have opened up new training needs for the people at work. Human resources development programmes have therefore; become the need of the hour. Government policy of importing technology has also necessitated introducing new facilities and avenues for training and development. Fresh initiatives and emphasis on research and development in the realm of industry also led to a new policy of human resources development to cope with the increasing demand for technically capable people.

Hence it is imperative to understand the emerging role of human resource professionals in order to foster greater efficiency and growth.

2. Review of Literature

Sathyarayanan (2015) attempted to analyze the changing dimensions of human resource management in the present era. There has been drastically change in the dimensions of human resource management from the personnel management to strategic human resource management. The roles and responsibilities of human resource managers are changing since the modern business facing the pressures of globalization. Global staffing and management of a workforce diverse in culture and language skills and dispersed in different nations are the

key goals of global human resources. Globalization, as it has emerged in the current century, it also presented distinctive HRM challenges to businesses. It also evidenced that global business is characterized by the free flow of human and financial resources. These developments are opening up new markets in a way that was never witnessed before. This accentuates the need to manage HR effectively to gain competitive advantage in the global market place.

Wai Mei & Indradevi (2014) compared the ability level against the perceived importance of the human resource roles in the Malaysian government linked companies. HR professionals in the GLCs showed that there was a difference in the ability of the HR Roles that they played to the perceived important roles. There is a need to bridge this gap closer so that the HR professional is not just having a 'seat at the strategic table' but begin to contribute in a more visible manner. As such, the primary role of this relationship building is to create an employee-friendly environment which is committed to the success of the employee's well-being. It also found that the extent to which HR is perceived as a business strategic partner is contingent to the perceived value of this employee advocate role within the organization. The key element is to ensure that the employees receive a fair hearing.

Inyang & Akaegbu (2014) explored the gamut of human resource management practices that must be entrenched in and to reposition the public service for higher performance. It further identified the role or responsibility and bench-skills and knowledge of the HR professional that will enhance optimum service delivery in the sector. This study found that the reforms of the public service were often structural in nature and paid little attention to the people-factor and people-management issues. HR professionals were not engaged to handle people as strategic resources, rather personnel administrators who lack professional expertise and competence were appointed to provide transactional and administrative support in the public service. This does not enhance strategic goal attainment and the competitive position of the public enterprises. The study recommended a shift in paradigm and the engagement of HR professionals who have the expertise to design and implement human resources management strategies that can drive service delivery and enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

Jain (2014) attempted to study the impact of technology on human resource practices. This study also revealed that the improved means of communication, technological advancements, computer and internet have brought the horizons closer and changed the functioning of the business world in a great way. Various HR functions can be effectively managed through the use of computers and IT tools, such as, the functions of recruitment, employee selection, employee management and workforce planning is managed through internet, web portals, video conferencing, and data warehouse. IT helps to train

employees, maintenance and performance evaluation, feedback, employee turnover, tardiness and absenteeism analysis, management and planning functions, succession planning through internet, intranet, and employee portals and so on.

Chambers (2013) explored the issues encountered by international organizations and global HR management practitioners within the existing literature. Globalization becomes a business strategy as organizations compete for consumers across borders. Thus, globalization becomes a deliverable for HR practitioners to add value by transforming and integrating HR throughout the organization as a core business process. This study revealed a corporation's growth strategy influences its decisions regarding both mergers and decisions to enter foreign markets and compete for international market share. However, entering into culturally diverse countries is the first hurdle these organizations must overcome. In summary, the research reflected that it then becomes vital for HR practitioners to transform HR into global core business processes that shape themselves around the local host country practices and laws and further shares it to accommodate the values held by that host country's potential employees and customers.

Rosman et al. (2013) evaluated the role of HR department in private healthcare sector in Pakistan and analyzed the factors affecting the role of HR department. Results presented that HR department plays the role of an administrative expert in the company. The major internal factors include workload, top management interference, management style and organizational culture which negatively affect motivation, performance and morale of the employees. This study revealed that these internal factors affect HR policies and practices and have an impact on quality and variety of employees that can be attracted and retained. Similarly, the external factors that have a direct or indirect impact on HR include economic environment, labour market condition, trade unions, demographic trends and workforce diversity, technology and legal regulations. It was concluded that all these external factors create difficulties for HR department to attract and retain the desired workforce.

Raghavi & Gopinathan (2013) revealed that human capital is the greatest asset of any organization and the organization makes an obvious effort in getting people with different background, skills and abilities to work toward the goal or purpose of the organization. Diversity of experiences, cultures, opinions, physical attributes and group identities are highly valued and appreciated as it provides a richness without which the organization could neither be faithful to its values nor successfully achieve its goals. It has long been argued that equality of opportunity for these diverse set of employees brings occupational benefits and that it is in the employers' interest to implement policy to promote equality of opportunity. It was concluded that elevating the HR's role is for it to

become the change agent to build an equal opportunity culture in the organization. This study also proposed a framework intended to depict the equal opportunity practices yield strategic value to the organization and that the HR plays a dynamic role in implementing it.

Abbott et al. (2013) discussed the extent to which human under-development in South Africa and the consequent societal problems of poverty and inequality are addressed by the work of HR practitioners. Findings of the study revealed that societal problems caused by human under-development impact tremendously on the daily work of HR practitioners. Many HR practitioners do play an employee advocate role within the workplace but do not see this role as extending further to any degree. This can provide HR practitioners with the opportunity to take a lead in integrating their workplace with the society around them and in so doing, provide meaningful programmes to improve the human capital value chain both within and outside their organisations. It was concluded that the employee advocate role will not be easy, but it could be one of the most meaningful steps for any HR practitioner to take.

Long (2013) examined the role of human resource (HR) professionals as change agents and the competencies they need to possess in order to execute this role. HR professionals as change agents have the responsibility to ease the effect changes in the organization and protect employees against the side effects of the inevitable changes. Sometimes, the change helps to introduce a significant increase of the performance and the company can boost the sales and production without additional costs. This study also revealed that several vital competencies that are reviewed in this paper including effective relationship, value chain knowledge, gain and profit sharing work, performance management and human resource development skills. Based on the finding in the study, all these competencies are expected to relate with the role of change agent. HR professionals for their inability to function as change agents will inevitably create a barrier against them from becoming a well-integrated strategic partner.

Bakuwa (2013) specifically explored the key factors that significantly influence the performance of the employee advocate role by HR professionals in a developing country context – Malawi. Employees are motivated to contribute towards the achievement of organizational objectives when they hold the perception that management is committed to good people management and strive to create an open and comfortable work environment. Such an environment, among other things, provides an opportunity for employees to participate in meetings and discuss matters that concern them and their workplace. It is part of the HR professionals' employee advocate role to ensure that employees' concerns and needs are heard and understood by management in their respective organizations. It was concluded that HR professionals, as employee advocates,

should therefore endeavour to create a work environment that enhances the motivation of employees by organizing regular staff meetings. It was suggested that the results of this study appear to add value by providing empirical evidence to the effect that organization of regular staff meetings to listen to the views and concerns of employees is fundamental to the enhancement of the HR professionals' employee advocate role in developing countries.

Quartey (2013) examined the implications of human resource outsourcing for human resource practitioners work behaviours in the mobile telecommunication industry in Ghana. The assumptions of the resource-based theory served as a lens for providing an understanding into the implications of human resource outsourcing for human resource practitioners work behaviours. The results from the descriptive analysis indicated that human resource management functions such as recruitment, employee training, employee health and safety management and human resource information system and activities such as payroll administration and social security were more likely to be outsourced. The results further showed that human resource outsourcing activities had insignificant effect on human resource practitioners' work behaviours such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intentions. It was highly recommended that managements in the mobile telecommunication industry must reduce their overdependence on financial rewards and rather implement job enrichment and enlargement strategies in making their employees committed, satisfied and stay.

Singh & Raghuvanshi (2013) attempted to analyse the changing dimensions of human resource management in the present era right from its evolution. There has been drastically change in the dimensions of human resource management from the personnel management to e-human resource management and strategic human resource management. This study revealed that the increased administrative burden increased the need to fulfil a rising number of legislative needs, though the overall functional emphasis moved from employee administration to employee development and involvement in organization. This study explored issues not only in the perspective of the individual employee and their employer, but in circumstance of the wider workplace, the labour market and economic powers shaping the type of work, technological improvement, employment rules and societal trends. It was concluded that changing dimensions of human resource management communicates all the pertinent information to its employees.

Chouhan & Srivastava (2013) as the HR profession has increasingly earned its seat at the strategic table and become a business partner, the need to develop the foundational competency has become more pronounced. Every well-managed firm should have well defined roles and list of competencies required to perform each role effectively for all HR jobs. IT Industry, being a knowledge-

based industry, a high intellectual capital lends competitive advantage to a firm. With a global explosion in market-opportunities in the IT sector, the shortage of manpower both in numbers and skills is a prime challenge for HR professionals. The related issues are varied indeed: recruitment of world-class workforce and their retention, compensation and career planning, technological obsolescence and employee turnover. Therefore, many IT companies in India are interested in knowing the present skill level of their employees so that training can be given to improve their performance. Competency mapping model helps in identification of training needs for HR professionals.

Singh & Dhawan (2013) expressed that HR professional must play special roles in dealing with these changes and must develop specific competencies to support these roles. HR managers will have to accommodate employees in their virtual work locations and find ways to manage corporate culture, socialization and employee orientation. In order to obtain and maintain a competent workforce, they must act as organizational performance experts and shape employees behaviour without face to face meetings. Because of continuous changing socio-economic, technological and political conditions, the human resource managers of the future shall have to face more problems in the management of labour. In summary, the human resource managers of today may find themselves obsolete in the future due to changes in environment if they do not update themselves some of the important challenges which might be faced by the managers in the management of people in business and industry.

Yusoff (2012) provided preliminary information needed to begin theoretical or framework development and to initiate more rigorous research on HR role. Human resource function is an important function contributing to the well-being of the organization, HR played the role of an administrative expert burdened with the responsibility to look after the day-to-day operational HR but today HR is moving towards a more strategic role whereby it plays a main role in deciding strategies for company together with other top level managers. The study showed that the HR executive can operate as administrative expert and change agent simultaneously. The study found that there is little evidence of the HR function playing roles as employee champions, strategic partners or change agents. This study was concluded that the low expectations by top management concerning the strategic contributions of the HR function seem to have contributed to the limited attention to people management and cultural change issues in the integration process.

Kramar & Steane (2012) explored trends in the role of human resources in general and the role of line managers in managing people. The findings indicated that managers expect HR will increasingly encompass responsibilities for developing human capital as a strategic imperative of business, as well as the traditional operational

executor/functional expert roles. The study indicated HRM will continue to evolve and that HR professionals will continue to work in partnership with senior managers, external providers and especially with line managers. It also revealed that in order to understand the future role of HRM it is necessary to take into account the context of the organization. Characteristics such as the nature of the industry, extent of unionization, sophistication of the existing approach to HR, local/multinational structures emerged as important influences. It was concluded that in large organizations the expert knowledge of HR and the provision of this advice to line managers is most likely to be undertaken by generalist, more junior staff, while involvement as a strategic partner and conflict removal about organizational strategy and direction would be undertaken by senior executives.

Sharma (2012) identified the role of HR professionals, organizational goals and HR systems and practices serve as basis from which the roles of HR practitioners are going to emerge. The roles might not be present in same proportion in all organizations but would vary depending on the organizational vision and objectives, sector, environment, competition and competencies required from HR professionals to proactively work on and provide solutions to strategic business issues facing the organization. The findings of the study revealed that HR need to partner with people, set personal career goals for them after understanding their capabilities and competencies, and finally developing strategies to achieve them. While individuals can be helped in managing their careers through self-assessment, mentoring and coaching, the organizations may implement succession oriented training programmes through HR professionals to enable their human capital to focus on career choices and accordingly work towards developing a succession planning.

Zins (2012) described how negotiation theory provides a roadmap for making an employment termination less awful for everyone involved. It has envisioned an HR manager driving a process that pushes employee, supervisor, senior manager, and attorney alike past their entrenched conclusions to the underlying data so that a better-informed and more productive conversation can take place about the employee's performance and an anticipated job action. It has likewise described how the HR manager can potentially get the parties past their divergent positions to map their more nuanced interests. In addition, an employee who perceives unfair treatment will become more entrenched in that view if the employer snubs him in this way. Hardened in this conclusion of unfair treatment, and deprived of an empathetic reception within the workplace, the employee may become likelier to pursue outside options, such as filing an administrative charge or a lawsuit.

Ofori et al. (2012) determined the perceptions of the HR function among professionals in Ghanaian organizations. The results from the study revealed that respondents ranked the recruitment of qualified personnel; training and

development; and the retention of qualified staff as the most important work process functions of HRM. It also revealed that the perceived relevance of the HR function is influenced by age, job position, being denied assistance, and being sidelined for recognition. The findings of the study revealed an emphasis on the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel, training and development, and performance appraisal as the key roles of HRM. The factors that influence the perception of the HRM functions include; age, job position, gender, being denied assistance, and being sidelined for recognition by the organization. It was suggested that it would be useful to examine the perceptions of the HRM functions within the various industries, or between private sector and the public sector institutions.

Waiganjo et al. (2012) examined the extent to which strategic human resource management influences firm performance from various critical perspectives. Rapid environmental changes, competition to provide innovative products and services, changing customer and investor demands and globalization have become the standard backdrop for firms. Sustained competitive advantage could be generated from a firm's human capital by designing strategic human resource management to diagnose a firm's strategic needs which is required to implement a competitive strategy and achieve operational goals. Effective human resource management strategy systematically organizes all individual human resource management measures to directly influence employee attitude and behaviour in a way that leads business to achieve its competitive strategy. Conclusively, the contribution that SHRM may make to an organization's performance and effectiveness is closely linked to the changes in different business environment including macro and micro contexts, thus the bundling of these practices with the competitive strategy of the firm.

Dorel & Bradic-Martinovic (2011) expressed that the HR management had undergone radical changes over the last fifty years, while technological development has enabled the transformation of many business activities. Small and medium enterprises managed to overcome the HR management tasks without specialized software, more or less successfully. Large enterprises, with numerous employees and complex structure, on the other hand are no longer able to do that. In the conclusion it is necessary to point out several trends that lead to further improvements. First of all, this study expected improvement in the field of dashboard type of view over data, so management of the company can access accurate information when they need it. Then, it also expected the improvement in the Intranet and Internet interface for self-service modules, as well as further development of e-learning, which is believed to become very popular among younger generations.

Paphavatana & Mohiuddin (2011) carried out with objective to provide with a holistic picture of what type of change is taking place in terms of HR now-a-days. This

study attempted to understand the phenomena as a whole through applying evolutionary perspective which would provide academics and practitioners with a direction to think when facing the complex changing perspectives. The findings of this work suggested that the whole change process corresponds to a variation cycle of the evolutionary process, which should eventually move to a selection cycle. The choice and success of these new structures and roles are dependent on factors such as corporate strategies, adequate knowledge or HR presence/absence of competition and finally suggest that success factors vary from environment to environment and this it is not possible to come up with a set of key success factors which would work across cultures and business environments.

Crouse et al. (2011) found that changing demographics is resulting in labour shortages that result in more emphasis on recruitment and retention. The findings was expressed in a slightly different way by our participants who found that managers were promoted quicker and needed more coaching and mentoring. Participants noted that another impact of changing demographics was the changing expectations of employees. In summary, the downturn in the economy had HRM implications in areas such as recruiting, training budgets and redesigning of positions. The trends are interrelated. It may be that the technology changes will be able to assist HRM practitioners to deal with the problems that arise from the economic downturn. On the other hand, a downturn in the economy may result in people working longer and more generational issues arising.

McGurk (2011) investigated the contribution of management and leadership development for middle managers. Management and leadership development played an important role in enabling strategic change through middle managers, but that greater contextualization is required to understand the precise nature of its effects and its limitations. The study differentiates between the MLD options of management development, leader development and leadership development and hypothesises a range of MLD outcomes across organizational types. It was found that when the machine bureaucracy divisionalizes, investment in line management training makes a significant contribution to organizational stability, while leader development is most effective in the customer-facing divisions of the business. It was concluded that this study also developed the academic literature by contextualizing changes to middle management role and explaining the contingent role of MLD in organizational change.

Alwis (2010) attempted to find out the back ground of the e-HR adoption in the Sri Lankan context and its impact on the role of the HR Professionals. Findings of the study revealed that if an organization is going to adopt this, first of all they must evaluate employee attitudes, organizational characteristics, culture and the way of collaborating those with HR and IT. Also this study informed that an

organization should identify the suitability of the select software through cost and benefit analysis, because it critically affects the post performance of the whole system. The adoption of e-HR by HR professional will make a significant change in their roles by making them strategic partners in business. It was concluded that the critical success factors for the implementation of e-HRM in the Sri Lankan context in order of importance are employee attitudes, organizational culture and characteristics, collaboration of HRM and IT, management commitment and individuals' IT skills.

Long & Ismail (2010) examined the various role of HR such as strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert and employee champion. This study also examined the potential barriers that hinder the HR professional from bring a strategic partner in an organization. The findings showed that the roles of an administrative expert and employee champion obtained highest score in this study. All HR roles are tested and are significantly related to firm performance. Furthermore, it is found that role of strategic partner and change agent contributes most to firm performance. This study also found that the main barrier that hinders HR professional to pay strategic role in an organization is they have no time to address both administrative and strategic issues.

Abdullah (2009) examined the challenges to the effective management of HR training and development activities in manufacturing firms in Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that the challenges faced by employers and organizations in the effective management of HR training and development varied from concerns about the lack of intellectual HR professional to coping with the demand for knowledge-workers and fostering learning and development in the workplace. As well as the major challenge presented by the lack of HRD professionals, HRD practitioners are currently being confronted with the challenge of coping with the demand for knowledge-workers, with issues relating to the hiring, training and retention of a skilled and competent workforce. The findings of this study implied that the process of developing knowledge workers towards achieving knowledge economy status is likely to be very challenging and to take a long time to achieve unless employers can surmount these challenges by developing and implementing contemporarily appropriate policies and procedures for HR management and development.

Du Plessis & Beaver (2008) examined the issues of adjustment, culture, remuneration, contracts and agreements in the deployment and return of nationals in multinational organisations. There are many aspects of managing human resources internationally that differ from domestic human resource management. International human resource management is much more complex than domestic based human resource management because there are wider issues to be aware of. Pay and conditions of employment are too important for employees to standardise

throughout multi-national companies, because there are many potential problems that could arise. It was concluded that the value added by employees in overseas assignments plays such a large part in the company's international success, human resource managers should always keep this in the forefront of their minds.

O'Riordan (2004) examined the extent to which a more strategic approach to HR is being implemented across the Irish civil service and to provide guidance to departments wishing to further progress this area. It also stressed that developing a strategic approach to HR increases staff motivation and commitment, which in turn leads to enhanced productivity. The results of the study revealed that strategic HR implies using HR policies and procedures to help achieve business objectives. In practice, this implies developing 'a high-commitment – high performance approach to the management of people. Furthermore it showed that, career development, appraisal, training and work-life balance which are the most important determinants of employee motivation and performance.

Chen & Popovich (2003) revealed that customer relationship management is a combination of people, processes and technology that seeks to understand a company's customers. It is an integrated approach to managing relationships is focusing on customer retention and relationship development. This study ensured that companies successfully implement CRM will reap the rewards in customer loyalty and long-run profitability. However, successful implementation is elusive to many companies, mostly because they do not understand that CRM requires company-wide, cross-functional, customer-focused business process re-engineering. Although a large portion of CRM is technology, viewing CRM as a technology-only solution is likely to fail. Managing a successful CRM implementation requires an integrated and balanced approach to technology, process and people.

Kayes (2002) outlined five sociological issues facing organizations in the global human resource development context. The decreasing influence of institutions throughout the world requires increased resources on learning at all levels of organizations. This study revealed that globalization promises to increase the spread of economic and rationalist values such as efficiency, replication and measurability. The emergence of global subcultures seeks to challenge the status of globalization as a dominant institutions organizing process. It was found that the ability of HRD professionals to respond to these changes will rely on their ability to adapt to these changing institutional structures. Adaptations to changes in global organizations include responses to the changing demographics and values of the workforce, increase professional specialization, better equipping of the workforce to learn independently of formal learning programs, learning in a team environment, greater sensitivity to diversity, and the engagement of the workforce in developmental or long-term learning programs.

3. Role Diversity

The following broad category of roles, performed by human resource professionals, has been identified based on review of literature:

- Administrative Role: Strategic partner, Cultural integrator in M&A, Talent management, Change agent, Administrative expert, Diversity management.
- Employee Advocate Role: Employee development, Gain and profit sharing strategies, Dispute resolution, Grievance redressal, Employee welfare, Work environment, Education & training, Career and succession planning.
- Operational Role: Efficient decision making, Mentoring, Counselling, Negotiator, Motivator, Communicator.
- Strategic Role: Performance development, Strategic planning, Downsizing, Work process redesign, Financial accountability, HR planning.
- Contingent Role: Adoption of new technology, Customer relationship management, Competition, Globalization, Leadership development.

However it may be mentioned that these roles are not final or permanent but would keep evolving and changing as the years roll by and technology transforms the traditional roles to virtual HRM.

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