



ROBIN KRAMAR & JAWAD SYED

human resource management in a global context



a critical approach



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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

A CRITICAL APPROACH

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Tour of book

Key objectives

At the start of every chapter, key objectives guide your reading and provide a useful reference for revision

- After reading this chapter, you should
- Develop a vocabulary for discussing resources practices from an ethical perspective
 - Identify how and why human resource activities have an ethical dimension
 - Recognize the connection between human resource

Critical Thinking boxes

Look for the lightbulb icon to develop your critical thinking skills, by exploring contemporary debates in HRM and some of the issues facing human resources managers in the global workplace

Critical thinking 7.1 The case of Schmidt

In Taylor's most famous experiment, he studied the process of shovelling pig iron. He noted that one particular worker, Schmidt – finished the day's work and jogged home to finish building his own house. Taylor therefore praised Schmidt for his experiment. After restructuring the shovel and how the work was to be undertaken (eliminating all superfluous activity), Taylor was able to demonstrate that Schmidt was able to demonstrate

Exercises

Exercises in many chapters give you the chance to test your understanding and apply your reading to your own experiences

Exercise

- When it comes to recognizing and rewarding individual performance, what are the three main advantages and three chief disadvantages of using non-cash recognition plans?

Collective performance

In certain

For discussion and review

Assignments, revision questions and topics for discussion at the end of each chapter help guide your class discussion and revision

For discussion and review

Questions

- 1 How has globalization changed the way we work?
- 2 How does performance appraisal work?
- 3 What are the challenges in managing a diverse workforce?
- 4 How can leaders influence employee behavior?

Exercise

- 1 Go to the end of the chapter

Case studies

At the end of each chapter, extended case studies give insight into HRM in practice in companies and countries around the world

Case Study The design of a new product

On Monday morning at 7.30 am, a man was leaving his apartment, one specifically for expatriates, and was heading towards Kuala Lumpur's central business district. On the way, he listened to the voice messages on his phone, one of which was from the assistant manager of the firm's owner, Frank. The message stated that he was expected to call back before his meeting. The human resources (HR) team was leading. The team meeting was scheduled to bring together Hans and Chinese colleagues to form a crossfunctional project team to develop and implement a new personnel process within the firm's restructuring, in order to

Mini case studies

There are also mini case studies throughout the book, providing a glimpse into real-world HRM in a global context.

Mini Case Study 9.1

Ethics: performance appraisal at Travelscency
In 2004, Keith Gavin became financial controller at Travelscency, a member of the executive committee of Travelscency, a medium-sized, family-owned travel agency in the Hunter valley, 2 hours' drive north of Sydney, Australia. Keith sold his home in Sydney and relocated to the Hunter valley with his wife and two young children, 8 and 10 to take up the position. He was the first person from outside the family running the company in its history and he took the job very seriously.

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Case study matrix

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Introduction

Making critical sense of human resource management in a globalized world

Jawad Syed and Robin Kramar

Welcome to the first edition of *Human Resource Management in a Global Context: A Critical Approach*. The book has been written with the aim of developing our understanding and practice of human resource management (HRM) in an increasingly globalized world of work. The book uses a critical lens to develop an approach to HRM that is not only business-focused but also context-sensitive and socially responsible – we will explain our rationale for this below.

The emergence of HRM in the 1980s was accompanied by a sustained theoretical assault on its pretensions, highlighting the gap between the rhetoric of HRM and the reality, which was focused on impersonal economic rationalism. The reconstruction of the employment relationship as a singularly individual market exchange did not go uncontested in management education. However, whereas the proponents of HRM once felt the need to engage and respond to critique, the field now seems to have narrowed as the major concerns relate merely to strategic ‘fit’ and identifying mechanisms to facilitate ‘high-commitment’ and ‘high-performance’ organizations.

We consider the overemphasis of HRM on strategic performance to be problematic in view of the considerable gap between the policy and practice of strategic HRM. Vaughan (1994) argues that although organizational mission statements usually hold that employees are their most important asset, organizational reality is characterized by impersonal economic rationalism. Wilmott (1993) asserts that the rhetoric of HRM tends to turn employees into ‘willing slaves’ who negate their own interests, assuming the organization will take care of them. Seen from this angle, HRM’s unitary rhetoric may compromise the individual and collective needs of employees and may instill an HRM culture

that advantages organizations at the expense of employees. This is particularly true in periods of economic recession and instability. Although the economic gains for the organization are always a priority, issues related to individuals and societies remain subject to various concerns and tensions. Furthermore, a number of changes have occurred in factors influencing the way people are used in organizations, for example globalization, migration, environmental sustainability, governance, ethics, work-life balance and workforce diversity.

Bringing together eminent international scholars, this book places a premium on the critical thinking and analytical abilities that can be successfully applied to HRM. We take a different view of HRM theory and practice from that of often mechanically prescriptive orthodox texts. Our take on the theory and practice of HRM is far from US- or UK-centric: our choice of the topics as well as geographies covered in the text (that is, continental Europe and Asia-Pacific) is an attempt to situate the critical issues facing HRM in a global context.

Each chapter in this volume addresses a core topic and reflects the current state of critical scholarly activity in the field, highlighting some enduring theories and approaches, and then pushing the boundaries of HRM beyond those ideas. Our approach differs most widely when we consider that the practice and theory of HRM involves a number of key issues, including but not limited to managing diversity, ethics, corporate social responsibility, national context, knowledge management, relationship between work and non-work, implementing HRM (which often requires managing change), understanding the expectations and motivations of individuals and groups, and the role of external factors, for example legal and regulatory requirements, in influencing HRM. We consider these topics to lie at the heart of real-life HRM situations, and we believe that a critical approach offers a more effective outcome. We identify and challenge assumptions, develop an awareness of the context, seek alternative ways of seeing a situation and relate these to real-world examples in contexts as diverse as Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Each chapter follows a common structure by first identifying learning outcomes, and then moving on to a discussion of fundamental theories and key concepts related to the chapter, an integration of contextual and critical insights with the HRM literature, and one or more case studies exemplifying the application of theory to the world of HRM practice.

Each case study is designed for students who are taking a course in HRM with a significant international component. The aim is to provide a dynamic example and critical illustration of the HRM theory that readers are studying. As a learning tool, Clegg et al. (1984) and Hoffman and Ruemper (1991) identify several advantages of the case study approach:

- For students, case studies provide an opportunity to think logically and imaginatively, to experiment and to debate ideas free of risk.
- Cases provide an opportunity for experiential learning with particular reference to interpersonal skills and group work.
- Cases provide an opportunity to evaluate critically some of the theories covered in the textbook and on the course.