

TRANSFORMING ROLE OF HRM: CHALLENGES, POLICIES AND PRACTICE IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

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Received: 21 Jun 2018

Accepted: 30 Jun 2018

Published: 07 Jul 2018

ABSTRACT

Human Resources Management (HRM) in organizations has a vital role to play and to maintain a competitive edge. To face the ever-increasing demand for Human Resources (HR) and the speed at which changes are taking place in terms of technology and practices. In the rapidly changing phase of transforming business background, globalization, diversity in the workforce, advancement in technology, changing business scenario, employee preferences etc. It's a challenge for the HRM to perform an important part and engage in best practices towards organizational and individual success. The role of HRM will be more significant in the changing times of business economy. This paper attempts is to explore the changing role of HRM and challenges associated with effective HR policies and practices from a current business scenario.

KEYWORDS: *HRM, Globalization, Workforce Diversity, Organisational Behaviour, Employee Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

From personnel management to HR business partner, the definition of HR and role has changed in the last two decades due to the rapid changes in the business scenario. The HR function has gone through radical and rapid changes due to the emergence of automation and technology, political and legal environment and influence of international economy, which has led to inclusion and diversity among global workforce and advancement in information technology. All these are posing challenges on HR experts to appeal to, maintain, develop and foster capable workforce through work engagement and employee flourishing. As organizations have realized human capital is the key to organisational growth and this has led to new areas in HR such as strategic partner, employee engagement, competency development and talent management. Employees always will built their opinion round a hale and hearty organization on the basis of work environment, beliefs and resourcefulness of the company which add value to the employee in his /her career progression and at the same time these reflect the organizations values and their approach towards employees well-being. The key to a successful organization is having highly motivated and engaged workforce. A good work life balance impacts the workforce and organization to enhance the longevity of the employees and productivity, as pay is always not a criterion for retaining employees.

TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

During the last two decades, HR function has evolved as an important function across sectors and India has

emerged as the powerhouse of the workforce especially in the IT sector. Diversity in work environment, cultures, millennial workforce and growing business have contributed to the significance of HRM in India. From a supporting function to a strategic role, HRs holds the key to the transformation of the organization and its human capital. The transformation has contributed significantly to the management of HRs and influences the framing of policies and practices towards long-term business objectives. The success of the organization in today global scenario depends on the HR Business partner, who acts as a bridge between the organization and the workforce. It's all about understanding the environment of the workplace, employee and the business need to support their performance and ensure they contribute to the success of the organizational effectiveness. It's how we look at it inter-related and inter-dependent. The early 1990's sowed the seed of change in the functioning of HR from the management perspective and they changed their outlook and perception towards employees and change their viewpoint. Talent pool became a vital aspect, so the HR functions to attract, develop and retain them. As organizations started to focus their vision and mission towards the employee, who contribute towards their success. The roles are also changing due to the change in the political scenario, government policies, labor legislation and important technology.

In the global scenario, the organization needs to focus and stress upon attracting and having better workforce rather than financial capital. Factors like having the international workforce, complying with international workforce laws and regulations, changes in the political and legal scenario, gender equality and advancement in technology and automation. These factors are a few challenges which HR experts need to overcome to have capable employees in their organization. To truly understand the area of HRM, one must consider and accept four basic roles of the HR function such as a strategic partner to the business, management advocacy, and employee advocacy and compliance enforcement. HRM in the current scenario has started looking at business and many traditional practices have been laid off. Flat organization, lean teams, project structures and profit centers are in trend, which requires a great deal of multi skilling or specializations. This means that business standards, working norms, and performance need to be looked at business and employee's point of view.

The HR function needs to adapt according to the business needs by having a dynamic and flexible workforce which can adjust shiftily to the rapidly varying necessities of the organization or market need. A function which is strategic and influences business and people. A managing expectation, flexibility, developing competencies, salary as per market standards are some of the aspects through which the employees can be engaged. Apart from having a robust performance management system, career planning, and development, effective reward and recognition system. This needs to fit the requirement of the business and employees. The key is to keep the employees motivated. Another important aspect in the HRM is transformation or change. HR plays the role of a catalyst to make sure the change process is implemented as per the transformation process. The HR team since they are the custodians of employee relations and engagement must ensure that the transformation exercise goes efficiently, with bare minimum disruption and high level of participation from the workforce. Since they are the custodians of employee relations and engagement

CHALLENGES IN HRM POLICIES AND PRACTICES

HRM is a vital asset and a foundation for accomplishing reasonable benefits in any organization. Khatri (1999), "one of the most significant features about individuals are they is willing to change according to the establishment". However, Rundle (1997) looks at " people (immediate supervisors), not the establishment, are the adaptive device in

defining how the establishment will react to the competitive atmosphere". Though it's a fact that "dealing with human capital is more challenging and demanding than handling finance or technology" (Barney, 1991; La do and Wilson, 1994; Schramm. Jennifer, 2012). Changes in working environment, technology and development of international workforce and practices, The HR function has seen and been through the sweeping transformation in terms of policies and practices that not only engage the workforce for better productivity and also contribute towards the business objectives. Some of the challenges faced by the business are:

Information & Knowledge is the key in today's market, as intellectual capital are working on concepts and ideas. The focus is towards organizational effectiveness and how organization can attract, utilize and retain talent. Due to the advancement in technology, there have been certain changes in the approaches to the guidelines of organizational regulations. Changes due to automation have disseminated many lower-end jobs and have also encouraged organizations to go lean and downsize the extra layers to achieve better margins. At the same time, it's going to be a major disquiet for the HR professional to manage the expectation of the knowledge workforce. Thanks to telecommuting, business has looked to work remotely, i.e. work from home option especially in the IT sector. This has become a popular concept due to the flexibility of not having to travel long hours and advancement of telecommunication.

It has worked as cost effective for the business and has also increased the talent pool. At the same time, the business has gained considerably due to saving on real estate cost, transportation etc. However this has also through new challenges to the business, such as data privacy, data security and business continuity.

Globalization has extended the talent pool across and one of the major challenges to organizations and senior HR leaders are to look at practices and policies like multi-cultural, diversity and intrusion, ethic sensitivity etc. The demand for skilled workforce or talent is getting bigger as the demand-supply gap is on the rise due to global investments across sectors. The question is employability of skilled workforce and not the graduates passing out of engineering and business schools in India. The global business growth has changed the Indian work environment, practices and HR capabilities. Business has realized and understood the importance of human capital towards the growth. This has led to new specialized functions such as strategic partner, talent acquisition, employee engagement, competency development, organizational development, talent development and management. Many organizations are showcasing innovative process put into practice by the HR team. This has also give ways to new organization structures due to the business climate (Garr, 2001: Lenin Karthikeyan, 2014), which provides HR teams to deal with heterogeneous functions and work closely with employees (Lenin Karthikeyan, 2014).

Workforce Diversity is about the workforce that represents a much different cultural background, point of view etc. It has an emotional impact on the organization from talent acquisition to compensation & benefits to corporate culture and performance culture. Diversity can be termed or considered into two separate features: Noticeable change (i.e. ethnic group, time of life) and fundamental change (i.e., beliefs, sexual orientation) (Lenin Karthikeyan, 2014). Any organization that practices diversity can increase its the work force talent and be more innovative and have an edge among competitors. Some of the key characteristics of workforce diversity include race, traditions, gender, age, faith, academic and technical background and sexual orientation. The Crucial tasks facing HRs is being able to attract and maintain the workforce. The tasks consist of (i) Incorporation of organization culture to put up with diversity and individual employees feelings. (ii) Think global and act locally. It's very vital to be quick in responding and adapting to the ethos of the province or

geographic location and social group necessities that meet the terms with native statutory compliance. It also has an effect on the ethical, lawful, and corporate insinuation towards the organization and business. Pearson's (1995) using the theories on (i) Similarity attraction paradigm, (ii) Social identity and (iii) Social categorization. These explain how individuals react to social and emotive responses to multiplicity. These factors have optimistic (improvement, invention, suppleness) and negative effects (high level of absenteeism, to dis-satisfaction towards one's job) Lenin. Karthikeyan (2014). Alternatively, the team that handles diversity provides assistance to diminish the contrary outcome of multiplicity and capitalize on the positive effect. Organizations can react to the industry forecasts further by creatively and vibrantly, particularly in the international scenario when you have talents of diverse culture background, gender, age and lifestyle. However, when diversity is not encouraged, there is a risk of losing talent. Managing diversity is one aspect which is taken lightly but the challenges are too many confronting the HR function. Globalisation has resulted in internalization of the workforce and the demand for talent has increased.

Attracting and retaining talent is the key to organizational success as the demand for the talented workforce is huge and a dearth of the trained and skilled workforce. University and Institutions need to change the way they structure the course curriculum. The numbers of our engineers especially in the information sector are looking at opportunities at global locations (US, UK, Canada). Another concern is the average lifecycle of the employee in the organization has dropped considerably among young professionals in the age group of 22- 30 years. Globalization and technology has encouraged and made sure of equal opportunity for the organization in the information technology (IT) sector. The salaries have increased drastically with many add on facilities to attract and retain talent. The HR function is the main differentiator within the business and important source towards viable benefit in our country, where workforce is in abundance it always exceed the availability of vacant position, thus making talent the key difference and remains to be scarce in today's manpower market. Identifying the right talent has always been a challenge and with increased competitiveness among the organizations, talent acquisition teams needs to look at new avenues and look at developing talent as potential resources. There are many specialized firms which engage in the identifying talent is a fact that there is dearth of talent pool, which support the talent acquisition team to employ human capital with positivity and cultural fit with right skills, experience and knowledge. It's always good and easier to retain existing talent than lateral hires due to competition, So it's important from the HR team to look at interventions and come out with competitive and tailor made salary structures that includes various perks, enhancement of role, empowerment and independence, healthier workplace environment towards growth and development etc.

Managing Talent for Success is another area where HR function is working with employees to equip them with right skill sets and ensure there are project ready longing at the big picture. Employees are encouraged to provide suggestions and ideas for new projects, which is looked as a motivational factor that encourages them to think out of the box to implement projects and practices for continuous improvement. Through HR department, organizations are looking at retention as a key aspect. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was used as a regular practice to retain high potential talent across industry, Today due to competition, '**Garden leave clause**' has been introduced so competitors don't acquire your key talent especially banking and financial services and insurance (BSFI) sector. Moreover, the practice has started emerging among consumer and technology space where these clauses are incorporated in employment contracts of senior-level executives as a retention tool. Whereby creating an additional barrier for competitor, who may have to wait for six months to one year for hiring a candidate. **Stay interview** is been adopted by many organization and has become an

important tool for employee retention. From the HR perspective it's necessary to understand factors that influence employee retention, which ultimately is considered as the major driver in employee performance.

It gives insight into the employee perception of what motivates employee to stay with the organisation, but also, gives an idea about steps that can make them more productive and engaged with the organization.

Cultural fitment: The traditional approach towards hiring talent was to hire talent with the required skill set or develop the required skills as the demand of the organization. Today the challenge is different and the new order is to look at the cultural fit or the employee-employer fitment. Some of the measures taken by the talent acquisition team are (i) ability to perform the required task, (ii) candidates who can work with teams and (iii) where culture and values match. Collins (2005) indicates that "companies perform well, when they take on a strategy for talent acquisition towards inviting and selecting the required workforce for their optimism, cultural fit and positive reasons. It's noticed that these companies have 7.5% progression on returns, 6.15% progression on income and 17.1% lower turnover. When looked at similar organizations that has not taken up this approach" Collins (2005).

In recent times **Employee Competence** is looked as an important aspect and key to the individual development and organization. The function has undergone much change and ensures the employees are project ready. At the same time, the return on investment is to be looked as employees quit before the organization encases on their services, so this gives scope to talent management over learning and development. In this regard, it's essential for the function to adopt a market driven approach by (i) understand the employee's skills and competencies, then provide opportunities to apply the same skills in the projects. (ii) To promote adaptability, resilience and agility, skill enhancement must be planned and promoted. The HR function needs to take on a bottom-line approach, to incorporate its well-designed undertakings with the organizational strategic objectives and goals while making policy decision or framing policies. While this doesn't affect the other functions such as finance or quality but the well-being of employees runs at cross-purpose with interest of the organization in terms of profitability. Walking the tightrope between the employee concern and the commercial imperatives of the organization is a challenge faced by the HR function.

It's very essential to look at performance pay, where the employees add value to the organization regarding cost-effectiveness, based on individual's performance level. In the same way, today we are looking at contractual or performance driven contracts, work forces have a preference of having a constant proposal and habituated to phased contract by means of monetary and non-monetary perks.

The HR function needs to look at (i) motivational aspects, (ii) customer centric approach (iii) employee development and growth etc.

In any business context, only thing that is constant is **change**, it's important to manage change and necessary to adapt to the environment where transformation is need of the hour to look at new business avenues. Transformation is required when there is reorganization of the business, mergers and acquisitions, transformation of engagement process, outsourcing, flexi working etc. These change interventions bring in new perspective in terms of improving organizational communication, better process implementation, quality of work and work life, employee well-being and increase in productivity. During the change process the challenges for the HR functions are (i) Support employees overcome resistance to change by providing counselling and educating about the big picture thinking and its benefits. (ii) Be a catalyst towards the change process and (iii) provide support to employees in terms of equipping them to deal with change. Each business

unit wants the progression of HRM to deal with the business life challenges. The important aspect is how to maximize the performance and ensure there is good work engagement practices. So it needs to have a robust system and policies in place.

In the information technology and services economy, employee psychology has gained prominence in today's workplace in our day to day life, "engagement" refers to participation, assurance, desire, eagerness, engagement and focused efforts to get-up-and-go(Schaufeli, 2012). **Employee engagement** is defined "as an person's intelligence of determination and concentrated vigour, obvious to others in the show of individual resourcefulness, adaptableness, hard work and perseverance guided in the direction of company objective" (Malley, 2007:9: Patrick. H.A., 2014). Hewitt, the Consulting firm states "Engaged employees consistently demonstrate these three behavior. a) Consistently speak positively about the organisation to the co-workers, customers, vendors and potential workforce, b) They aspire to be part of the establishment despite various occasions to work in other establishments and c) Give their best in terms of efforts and wits to contribute to establishment success by putting in additional period" (www.hewittassociates.com). Schaufeli, LeBlanc, Peeters et al., 2001: Schaufeli, W.B. (2013),

It's a known fact for engaged workforce, the workplace is enjoyable and engaged employees are individuals with high self-efficacious and enthusiastic. This has an affect over their daily lives (Bakker, 2009). By creating positive approach and response system, regarding acknowledgment towards task accomplishment.

Due to clients being from across the globe and employees stationed in India need to report to the manager in US, as the geographic boundaries and time zones does not make a difference, so the work timing etc. This has made the employees work life and individual activities as indistinct. So the work life balance can support individuals turn into more productive and not expected to burnout. Jim Bird of WorkLifeBalance.com writes, "work-life balance does not mean that individuals need to have the same ability" and further makes a point stating that individuals have set up a new notion of work-life balance (Rachel Dresdale, 2016). Since the geographical time zone doesn't interfere in today's workforce. Communication and technology has brought the entire workforce under a single umbrella and made it possible that workforce is having 24/7 work life. As today's organisations are moving from creating work-life balance to work-life integration. Workforce needs to have a sense of stability between personal and professional lifestyle to maintain and sustain a healthy living. So it's very important to have a composed work lifestyle. HR function has looked at various aspects of providing employees with flexible working hours and to take breaks as and when required, without deliverables being hampered. As a replacement for workplace, today we create our own place to deliver and engage. This rendezvous has combined workforce through employees work life and his individual activities, Rachel Dresdale (2016).

In most of the organizations, performance management system is required to take care of the **performance review** and to set objectives for the subsequent year, to identify development needs and to develop objectives and road map for next 2-3 years for the employee. Today Performance review has become a thing of past and organizations are looking at dropping annual performance reviews and engaging in regular reviews. Few companies have also started implement it. Recently, Accenture India has discarded their annual performance reviews and has designed a process, where the employees can receive and share unbiased and judicious feedback from their immediate supervisors. Today's performance review is towards having a better understanding of employee's development so he can contribute better. While many organizations have moved from traditional bonus to performance pay, family holiday etc. to improve their contribution towards organization growth. In most organizations, majority of the workforce consists of millennial. So

performance reviews must be looked from how the organization can leverage from individuals strength rather than weakness.

Among today's workforce are more career centric and for them **career development** is an import aspect of their professional growth. They are looking at organizations which not only pay them as per their competence and performance but those which help them develop and grow. From the organization perspective, it's important to development the employees with right competence to deliver the business goals, which has an enormous department on individuals participation and efficiency.

HRM should partner with the learning and development team to make certain, the improvement programs are being provided to workforce are as per the needs of the project or business. It's important from the HR perspective to have a career growth plan for their employees so they can retain them and inherent a learning culture as part of the organization.

Employer branding is another area where HR function is focusing on to position the organisation and very essential for the organisations to be visible to the millennial workforce on the social media platforms, which will establish them as brands and is in demand to work for. This platform provides two-way communication which makes it likely for businesses to put a figure on the results of their branding exercises in attracting and retaining talented workforce.

HR functions as **Data Centre**, for any organization data about human capital is very essential be it their performance review scores, employee movements, time keeping, response to internal surveys and following employee life happenings related to business etc. Today, there is lot of data on employees and the HR Analytic team needs to understand and how they can make sense and provide inference of these data to the business for better productivity and growth.

Employee experience is to some degree consists of "the physical, the cultural and the technological environs" (Jacob. Morgan, 2015). It's important for the organization to create an atmosphere where employees want to show up and be part of it. The workforce indulgent is a interdependent association, which permits them to engage, be cheerful and content at work at the same time they contribute towards their business goals effectively. From the organization perspective they must ensure that they focus not just on one environs but cater to full employee experience.

Social Media is an important tool towards building employee branding and every organizations have their In-house social media sites. This engages the workforce as a medium of communication and acts as a bridge between organization communication team and employees. It is effectively used for as platforms for knowledge sharing, Interactive guide towards understanding policy manuals and an engagement mechanism for effective feedback system. Knowledge sharing is the key and organizations encourage employees to share their problems and initiatives. This also creates visibility among the workforce and clients/customers. Today's employees are keen to build professional networking and to have well networked groups for various engagement needs. HR teams use this platform effectively for promoting their initiatives and practices (Rao, Pramila, 2015).

HRM policies and practices take up a distinctive association in development, thankfulness and maintenance of workforce. Promoting engagement of employees through assurance, employees also reciprocate with good performance and efficiency towards their business objectives. Every organization which is looking at best practices and looking at adding value to its workforce and customers must be keen to develop and implement the HRM policies and practices, which bring about competent and participate workforce (Legge, 2006).

Few Policies which have caught the Attention and Created an Impact in today's Organisation by Creating a friendly work environment. (1) Few organizations are providing work from home option to take care of their young children and some few are providing 1-2 years leave towards maternity. (ii) Equal Employment opportunity (iii) Paid family leave/vacation etc. Borkar. Neha (2017) Organisations like Godrej Group has decided to uncap the sick leave quota; While Flipkart has rolled out a paternity policy by providing 10 days paid leave and option to work from home for four hours to support the family during the first three months. Another initiative of supporting each other and bring camaraderie is Accenture India. They have initiated a policy "Hours That Help" where employees can share their leaves among themselves. Google ensures that they provide the best care to its employees, welfare measures like free meals to fun-filled activities. They encourage their workforce to follow their leisure pursuit. Host TGIF every Friday at 4:00pm, where employees can mingle and chill out. The employees need not swipe their card for attendance at Tata Tele Services Ltd. SAP Labs, goes the extra mile by taking care of their women workforce by providing them extra maternity benefits beyond the regular Maternity Act, extended paid holidays, free pick and drop during pre and post pregnancy apart from work from home policy once in a week for all employees. To engage employees better and to help them pursue their creative talents, they have introduced group activities like drama, music, and art and dance to engage their employees and encourage their talent. In Coca Cola India have various development programs on leadership which prepares employees to grow, apart from their commitment towards gender diversity at leadership level. ITC (FMCG) provides great support to senior executives and opportunities for young talent to become next level leaders. BHEL (Indian Public Sector) has a policy which encourages employees to look at working in different functions or departments (eg: Engineer taking up HR or Finance) so there is more exposure and career growth.

EFFECTIVE HR PRACTICES DRIVE PROFIT

It's a known fact that human capital drives the organizations growth and profitability. In recent times, it's been acknowledged that HR systems and procedures are associated to the business profits and growth. Research studies have shown the impact of HRM's policies and practices make. Schramm. Jennifer, (2012) "Companies that are highly skilled in core HR practices experience up to 3.5 times the revenue growth and as much as 2.1 times the profit margins of less capable companies, "according to report from "Capability to Profitability: Realizing the value of People Management".

At the same time, it's observed that there is a correlation between business growth and profitability to HR practices. Such as hiring and retaining of employees, developing the workforce, focus on next level leaders through career planning and having a robust performance management and rewards system. These practices also impact on the organization bottom line and influence the HR strategies. The business leaders are focusing and investing more time and money to build a skilled HR workforce that can deploy policies and practices effectively. As the expectation of business leaders on HR professionals are high. On the other hand, HR professionals need to play a role of strategic business partner in setting up business strategy and ensure the return on investment among the HR practices are understood and communicated to the stakeholders (Schramm. Jennifer, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

In the present day world-wide economic scenario, HRM practices and policies have been influenced by various reasons. Organisations need to look at HRM as a strategic partner and the HR practices and policies needs to keep up with the changing global workforce environment. They need to create a system driven by values and ethics, goal oriented and

encourages engagement. The policies that have made an impact are due to the humanistic approach to create a better work engagement that would contribute to the company effectively. HR professionals must understand and adapt to deal with the global workplace environment. Though the HR policy and practices differ from one organization to another but its outcome remains the same.

HR must be continuously engaged in innovative and creative practices to enhance the success of the business by value creation and have a reasonable advantage over competitors in a complex and highly uncertain global market. High-performance culture, analytics, flexibility, sustainability could be looked at as challenges for the future of HRM in India.

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