

THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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References :

I. Analoui, Farhad : « The Changing Patterns of Human Resource Management », Ashgate, Hampshire 2002.

1 The Book: « The Changing Patterns of Human Resource Management »

The book itself is a collection of papers from a conference on Human Resources Management (HRM). The selection was published in 2002 by Farhad Analoui an organizational psychologist, international management consultant and senior lecturer on HR and HRM Development at the Univ. of Bradford. It seems to be quite demanded by current research and universities. Internet research reveals that, despite its recent date of appearance, it has already been incorporated in a substantial number of university libraries especially in the US.

Throughout the book one will find attempts by experts, academics and practitioners in order to explain what HRM is or should be giving the reader an intuition of HRM boundaries and how people and organizations can benefit from HRM.

Articles include HRM topics in the context of public and private organizations observed in different regions and countries at the micro or the macro level. Despite the extreme diversity of the articles included, of course, not all HRM related issues could be considered in the collection.

Changing patterns of HRM can be found in several dimensions. They are of different relevance for the articles included in the collection of the book.

First there is of course a strong time related element associated with the accelerating changes in today's world of business. What seems to be adequate today can by no means be guaranteed to ensure the sustainability of the resources in the nearer future. In this rapidly changing world, Human Resource Management plays a strategic role in ensuring the adequacy and adaptability of the organization to its complex environment.

At the organizational level reorganization of work, processes and the way employees' affairs are dealt with are integral parts of today's work life. The philosophy of how people are selected, appraised, trained, motivated and developed is also continuous subject to change.

Across countries it can be observed that the control over the stock of resources, human or otherwise, is no longer solely confined to national parameters. The global nature of the issues is involved in the context of the strategic and forward looking role of HRM.

2 Articles in the Book

In the following complete list of articles, the two articles chosen to be regarded in more detail are marked in blue.

1. *The Changing Nature of Human Resource Management*, Shaun Tyson, p.1-12.
2. *Politics of Strategic Human Resource Managements: A 'Choice' Model*, Farhad Analoui, p.13-31.
3. *Corporate Strategy in the ASEAN Region: Human Resource Management Dimension*, Mark Hiley, p.32-45.
4. *Corporate Strategy: Evidence from British Airways plc*, Azhdar Karami, p.46-64.
5. *Techno-stress: the Need for HRM, Reinvention for the Digital Age*, Nada Korac-Kakabadse, Alexander Kouzmin and Andrew Korac-Kakabadse, p.65-87.
6. *Developmental Partnerships-Newcastle Business School an Newcastle City Council*, Sharon Mavin, p.88-103.
7. *Looking for Human Capital: Investment in Developing Countries*, Frahad Noorbakhsh, Alberto Paloni and Ali Youssef, p.104-120.
8. *The Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal for Birzeit University Faculty Members*, Grace Khoury, p. 121-136.
9. *Appraisal for University Administrative Staff?*, Pauline Fell, p.137-154.
10. *Training and Management Development in China: High Expectations and Conflicting Priorities*, Mohamed Branine, p.155-168.
11. *Training Programs for the Small and Micro Business in the Gaza Strip (GS)*, Mohammed Al-Madhoun, p.169-180.
12. *Transferability of Human Resource, Management across Borders*, Barbara Myloni, p.181-191.
13. *Human Resource Management and Development: A Case Study of Management Training in Malaysia*, Rezali Hameed, p.192-207

14. *Managerial Effectiveness and Women Senior Managers: Evidence from Romania*, Farhad Analoui, p. 208-229.
15. *The Motivation for Women Choosing a Career in Policing in Pakistan*, Pauline Amos-Wilson, p. 230-242.
16. *When Professionals make Mistakes: Gender Implications and the Management of Learning*, Patricia Bryans, p. 243-258.
17. *Business Management for Managers in Iran*, Mirza Hassan Hosseini, p. 259-269.
18. *Organizational Readiness for Change: The Role of Human Resource Management*, Maria Vakola and Nikolaou Ioannis, p.270-283.

3 Presentation of Selected Articles

Being a collection of articles published in 2002, the book contains a broad range of currently discussed topics in the area of HRM.

Among the included 18 articles in the book the selection of the articles considered explicitly in this text has been driven by personal interest. To get an impression of many diverse articles the emphasis has been rather put on reading as many of them as on summarizing the greatest possible number. Following this motivation the majority of articles in the book have been read and finally two of them will be presented here in more detail.

These articles are described and summarized with a focus on their content and value-added for the reader. For the detailed references for particular pieces of information, the reader is kindly referred to the article themselves.

3.1 Corporate Strategy: Evidence from British Airways plc, Article n°4, Azhdar Karami, p.46-64

3.1.1 About the article

The article claims to explore the process involved in developing a vision, business plan, and HR strategies adapted by British Airways plc (BA). After a period of crisis BA has undergone a major change in strategy in the 90s. A change of mission and strategic direction like this should usually also lead to an adaptation of functional strategies, as for example HR. So it seems certainly interesting to observe the development and implementation of this adapted HR strategy with BA.

Unfortunately, the author does not enlighten this process at all. The link between the new corporate strategy of BA and the few shortly described HR programs in his text is never explained. Not only does the author fail to characterize the new strategy of BA (he even doesn't cite the mission statement), he also does hardly comment on the requirements following for HR from BA's corporate direction. The process how BA actually derived its new HR strategy from the corporate requirements remains as unclear in the text as the characteristics of the new HR strategy itself.

The author meanwhile gets lost in highly descriptive details of HR measures which he never links to the overall corporate strategy nor to clearly formulated requirements for a functional HR strategy. He also briefly cites and describes overall BA programs without ever discussing their implication for HR, like for example the IT 2000 update and another business related program.

Finally, instead of reaching the "relevant" conclusion the author proudly announced at the beginning of the article, he just summarizes a generic model of deriving a functional strategy in general and repeats a few facts about BA and its programs.

Altogether one could say the author is rather unfocused in his approach to the issue and additionally fails to respond to his initially defined aim of the article.

3.1.2 Content of the article

Nevertheless, a rough outline of the article including the key content of its paragraphs will be provided here. He follow an approach considering the following areas:

1. Theoretical framework (corporate strategy, strategic human resource management, and human resource development strategies)
2. Airline industry, history of BA and its strategic orientations
3. HRM programs and initiatives of BA
4. Other BA programmas and conclusions

3.1.2.1 Theoretical Framework on Corporate Strategy and HRM

The context of the first section on corporate strategy can be found in any undergraduate book about corporate strategy. Basically the author explains the terms corporate strategy; vision; mission; objective and goals; business selection; industry choice; the impact of organizational structure, systems, processes and the impact and relevance of resources following the concept of the resource-based view of the enterprise.

The second section on Strategy and Human Resource Management describes HR as a potential source of competitive advantage, since employees are one of the many strategic resources according to the resource-based approach. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is responsible to align HRM activities to corporate strategy.

The third section on Human Resources Development Strategies explains and characterizes HR strategies. HR strategies are functional and should achieve two major things: firms annual objectives and employee satisfaction and development. These strategies usually result from HR audit and analysis, staff appraisal, HR forecasts and perception of competitive advantage. Their main focus is to support need for new or enhanced skills, multi-skilling and increases in competences required to support business strategies. To achieve this there are two major types of HR development strategies according to the author: Training strategies and Management development strategies.

3.1.2.2 BA and the Airline Industry

We are now given an overview over the airline industry and the history of BA which is certainly helpful to understand a corporate strategy approach but not particular important in detail in the context of the article.

Apart from some figures on market size and growth the most important information from the industry overview for the suite is probably the environment of progressing deregulation, rising competition (low-cost carriers) and the waves of consolidation the industry faces. Especially relevant to derive HR concepts is the emphasis on customer satisfaction and service quality of BA and some other airlines.

From the history of BA there are two facts of extreme relevance for a further understanding of HR strategy adaptation. The first is BA's privatization in 1987 together with a strategic new orientation and the mission 'To be the Best and Most Successful Company in the Airline Industry'. The second is BA's recent strategic turn-around in 1997 re-defining its mission and goals to address four key areas: the global economic climate, the challenge of competition, what customers were asking for, what employees wanted.

3.1.2.3 HRM programs and Initiatives of BA

To understand the HRM approach of any company, and also of BA, one has to keep in mind that HRM is not necessarily linked to the needs of the employees but rather to the whole HR of the organization. Therefore, out of many considerable HR aspects, those most crucial to ensure business

success have to be persuaded. Employee commitment, for example, is only supported if this leads to outcomes superior of other types of personal management.

The author mentions some HR aspects important to BA, however fails to explain their relevance in the context of the corporate strategy.

One considerable aspect of HRM in BA is creating motivation and commitment of all employees which continue to play a major part in the success of BA. So some of BA's HR measures are clearly designed to improve and support employees' motivation, as:

- A remuneration scheme with profit sharing and encouraged share ownership
- A premier staff rewarding scheme called "Award for Excellence"
- A staff suggestion scheme rewarding the best ideas of employees each year

The recent introduction of a new performance-based pay system is described as an ultimate consequence of this motivation oriented approach of BA.

Another aspect of HRM pursued by BA is the contribution of women to the industry. BA's policy is to promote equal opportunity in employees regardless of gender, race, color or disability. Consequently, BA has for example managed to increase the percentage of female employees, in management functions and overall.

Obviously, BA also regards his activities in training and development as crucial for their business success. Training and development is supported by various approaches and programs, for example:

- A Corporate customer service training trying to implement the highest possible standards of customer care
- The support of MBAs and other internationally recognized Diplomas
- A company-wide communication program regularly updating the staff on BA and industry news and issues
- The availability of multi-media open learning centers and business library

3.1.2.4 HRM programs and Initiatives of BA

In the time of the strategic new orientation BA has obviously initiated two business relevant programs which the author briefly describes. However, he surprisingly does not discuss their implication for HR.

As said, the conclusion the author delivers at the end of his article does not go beyond summarizing a generic model of deriving functional strategies and repeats a few facts about BA and its programs.

3.2 When Professionals make Mistakes: Gender Implications and the Management of Learning, Article n°16, Patricia Bryans, p. 243-258

3.2.1 About the article

The article presents the author's current research investigating the experience of making a mistake at work and the learning which resulted. The issue can be seen in the context of incidental learning (not to be confused with informal learning) which the author characterizes as unintentional and as the by product of another activity.

The author's study includes the viewpoint of a range of professions as social workers, teachers, solicitors and HR managers which have been selected through opportunity sampling of people he knew already. The individual interviews conducted with them were extremely interactive and open form. The author defends his highly subjective approach with the requirements of the issue involving high levels of emotions.

The study concludes, that the experience of mistakes at work depends highly on gender and has major implications for management and development of people at work, embedding the results in the corresponding practical (workplace environment) and scientific context (current existing research in the area).

For most readers these results might not seem highly surprising, however, the author emphasizes that past research has completely neglected the gender component in dealing with people's handling of mistakes and gives examples and details of studies where the "typical" male reaction has been taken as an overall behavioral norm.

Though the results of the author's study might not seem as a scientific breakthrough the article gives a good overview of the practical constraints in companies for learning from mistakes at the workplace and about the existing research literature on the issue. Furthermore the case examples and interview abstracts given in the text are extremely illustrative and enlightening to gain an intuitive understanding about the different perception and handling of mistakes by various men and women.

From a scientific point of view, there might be doubt if the results and observations concerning the different mistake handling of men and women can be generalized from such a small opportunity sample.

From a practical point of view, it is a pity that the author's advises for companies to incorporate his findings do not go beyond extremely general conclusions like "build a supportive company culture". A reference to a case study where a company has tried to implement these ideas would have certainly been a nice supplement.

3.2.2 Content of the article

The author gives an outlook on different findings and opinions relevant for the topic of his study. He especially considers the workplace environment, the existing scientific research and his own interview results to finally reach some major conclusions and formulate some requirements for companies to profit from employees' learnings from mistakes.

3.2.2.1 Workplace Environment

- Major changes affecting professional knowledge and relationships are taking place across a range of professions and workplaces. They are caused by advances in technology, new management structure and the rising exposure of any employee to criticism and increasing expectations.
- From scientific evidence as well as from pure observation and experience it is clear that most cooperate culture lacks the support and openness to allow employees to admit and really learn from mistakes. Mostly mistakes are rather sanctioned.

3.2.2.2 Scientific Research

- The analysis and the scientific research of mistakes is embedded in the understanding of reflective thought and learning from experience. Current scientific research concentrates on the way of problem solving involved in mistake handling and crisis management.
- Analysis of organizations and mistakes and successes reveal the importance of flexibility in the continuously faster changing environment of the enterprise and the workplace in particular. This observations have recently led to the emphasis of the concept of learning organizations. Organization need to learn "how to learn" and not to be afraid of mistakes.

- In today's companies there is a perception of mistakes as human errors, errors that should be prevented if not sanctioned to make people avoid them. Learning that goes further than to prevent a specific mistake, such as learning that might allow mistake handling and crisis management in general or prevention of broader spectrums of mistakes by creating awareness, are usually not supported by corporate culture.
- Narrative study approaches have revealed that individuals dislike admitting mistakes in general since this may involve fear, guilt and possible ill-effect on their personal standing and reputation. The language used to talk about mistakes is therefore highly emotional.
- The majority of studies on the issues of learning from mistakes has more or less neglected the gender component and implicitly assumed that the "typical" male reaction can be taken as the human behavioral norm.

3.2.2.3 Interview Results

The study provides rich details of the experiences with mistakes of individuals in organizational environments, summarizing and citing interviewees' perception on different sub-issues:

- *Personal Definition of mistakes:* Interviewees largely agreed that the key issues were misjudgments and averse consequences which were unplanned. The scale of the consequences differentiated mistakes from slips.
- *Finding a mistake:* Women quickly thought of a mistake, men took considerably longer often first stating they could not remember. It is unclear if they did not wish to talk about it or if the mistakes are less present in the memory of men than of women.
- *Coping with mistakes and self-reflection:* Women report, that their mistake remained near to the surface whereas men report it was just the only one they could think of. Women tend to live and self-reflect their mistake with high emotional intensity, sometimes for years. Their reported mistakes lay often in the area of relationships, communication and coping with organizational rules and frameworks. Women's self-worth seems extremely tied to these issues of relationship. Even years after the mistake they were often still trying to re-construct their self-confidence and identities at work and continued to blame themselves. Men seemed more able to rationalize mistakes and blame the circumstances or others.

A female manager, who was finally dismissed for her mistake:

At the disciplinary interview it was complete destruction. I wouldn't have been interrogated like this if I'd killed someone. They didn't just take away my job. They left me with no dignity and nowhere to go. They took away my self-confidence, my career and eventually my marriage... It has had a huge impact on my life. Some of it I still can't face. Five years later I still have flashbacks.

On the other hand a very senior male business manager:

No-one is indispensable. The mistake was mine- the organization is not obliged to do anything about it... I did everything I should have done. I can't see what more I could have done.

- *Reaction of organization (responsible managers) and its perceived appropriateness:* Both men and women wish to deal personally with the implications of their mistake, the men more to restore their public image, the women more out of a desire to make things right, to apologize and reassure others. Managers taking the time to reaffirm women were positively perceived. Some reactions of the organization are perceived as highly inappropriate and inducing inappropriate learning as for example expressed by one man as - if "that's how they want it; that's how people get on around here".

3.2.2.4 Conclusions and Requirements for a supportive environment

For individuals, making mistakes can be a positive way of learning if one can help to provide a safer environment for reflecting mistakes and sharing the learning with others. It is helpful to talk to colleagues about mistakes to deliberate reflective transformational learning. Therefore companies should facilitate communication about mistakes.

Mistakes should be managed in a constructive way. By implementing a structure in companies to support learning from mistakes gender differences should be taken into account. Otherwise women not being able to cope with past mistake will avoid to take future risks in a contra-productive way for companies and men having avoided to deeply reflect their failure might not to incorporate the experience into future decisions (shallow learning curve).