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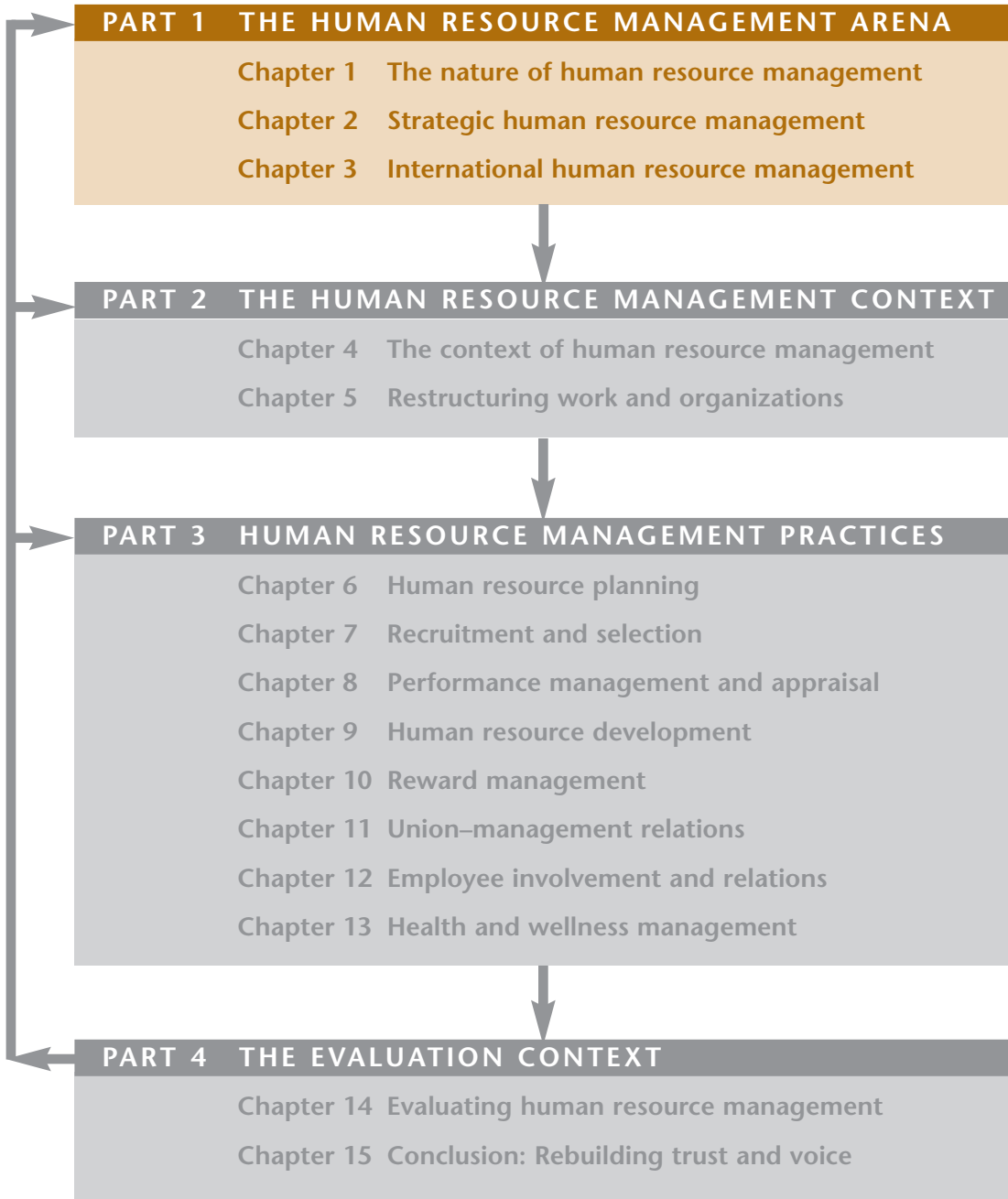
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The human resource management arena

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Chapter one

The nature of human resource management

John Bratton

Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities is critical to achieving competitive advantage, this being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programmes and practices.

*'The real sources of competitive leverage [are] the culture and capabilities of your organization that derive from how you manage your people.'*¹

*'The role of HR is becoming as important if not more than any other executive leadership function.'*²

*'The role of the HR professional is one of creating the space and circumstances for serendipity to occur.'*³

Chapter outline

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- The history of human resource management p. 5
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Chapter objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the development of human resource management (HRM)
2. Define HRM and its relation to organizational management
3. Explain the central features of the contract in the employment relationship
4. Summarize the key HRM functions
5. Explain the theoretical issues surrounding the HRM debate
6. Appreciate the different approaches to studying HRM

Introduction

This book is concerned with managing people, individually and collectively, at work. The quotations that opened the chapter provide insights into how the human resource function is viewed by academics and practitioners in the first decade of the 21st century. In recent times, **human resource management** (HRM) has assumed new prominence as concerns persist about global competition, the internationalization of technology and the productivity of labour. It is argued that these market imperatives require managers to change the way in which they manage the employment relationship to allow for the most effective utilization of human resources (HR). Leveraging workers' full potential and gaining the commitment of all employees, including managers, which is considered necessary for competitive advantage, requires change in three aspects of managerial control: organizational design, culture, and HR policies and practices. Current managerial orthodoxy, therefore, argues the need for restructuring towards 'flat' hierarchical structures, an enlargement of job tasks with greater employee autonomy and managerial leadership to shape the more intangible aspects of the workplace, such as beliefs, norms and values. For some, HRM is associated with a set of distinctive 'best' practices that aim to recruit, develop, reward and manage people in ways that create a sustainable commitment to high-commitment management, or what North American academics call 'high-performing work systems'.

The last two decades witnessed considerable practitioner and academic interest in the precise meaning of HRM, its characteristics, its antecedents and its ideological assumptions. The focus of much research explored the 'added value' of the HRM function, the link between 'best' or better HRM practices and business performance, and the role of the HR specialist within that process. The HRM debate has exposed enduring tensions and paradoxes associated with the management of employment relations in the workplace. As business organizations strive for competitive cost structures, most follow the conventional wisdom of business strategy – restructuring, delaying and redundancies – rather than look to the HRM elixir for competitive advantage. In the first decade of the 21st century, when most Western economies are experiencing relative growth and 'jobless recoveries', periodic newspaper reports of large-scale redundancies of professionals, managers and workers have an 'exposé' quality to them. It's as if the theatre curtain is pulled back too early so that we see the stage crew still moving props into position. Business news exposes the reality of executive behaviour and the management of employment relationships: restructuring, outsourcing of work to ever cheaper labour markets, workforce reductions and greater 'flexibility' in the use of people. Whether it is called downsizing, rightsizing or re-engineering, the result is the same; many managerial and non-managerial employees experience career derailment and job loss. For those still in employment, change, insecurity, longer hours and work intensification become the norm. Research and critical debate have pointed to the need to address the tension between the dual imperatives of competitiveness and control, and the consent and commitment of employees. In the HRM literature, the tension is often framed in terms of 'the rhetoric versus the reality' of HRM.

This chapter examines the complex debate about the nature and significance of contemporary HRM. We aim to explore some influential theoretical models developed by HRM scholars that attempt to define HRM analytically by discovering its fundamental traits, contrasting concepts, key domains and goals. To make sense of the HRM discourse, however, it is important for us to briefly examine the history of HRM.



REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Based upon your reading or own work experience, how important is HRM to organizational success?

The history of human resource management

In the management literature, there is an awareness that developments in HRM are mediated by product and labour markets, social movements and public policies that are shaped by past patterns of historical development and current societal changes and beliefs. Fashions come and go, and the same might be said about approaches to people management.

Keynesianism: collectivism and personnel management

The roots of people management can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution in England in the late 18th century. However, we begin our discussion on the history of people management with the economic and political conditions prevailing after the 1939–45 world war. The years 1950–74 were the ‘golden age’ of Keynesian economic doctrine, as evidenced by the post-war Labour government’s commitment ‘to combine a free democracy with a planned economy’ (Coates, 1975, p. 46). It was a period when both Conservative and Labour governments, anxious to foster industrial peace through conciliation, mediation and arbitration (Crouch, 1982), passed employment laws to improve employment conditions and extend workers’ rights, which also encouraged growth of personnel specialists. The Donovan Commission (1968) investigated UK industrial relations and recommended, among other things, that management should develop joint (union–management) procedures for the speedy settlement of grievances.

In the 1970s, new legislation, promoting sexual equality and standards in employment, and the prescriptions contained in the Donovan Commission’s report amplified the status of the personnel function. Running parallel with these public policy developments was the rise of productivity bargaining. This had the effect of extending the personnel manager’s function into the ‘fabric of the business – the improvement of profitability’ (Clegg, 1979, p. 100). The Donovan Commission (1968, p. 25) observed the growth in **personnel management**: ‘From a tiny band of women factory welfare officers in 1914, personnel managers have multiplied to well over ten thousand today, most of them men.’ A decade later, a study found that 46 per cent of the manufacturing establishments sampled had personnel officers with some responsibility for ‘dealing with trade unions.’ The Second World War increased the demand for labour and personnel specialists, and in 1946 those professionals involved in people management established the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM). Between 1956 and 1989, membership of the IPM rose from 3979 to 35,548 (Farnham, 1990, p. 24).

It is outside the scope of this chapter to analyse why men dominated the HR profession, but Townley (1994) offers one explanation. She argues that gender was a dimension in the relative employment opportunities in the workplace, as ‘soft’ training positions went to women and senior industrial relations negotiating positions devolved to men. The current debate on HRM is heavily gendered: ‘Put bluntly, the

focus of HRM – an agenda, in the main, prescribed by men – has been “important” men in one field (academia) talking to, reflecting and reporting on “important” men in another (business)’ (Townley, 1994, p. 16). If we accept a feminist critique, the gender dimension has also shaped the way in which personnel management and HRM has been constituted as a subject for study (see, for example, Mills and Tancred, 1992).



HRM WEB LINKS

Go to the website of the HR professional associations (e.g. Australia www.hrhq.com; Britain www.cipd.co.uk; Canada www.hrpao.org; USA www.shrm.org). Then click on the ‘Mission Statement’ or ‘History’. Evaluate the information at the site in terms of the material covering the history of personnel management. What are the origins of the association?

Neoliberalism: individualism and human resource management

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a period of radical change in both the context and content of the way in which people were managed. Western economies saw the renaissance of ‘market disciplines’ and a strong belief that, in terms of economic well-being, too much government was the problem. The new economic orthodoxy insisted that the role of government was mainly to facilitate this laissez-faire agenda (Kuttner, 2000). The rise of radical Conservative governments in Britain and the USA provided the political and economic backcloth to the shift in managerial thought and discourse. Whereas it was alleged that traditional personnel management based its legitimacy and influence on its ability to deal with the uncertainties stemming from full employment and trade union growth, HRM, it was contended, emphasized internal sources of competitive advantage.

The seminal book *New Perspectives on Human Resource Management* (1989), edited by John Storey, generated the ‘first wave’ of debate on the nature and ideological significance of the normative HRM model. Debate focused on ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ versions of the HRM model. The ‘hard’ version emphasizes the term ‘resource’ and adopts a ‘rational’ approach to managing employees, that is, viewing employees as any other economic factor, as a cost that must be controlled. The ‘soft’ HRM model emphasizes the term ‘human’ and thus advocates investment in training and development, and the adoption of ‘commitment’ strategies to ensure that highly skilled and loyal employees give the organization a competitive advantage. For some academics, the normative HRM model represented a distinctive approach to managing the employment relationship that fitted the new economic order (Bamberger and Meshoulam, 2000; Beer et al., 1984), and heralded the beginnings of a new theoretical sophistication in the area of personnel management (Boxall, 1992). For detractors, however, the HRM model was characterized as a manipulative form of management control causing work intensification (Wells, 1993), as a cultural construct concerned with moulding employees to corporate values (Townley, 1994). The HRM model, among both its advocates and its detractors, came to represent ‘one of the most controversial signifiers in managerial debate’ (Storey, 1989, p. 4).

By the late 1990s, a ‘second wave’ of debate emerged that emphasized the centrality of HRM to organizational success. The literature focused on four distinct themes: the

measurement of the effects of HR practices on organizational performance, sometimes referred to as the 'Holy Grail' (Purcell, 2003); the significance of the economic and social context in shaping the HR strategies and practices of organizations; the new organizational forms and relationships; and the importance of 'knowledge' management and learning in the workplace (Mabey et al., 1998b, pp. 2–3). In the academy, the significance of the HRM phenomenon was recognized in the launch and growth of new academic journals, such as the *Human Resource Management Journal* and the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. Within the HRM profession, the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) was formed in 1994 by the merger of the IPM and the Institute of Training and Development. In 2000, the IPD's quest for centrality and credibility was given a boost when it was awarded chartered status and became the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

Since its earliest inception, the HRM model has remained highly controversial (Legge, 2005; Storey, 2001). As a set of ideas associated with the totality of the organization's management of work and employees, the HRM model represented the dominant managerialist thinking on the quest for flexibility and labour productivity, ideally without interference from trade unions or government institutions. As such, the emergence of the HRM phenomenon can be seen as a historical outcome of rising neoliberalism ideology and globalization (see Chapters 3 and 4), much as the 'Social Contract' of the 1970s was an outcome of Keynesian economic planning and the 'Old' Labour government–union partnership. Whatever the fashions in management theory, HRM remains highly relevant for students and practitioners of management, given that the *raison d'être* of HRM is, using a variety of styles and techniques, to leverage people's knowledge and capabilities and manage employment relationships.

Management and human resource management

The term 'human resource management' has been subject to considerable debate, and its underlying philosophy and character is highly controversial. Much of this controversy stems from the absence of a precise formulation and agreement on its significance (see, for example, Storey, 2001). A widely acknowledged definition of HRM does not exist, but we obviously need a definition of the subject matter if we are to understand HRM theory and practice, although we accept that it will be one of several possible definitions. This is our attempt at a definition:

Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities is critical to achieving competitive advantage, this being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programmes and practices.

HRM, as we have portrayed it, underlines a belief that people really make the difference; only *people* or *employees*, among other resources, have the capacity to generate value. It follows from this premise that human knowledge and skills are a *strategic* resource that needs to be adroitly managed. Another distinguishing feature of HRM relates to the notion of *integration*. A set of employment policies, programmes and practices needs to be coherent and integrated with organizational strategy. It follows, therefore, that if the workforce is so critical for organizational success, the responsibility for HRM activities rests with all *line managers* and should not be left to HR special-

ists (Schonberger, 1982; Storey, 2001). Since most readers of this textbook aspire to be managers rather than HR specialists, this book is oriented towards helping people manage people, individually and collectively, more effectively and equitably, whether they become line managers or chief executive officers. To grasp the nature and significance of HRM, it is necessary to understand the management process and the role of HRM within it. Before we do this, we should explain why managing people or the 'human resource' is different from managing other resources.

The meaning of 'human resource'

First and foremost, people in work organizations set overall strategies and goals, design work systems, produce goods and services, monitor quality, allocate financial resources and market the products and services. Human beings, therefore, become human capital by virtue of the roles they assume in the work organization. Employment roles are defined and described in a manner designed to maximize particular employees' contributions to achieving organizational objectives. Schultz (1981), an economist who won the Nobel Prize in 1979, argued that economic development depended on the application of knowledge; he called this aspect of economics '*human capital*'. He offered this definition:

Consider all human abilities to be either innate or acquired. Every person is born with a particular set of genes, which determines his [sic] innate ability. Attributes of acquired population quality, which are valuable and can be augmented by appropriate investment, will be treated as human capital. (Schultz, 1981, p. 21; quoted in Fitz-enz, 2000, p. xii)

In management terms, 'human capital' or 'human resources' refers to the traits that people bring to the workplace – intelligence, aptitude, commitment, tacit knowledge and skills, and ability to learn. But the contribution of this human resource to the organization is typically variable and unpredictable. This indeterminacy of an employee's contribution to her or his work organization makes the human resource the 'most vexatious of assets to manage' (Fitz-enz, 2000, p. xii) and goes a long way to understanding Hyman's (1987) assertion that the need to gain both the control and consent of workers will be the leitmotiv of HRM.

The open-ended nature of the human component drives much of the research into organizational behaviour. One set of perspectives, drawing on psychology, suggests that the behaviour of people in the workplace is a function of at least four variables: ability, motivation, role perception and situational contingencies (McShane, 2006). Another set of perspectives, drawing on sociology, emphasizes the problematic nature of employment relations: the interrelated problems of control and commitment (Baldamus, 1961; Watson, 1995). Human capital differs from other resources, partly because individuals are endowed with varying levels of ability (including aptitudes, skills and knowledge), along with personality traits, gender, role perception and differences in experience, and partly as a result of differences in motivation and commitment. In other words, employees differ from other resources because of their ability to evaluate and to question management's actions, and their commitment and cooperation always has to be won. In addition, employees have the capacity to form groups and trade unions to defend or further their economic interest.



HRM IN PRACTICE 1.1

RAIL FIRMS SHUNT 'OLD BR WAY' INTO SIDINGS

NEIL MERRICK *PEOPLE MANAGEMENT*

Great North Eastern Railway (GNER), which operates trains between London and the north-east, celebrated its first birthday earlier this month by announcing that it would spend an extra £1 million on training over the next four years.

The investment, taking the company's annual training budget to £1.25 million, will allow it to place extra emphasis on customer service and to introduce core competencies for managers.

Twenty 'on-board coaches', will work alongside inspectors, caterers and other staff to assist them in meeting new delivery standards. 'Traditionally, managers have told employees what to do,' said Victoria McKechnie, the firm's HR development manager, who worked with many members of the coaching staff when the line was owned by British Rail. 'The idea of appointing coaches is to create a peer group on board the trains that will help to enhance customer service.'

Some of the new money will be spent on a management-training programme, which is being introduced in July to coincide with the new performance management system. The course will revolve around 12 core competencies, including teamworking, creativity and building relationships, that were proposed by managers.

According to McKechnie, the 'old BR way' of sending people on training courses has been

abandoned in favour of coaching, mentoring and secondments. Managers and other employees are, with the assistance of the training department, responsible for identifying and meeting their own training needs.

'They want to make safety secondary to revenue-raising,' Harries said. 'It is absolutely critical that, if a train breaks down, the people left in control know what they are doing.'

Midland Main Line (MML) is organising a 'Winning the Future' programme, under which all 600 employees who have direct contact with customers or fill support roles will attend a two-day programme focusing on culture change. About 300 maintenance staff will take part in similar events at their depots.

MML, privatised in April 1996, spends about £800,000 per year on training. Barry Brown, customer services director, hopes that events focusing on culture and attitude change will be held annually, with all staff spending up to five days away from the workplace.

'It's the hearts and minds of front-line managers that have got to change,' he said. 'They are a pivotal influence on the staff below them.'

Richard Greenhill, an IPD

vice-president, believes that training is encouraging employees to review traditional roles. 'People can organise themselves more effectively if they are prepared to be flexible and cross boundaries that they didn't cross previously,' he said.

Anglia Railways, privatised in January, has expanded its customer service programme to cover all its 650 staff. The company has also introduced a training scheme for telesales and ticket-office staff. Among the areas covered are proactive selling, such as asking a customer if they want to upgrade to first-class travel. 'In the past, railways have not been very good at selling themselves,' said Peter Meades, Anglia's communications manager.

Laurie Harries, spokesman for the RMT [National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers], said that the rail workers' union had always argued for better customer service training, but it was concerned that the rail operators might go too far in ending demarcation. The RMT is opposing proposals under consideration by a Railtrack working party that would see guards spending more time collecting money from passengers, rather than performing other duties.

'They want to make safety secondary to revenue-raising,' Harries said. 'It is absolutely critical that, if a train breaks down, the people left in control know what they are doing.'

The meaning of 'management'

The term **management** may be applied to either a social group or a process. When applied to a process, management conjures up in the mind a variety of images of managerial work. But it would be misleading to define a manager in terms of the tasks that she or he performs. For example, a homemaker plans and organizes tasks in the home, but does this make him or her a manager (Grint, 1995; Hales, 1986; Stewart, 1998)? To answer the question, 'Who is a manager?' depends not upon the tasks people undertake but on their social position in the organization's hierarchy. A manager is an organizational member who is 'institutionally empowered to determine and/or regulate certain aspects of the actions of others' (Willmott, 1984, p. 350). Collectively, managers are traditionally differentiated horizontally by their function activities and vertically by the level in which they are located in their organizational hierarchy. Management has been variously conceptualized as 'the central process whereby work organizations achieve the semblance of congruence and direction' (Mintzberg, 1973), as 'art, science, magic and politics' (Watson, 1986) and a process designed to coordinate and control productive activities (e.g. Reed, 1989; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). To study the complex and contradictory nature of managerial work, we need to examine various theoretical perspectives. The purpose is to develop a more in-depth understanding of the factors that shape the HRM process.

Drawing upon the work of Watson (1986) and Reed (1989), we can identify four major analytical perspectives that have shaped the study of management: the science perspective, the political perspective, the control perspective and the practice perspective (Figure 1.1). Fayol (1949) articulated the notion that management is a science. In his seminal work, Fayol identified a distinct body of knowledge and managerial activities, from planning to controlling, including organizing and directing – the 'PODC' tradition. This offers an idealized image of management as a rationally designed and operationalized tool for the realization of organizational goals.

The *political perspective* provides a view of management that characterizes the workplace as a purposive miniature society with politics pervading all managerial work. By politics we mean the power relationships between managers and relevant others and, in turn, the capacity of an individual manager to influence others who are in a state of dependence. This perspective to studying management offers an approach that examines individual managers as 'knowledgeable human agents' func-



tioning within a dynamic arena where both organizational resources and outcomes can be substantially shaped by their actions. It reinforces the theoretical and practical importance attached to building alliances and networks of cooperative relationships among organizational members. The political perspective has been criticized for failing to give sufficient attention to 'power struggles' in the workplace (e.g. Salaman, 1979; Willmott, 1984), which is the essence of the 'radical' control perspective on management.

The *control perspective* conceptualizes management as a controlling agent that serves the economic imperatives imposed by capitalist market relations. Managerial control is thus the central focus of management activity. According to this perspective, management structures and labour strategies are instruments and techniques to control the labour process in order to secure high levels of labour productivity and corresponding levels of profitability. This approach to management has come to be associated with the seminal work of Harry Braverman (1974) and the labour process school to which his work has given rise. It recognizes the existence of inconsistent organizational designs and management practices, and these paradoxical tendencies provide the source of further management strategies that attempt to eradicate the tensions that these paradoxes have created. The most important of these paradoxes is considered to be the simultaneous desire for control over and cooperation and commitment from workers.

The *practice perspective* conceptualizes management as an activity aimed at the continual amelioration of diverse, fragmented and usually contested complex practices. According to Reed (1989), it addresses the limitations of the first three perspectives by recognizing that although management is indeed a science, it at the same time involves both a political process and control mechanisms. Furthermore, Reed (1989, p. 21) contends that, within the practice perspective, organizations 'generate both structural and processual contradictions that will be reflected within management practice'. Therefore, managers will be called upon to secure subordinates' discipline and consent simultaneously, and, given the heterogeneous nature of management, they will be divided over how these mutually incompatible objectives are to be achieved. Typically, a nexus of HRM practices and supporting rationales will be constructed to provide the mechanisms by which managers strive to secure control over and commitment from organizational members, in other words to ensure that employees are manageable.



REFLECTIVE QUESTION

What do you think of these four perspectives of management? Do they help to explain managerial behaviour? Do they help us to understand the uncertainties and conflicts found in managing people?

The nature of the employment relationship

The nature of the relationship between individuals and their work organization is clearly an issue of central importance to HRM. Although the term **employment relationship** appears to be self-explanatory, it is complex in nature, containing distinct elements that make it different from other contractual relationships. The employment relationship describes dynamic interlocking reciprocal relations that exist between

employees and their employers. Today, employment relationships vary widely from a short-term, primarily but not exclusively economic exchange for a relatively well-defined set of duties and low commitment, to complex long-term relationships defined by a broad range of economic inducements, and also relative security of employment, in return for a broad set of duties and a high commitment from the employee (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2005; Tsui and Wu, 2005). The employment relationship may be regulated three ways: *unilaterally* by the employer; *bilaterally*, by the employer and trade unions, through a process of collective bargaining; and *trilaterally*, by employers, trade unions and statutes, through the intervention of the government or state (Kelly, 2005). What, then, is the essence of the employment relationship? Research into the employment relationship has drawn attention to relations in the workplace oriented towards the:

- economic
- legal
- social
- psychological.

At its most basic, the employment relationship embraces an economic relationship: the 'exchange of pay for work' (Brown, 1988). When people enter the workplace, they enter into a *pay-effort bargain*, which places an obligation on both the employer and the employee; in exchange for a wage or salary, paid by the employer, the employee is obligated to perform an amount of physical or intellectual labour. The pay-effort bargain is relevant for understanding how far the employment relationship is inherently conflictual or consensual. In the capitalist labour market, people sell their labour and seek to maximize their pay. To the employer, pay is a cost that, all things being equal, reduces profit and therefore needs to be minimized. Thus, as Brown (1988, p. 57) states, 'Conflict is structured into employment relations' as the logic makes the pay to one group the cost to the other. The 'effort' or 'work' side of the contract also generates tensions and conflict because it is inherently imprecise and indeterminate. The contract permits the employer to buy a *potential* level of physical or intellectual labour. The function of management is therefore to transform this potential into actual value-added labour. HR practices are designed to narrow the gap between employees' potential and actual performance, or, as Townley (1994, p. 14) explains:

Personnel practices measure both the physical and subjective dimensions of labour, and offer a technology which aims to render individuals and their behaviour predictable and calculable ... to bridge the gap between promise and performance, between labour power and labour, and organizes labour into a productive force or power.

The second component of the employment relationship is that it involves a legal relationship: a network contractual and statutory rights and obligations affecting both parties to the contract. Contractual rights are based upon case law (judicial precedent), and the basic rules of contract, in so far as they relate to the contract of employment, are fundamental to the legal relationship between the employer and employee. It is outside the scope of this chapter to give a full exposition of the rules of contract, but there are a number of requirements of a valid contract:

- *Intention*. The parties must have expressly or implicitly intended that their agreement should be binding in law. In the case of a contract of employment, it can be

entered into informally or formally. It can emerge as a result of a conversation at the office door, interviews, exchange of letters or negotiation.

- *Agreement.* The parties to the contract must actually have reached an agreement on the basis of an offer and acceptance.
- *Consideration.* This may be defined as an economic value or a promise thereof, and, in the case of a contract of employment, the consideration of the parties is a promise by the employer to pay the agreed salary or wage in return for the employee's promise to work for the employer in accordance with the contract.
- *Consent.* Both parties to the agreement must consent to the terms of the contract. There must be no duress or undue influence applied in respect of either party by the other, and no misrepresentation.
- *Legality.* The proposed contract must be legal both in its object and in the manner in which it is performed. For example, a contract of employment is illegal and therefore invalid if the manner of payment deliberately seeks to defraud the taxation authorities.

In summary, a contract freely negotiated between an individual and her or his employer is central to understanding the employment relationship in English law (Wedderburn, 1986), and the contract of employment is subject to the general contractual rules of common law (see, for example, Selwyn, 2004).

Statutory rights refer to an array of legislation that affects the employer–employee relationship and employer–union relationship: the ‘right not to be unfairly dismissed’ or the ‘right to bargain’. Statutory employment rights provide a basic minimum or ‘floor’ of rights for all employees. A complex network of UK and European Union statutory rights regulates the obligations of employer and employee even though they are not (for the most part) inserted in formal terms into the employment contract itself. In the event of violation, legal rights can be enforced by some compulsory mechanism provided by the state, for example a tribunal or the courts. For a further discussion on the legal regulation of the employment relations, see ‘The state and the employment relationship’ in Chapter 4.



REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Based on your own work experience or that of a friend or relative, can you identify three statutory employment rights?

The third distinguishing component of the employment relationship is that it involves a *social* relationship. Managerial and non-managerial employees are not isolated individuals but members of social groups, who respond to ‘social norms’ that influence their actions in the workplace. This observation of human behaviour in the workplace – documented since the 1930s – is highly relevant given the increased use of teamworking (Kersley et al., 2005). Furthermore, unless the employee happens to be an international soccer or hockey celebrity, the employment relationship typically involves an uneven balance of social power between the employer and the employee. The notion in English law of a ‘freely’ negotiated individual agreement is misleading. In reality, without collective (trade union) or statutory intervention, the most powerful party, the employer, imposes the agreement by ‘the brute facts of power’ (Wedderburn, 1986, p. 106). Thus, the social dimension of the employment relationship relates to the issue of power in the workplace.

The fourth component of the employment relationship is a dynamic two-way exchange of perceived promises and obligations between employees and their organization: the **psychological contract** (Guest and Conway, 2002; Herriot, 1998; Kramer and Tyler, 1996; Rousseau, 1995). The concept of the psychological contract was written about in the early 1960s, but in recent years it has become a 'fashionable' framework within which to study aspects of the employment relationship (Guest and Conway, 2002; Sisson and Storey, 2000). One reason for the increased focus on the more cognitive-driven aspects of the employment relationship is corporate restructuring. Organizations seek both flexibility and employee commitment. The restructuring of many corporations has increased 'non-standard' forms of employment (temporary, part time, contract work), which has led to a 'no guarantees' attitude among many organizations (Rousseau, 1995). Yet, when competitive advantage appears to come from leveraging managerial or 'knowledge' workers' intellectual assets, and when those 'human assets' can 'walk out of the door' to work for a competitor, the notion of employee commitment emphasizes the importance of managing the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) and why we need to examine this contemporary concept more fully.

The 'psychological contract' is a metaphor that captures a wide variety of largely unwritten expectations and understandings of the two parties about their mutual obligations. Rousseau (1995, p. 9) defines it as 'individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization'. Most discussants view the concept as a two-way exchange of perceived promises and obligations. Guest and Conway (2002) have conducted empirical studies on the psychological contract and define it as 'the perceptions of both parties to the employment relationship – organization and individual – of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship' (p. 22). At the heart of the concept of the psychological contract are levers for individual commitment, motivation and task performance *beyond* 'expected outcomes' (Figure 1.2).

The concept of the psychological contract has a number of important features that challenge managers. The organization does not always communicate with one voice,

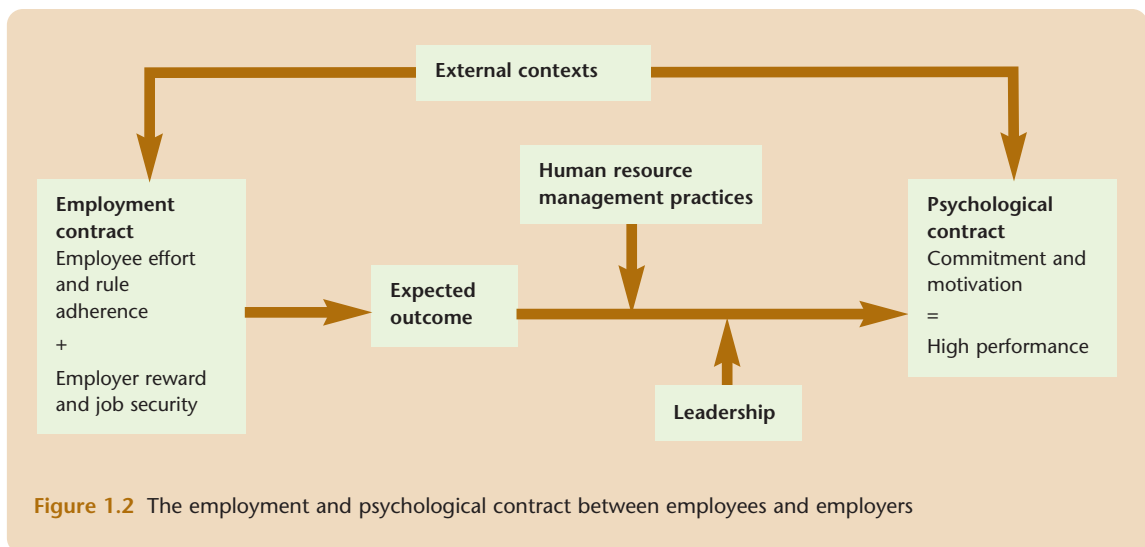


Figure 1.2 The employment and psychological contract between employees and employers

and ineffective communication practices are more likely to create different beliefs about the reciprocal promises and obligations (Guest and Conway, 2002). Thus, individual employees will have different perceptions of their psychological contract, even when the legal contract is identical. Managers, therefore, will be faced with a multitude of potential psychological contracts within the same organization (Bendal et al., 1998). A second feature of the psychological contract that challenges managers is that it reaffirms the notion that the employment relationship is perceived to be one of exchange – the *promissory* exchange of offers and the mutual obligation to fulfil these offers by the organization and employee. As Rousseau (1995, p. xi) observes, ‘Promises about the future are the essence of contracts’. Yet, research confirms that senior managers often fail to keep their promises (Guest and Conway, 2002). A third feature of psychological contracts that has been emphasized is that they are shaped by the social and economic context, leadership, communication and HR practices. Rousseau (1995; Rousseau and Ho, 2000), for example, has persuasively shown that HR practices shape the day-to-day behaviours of employees and are ‘the major means through which workers and their organization contract with each other. HR practices send strong messages to individuals regarding what the organization expects of them and what they can expect in return’ (Rousseau, 1995, pp. 182–3).

Let us try to illustrate how HR practices create contracts. Eleanor has just graduated from university and is considering applying to Zap Airlines for an entry-level management position. She goes to the company’s website and reads in its mission statement ‘We are a learning organization’; the job advertisement she reads in the newspaper states ‘Excellent career prospects’; at the selection interview, Eleanor is told, ‘We encourage you to complete an MBA’; two weeks later Eleanor receives a letter offering her the position and detailing her salary and other terms; in the first 12 months, she works hard and frequently completes company work at the weekends; she hears stories from co-workers of other employees on the career ‘fast-track’ being promoted; at the year-end appraisal interview, she is reassured ‘Keep up the good work and you’ll be promoted’. In effect, the psychological contract to Eleanor is conveyed through several communication channels: written documents (e.g. mission statement, job advertisement) and oral discussions (e.g. selection interview, ‘stories’, appraisal interview). Thus, HR practices and organizational communications create both formal (e.g. letter of appointment) and psychological contracts to support organizational strategy. Recent UK research emphasizes the importance of organizational communication practices: ‘Effective communication reduces perceived breach of the psychological contract’, assert Guest and Conway (2002, p. 35).



REFLECTIVE QUESTION

What do you think of the concept of the psychological contract? Why does there appear to be more interest in managing the psychological contract? How important is it to manage the psychological contract for (1) non-managerial employees and (2) managerial employees?



Human resource management functions

HRM is a body of knowledge and a set of policies and practices that shape the nature of work and regulate the employment relationship. Drawing on the recent work of

Squires (2001), these practices suggest three basic questions: What do HRM professionals do? What affects what they do? How do they do what they do? To help us answer the first question, we draw on the work of Harzing (2000), Millward et al. (2000) and Ulrich (1997) to identify key HRM functions. These are HR policies, programmes and practices designed in response to organizational goals and contingencies, and managed to achieve those goals. Each function contains alternatives from which managers can choose. The key functions are:

- *Planning*: preparing forecasts of future HR needs in the light of an organization's environment, mission and objectives, strategies, and internal strengths and weaknesses, including its structure, culture, technology and leadership.
- *Integrating*: appropriately integrating or linking HRM with the strategic management processes of the organization and coordinating clusters or bundles of HR practices to achieve the organization's desired goals.
- *Staffing*: obtaining people with the appropriate skills, abilities, knowledge and experience to fill jobs in the work organization. Key practices are HR planning, job analysis, recruitment and selection.
- *Developing*: analysing learning requirements to ensure that employees possess the knowledge and skills to perform satisfactorily in their jobs or to advance in the organization. Performance appraisal can identify employee key skills and 'competencies'.
- *Motivating*: the design and administration of reward systems. HR practices include job evaluation, performance appraisal, pay and benefits.
- *Designing*: the design and maintenance of work systems that are safe and promote employee health and workplace wellness in order to attract and retain a competent workforce and comply with statutory standards and regulations.
- *Managing relationships*: under this heading may be a range of practices, processes and structures that build cooperative relationships among employees. It also includes employee involvement/participation schemes in the workplace. In a union environment, it extends to nurturing cooperative relationships between the employer and the trade union, negotiating collective agreements and administering the collective agreement.
- *Managing change*: which involves helping others to envision the future, communicating this vision, diagnosing and changing mindsets and mental models, setting clear expectations for performance, and developing the capability to reorganize people and reallocate other resources.
- *Evaluating*: designing the procedures and processes that measure, evaluate and communicate the value-added of HR practices and the entire HR system to the organization.



HRM WEB LINKS

Go to the website of the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey: www.dti.gov.uk/employment/research-evaluation/grants/wers/index.html for data on the job responsibilities of HR specialists. Has there been any change in the functions performed by HR specialists over the last decade? Are HR specialists involved in all key areas of activity above?



HRM IN PRACTICE 1.2

THE 21ST CENTURY CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER (CHRO)

HRM GUIDE, APRIL 2006

Senior HR leaders have a changing role to play with the rise in prominence of issues such as:

- workforce demographics and global talent trends
- corporate scandals and intensifying regulatory challenges
- technology innovations enabling new ways of working
- endless pressures to boost workforce profitability and performance
- increasing globalization

Meet a developing 21st century professional: the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO).

A new report from Deloitte Consulting, *Strategist & Steward: The Evolving Role of the Chief Human Resources Officer*, outlines the challenges, processes and performance measures facing today's CHRO. According to the report, the modern CHRO is required increasingly to act as both strategist and steward. To quote Deloitte's media release, they are 'leaders who not only manage the HR function and operations team, but also collaborate directly with the CEO and board of directors on a range of critical business issues.'

Jeff Schwartz, principal and national co-leader of Deloitte Consulting's CHRO Services, said:

'The requirements and perception of HR are changing dramatically as this function's

leadership is now expected to play a central role in building and shaping – not just staffing – the enterprise strategy.'

'The role of the CHRO as an enterprise business leader is still evolving – but this transformation has never been more timely or relevant.'

'This is an environment that HR leaders have longed for – where their executive peers would view HR as a business partner, rather than as a back-office administrator. Now CHROs must make sure that they are up to the task. The central challenge for CHROs is to view themselves as business leaders first – i.e. senior business executives responsible for the HR portfolio.' Deloitte Consulting's framework categorizes the CHRO's roles and responsibilities in four major ways:

- **Workforce Strategist:** Integrating business strategy and overall performance are increasingly important tasks.
- **HR Service Delivery Owner:** Despite the increasing focus on wider business issues, CHROs must still provide cost-effective, day-to-day HR administration and operations.
- **Organizational and Performance Conductor:** How do

businesses get the best performance from their employees? Organizations are increasingly complex and performance improvements can be required from departments.

- **Compliance and Governance Regulator:** CHROs must work directly with their boards on employee issues directly related to the critical areas of

- Regulatory compliance
- Ethics

'The role of the CHRO as an enterprise business leader is still evolving – but this transformation has never been more timely or relevant' said William Chafetz, principal and national co-leader of Deloitte Consulting's CHRO Services. 'As human capital-related issues, such as Baby Boomer retirement, generational differences, skills gaps and workforce globalization, continue to challenge a company's overall strategy and bottom line, the CHRO must become an increasingly familiar face and, in many companies, a potent force in the boardroom and executive suite, paving the way toward change, performance and new ways of working.'

Deloitte Consulting's *Strategist and Steward* report is available at <http://www.deloitte.com/us/strategistandsteward>.

Organizing the human resource function

How the HR function is organized and how much power it has relative to that of other management functions is affected both by external factors (e.g. a shortage of skilled knowledge workers, government employment regulations, social norms) and by internal factors unique to the organization (e.g. business strategy, organizational culture, corporate governance; see Figure 1.3 below). A *regulated-oriented* national business system, with strong trade unions, employment laws on equity and affirmative action and occupational health and safety regulations, elevates the status of the HR manager and strengthens the corporate HR function. In contrast, a *market-oriented* corporate culture, with employee pay based on going market rates, minimum investment in employee training and shorter employment contracts, is associated with outsourcing and decentralization of the HR function, which weakens the corporate HR function (Jacoby, 2005). The size of the organization also appears to negatively affect the extent to which HR services are provided internally by HR specialists from the central HR unit.

Klass et al.'s (2005) study, for example, found that an increasing number of small and medium organizations – defined as enterprises with 500 or fewer employees – have established a commercial relationship with a professional employer organization, which assumes responsibility for the delivery of HR services and interventions, a process usually referred to as ‘outsourcing’ (see also Chapter 4). They argue that the choice is not between an internal HR department or outsourcing HR services. Instead, small organizations have limited resources so the choice is between obtaining HR expertise and services from an external professional employer organization or foregoing such services. Besides the outsourcing of the HRM function, it would appear that an increasing number of European organizations have transferred responsibility for the HRM function from central internal HR departments to line management, a process referred to as ‘decentralization’ or ‘devolution’ (Andolšek and Štebe, 2005; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006a; Jacoby, 2005). The espoused HRM canon posits that HR are so critical for organizational success that the responsibility for HRM activities must rest with all managers at all organizational levels and should not be left to HR specialists. As the HRM function has assumed a more strategic role, shifting from the margins of an organization system to its very centre, line management simultaneously appears to be taking on responsibility for HRM activities. As the HR function has assumed a more strategic role, decentralization has meant a transfer of operating authority from the central HR department to line managers (Jacoby, 2005).

The development of strategic HRM (Chapter 2) has fostered this devolution process (Andolšek and Štebe, 2005). The notion of ‘strategic’ HRM underscores the need for HR strategy to be integrated with other management functions and highlights the responsibility of line management to foster the high commitment and motivation associated with ‘high-performing work systems’. The decentralization of HR practices can be explained by line management’s new responsibility for implementing a change in organizational culture. Typically defined as the basic set of shared beliefs, values and norms that represents the unique character of an organization, organizational culture provides the context for managerial behaviour. A focus on organizational culture underscores the fact that line managers have a myriad of simultaneous challenges including leveraging workers’ full potential and developing shared values, norms and commitment. As part of the integrative process, they are expected to better comprehend the strategic nature of ‘best’ or better HR practices, to execute them more adroitly (Andolšek and Štebe, 2005), and at the same time to intervene to affect the

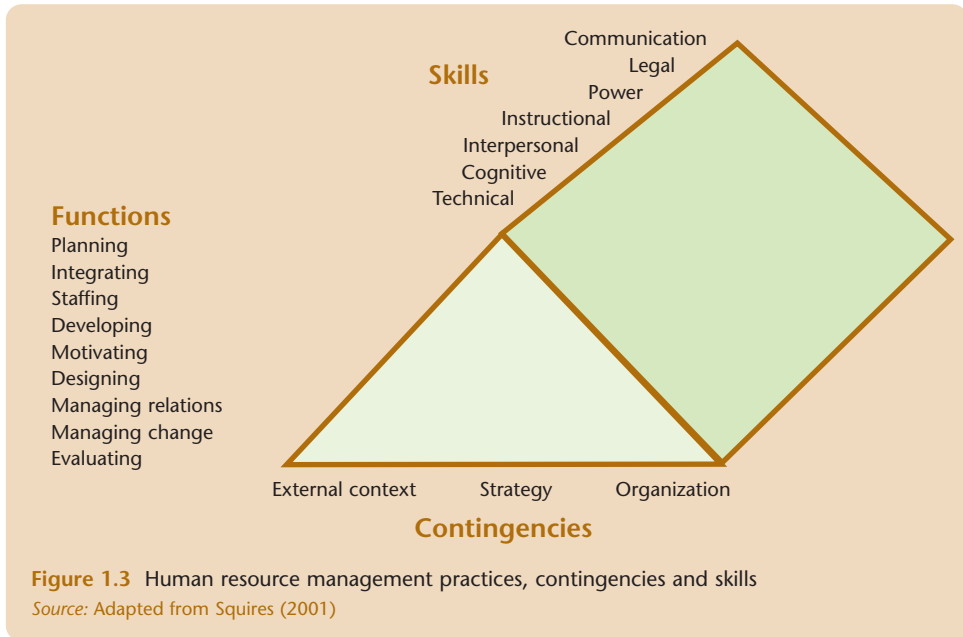
'mental models' needed to build a high-performing culture (Pfeffer, 2005). Research reveals that the size of the organization affects the decentralization process. Based on the results of their European study, Andolšek and Štebe (2005) conclude that decentralization is greater in smaller organizations without a developed HRM team of specialists, and where there is less written HR strategy. Furthermore, national systems of employment regulation set the limits or encourage the decentralization of the HRM function: 'the stronger the institutional framework ... the less [sic] options a company may have to impose its own approach to regulating its HRM' (Andolšek and Štebe, 2005, p. 327).

Human resource management practices, contingencies and skills

The peculiarities of national employment systems, national culture and organizational culture are factors that foster the divergent tendencies in HRM practice and inform the second question referred to above, 'What affects what they do?' The HR activities that managers undertake vary from one workplace to another depending upon the *contingencies* affecting management. These contingencies can be divided into three broad categories: external context, strategy and organization. The external category encompasses the economic, political, legal regulations and social aspect (for a full discussion on this, see Chapter 4). The external variables frame the context for formulating competitive strategies (see Chapters 2 and 3). The organization, which is embedded within a national socioeconomic system, is subdivided into size, work and structure, and technology (see Chapter 5). As we have discussed, an organization employing a large workforce is more likely to employ at least one HRM specialist to assist line managers with people-related issues.

It is important to recognize that domestic HR policies and practices are contingent upon external and internal contexts and are highly interrelated. For example, a company responding to competitive pressures may change its manufacturing strategy by introducing 'self-managed' teams. This in turn will cause changes in recruitment and selection, training and reward priorities, for example hiring people perceived to be 'team players', designing cross-functional training and designing a reward system that encourages the sharing of information and learning. HRM practices, therefore, aim to achieve two sets of objective: to improve employee performance and to enhance organizational effectiveness.

The third of our three basic questions, 'How do HR professionals do what they do?' requires us to discuss the means or *skills* by which HR practitioners may accomplish their managerial work. Line managers and HR specialists use technical, cognitive and interpersonal processes and skills to accomplish their work (Squires, 2001; Yukl, 2002). They accomplish their role by mentoring and teaching (Agashae and Bratton, 2001; Senge, 1990). Power is important because it is part of the influence process, as are legal procedures. Communication practices and skills convey the formal and psychological contract to employees (Guest and Conway, 2002). Managing the employment relationship will involve a mix of processes and skills, and individual managers will vary in terms of their capacity or inclination to use them. These processes and skills, therefore, are about human relationships and go some way to explaining different management styles and the distinction between a manager and a leader (Bratton et al., 2004; Kotter, 1990). The three related dimensions of HRM – functions, contingencies and skills – can be brought together and diagrammatically shown in a three-dimensional model (Figure 1.3).



The model implies not only that HRM is a multidimensional activity, but also that the analysis of it has to be multidirectional (Squires, 2001). We might, therefore, examine the effect of new technology (a contingency) on HR functions, such as training and development, and how HR functions are translated into action, such as learning and communication processes. The model is useful in several ways: it serves as a pedagogical device that allows the reader to discover and connect a specific aspect of HRM within a consistent, general framework; it offers HR specialists a sense of professional ‘identity’ by identifying professional functions, processes and skills; and it helps the HR specialist to look beyond his or her immediate tasks and be aware of the ‘totality of management’ (Squires, 2001, p. 482).



HRM WEB LINKS

Go to the website of the HR professional associations (e.g. Australia, www.hrhq.com; Britain www.cipd.co.uk; Canada www.hrpao.org; or the USA www.shrm.org). Click on the ‘Accreditation and/or certification’ button. Using the information you find, compare the practices that HR professionals are formally accredited to practise with the practices listed in Figure 1.3. Does the information on the website give a comprehensive picture of ‘What HRM specialists do’?



Theoretical perspectives on human resource management

Practice without theory is blind. (Hyman, 1989, p. xiv)

So far, we have focused on the meaning of management and the practical contrib-

ution that HRM practices make to the functioning of the modern work organization. We will now turn to an important part of the discourse – the search for the defining features of HRM – by exploring the **theoretical perspectives** in this area.

Models of human resource management

Over the past two decades, scholars have debated the meaning of the term ‘human resource management’ and attempted to define its fundamental traits by producing polar or multiconceptual models. A number of polar models contrast the fundamental traits of HRM with traditional personnel management. The models formulated help to focus debate around such questions as ‘What is the difference between HRM and personnel management?’ and ‘Is HRM simply personnel management in a new fancy wrapping?’ or, as Armstrong (1987, p. 32) mused, is HRM ‘old wine in new bottles?’

We can identify five major HRM models that seek to demonstrate analytically the qualitative differences between traditional personnel management and HRM (Beer et al., 1984; Fombrun et al., 1984; Guest, 1987; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990; Storey, 1992). These models fulfil at least four important intellectual functions for those studying HRM:

1. They provide an analytical framework for studying HRM (e.g. situational factors, stakeholders, strategic choice levels, notions of commitment and competence).
2. They legitimate certain HRM practices. A key issue here is the distinctiveness of HRM practices: ‘it is not the presence of selection or training but a distinctive approach to selection or training that matters. It is the use of high performance or high commitment HRM practices’ (Guest, 1997, p. 273).
3. They provide a characterization of HRM that establishes variables and relationships to be researched.
4. They serve as a heuristic device – something to help us discover and understand the world – for explaining the nature and significance of key HR practices and outcomes.

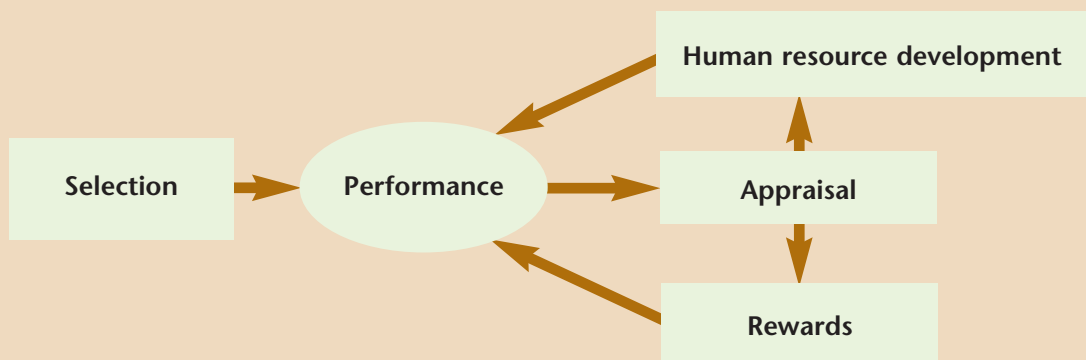


Figure 1.4 The Fombrun, Tichy and Devanna model of human resource management (1984)

Source: Adapted from Fombrun et al. (1984). Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons Ltd

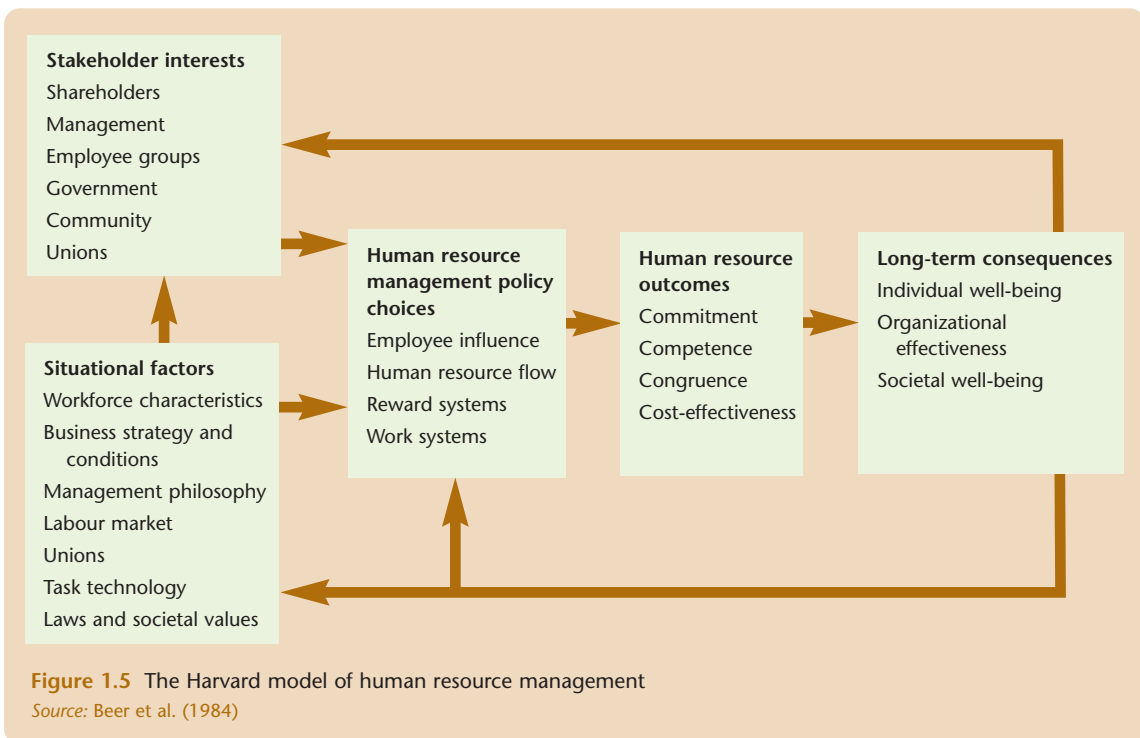
The Fombrun, Tichy and Devanna model of human resource management

The early HRM model developed by Fombrun et al. (1984) emphasizes the interrelatedness and coherence of HRM activities. The HRM 'cycle' in their model consists of four key constituent components: selection, appraisal, development and rewards (Figure 1.4). These four HR activities aim to increase organizational performance. The weakness of Fombrun et al.'s model is its apparent prescriptive nature, with its focus on four HR practices. It also ignores different stakeholder interests, situational factors and the notion of management's strategic choice. The strength of the model, however, is that it expresses the coherence of internal HR policies and the importance of 'matching' internal HR policies and practices to the organization's external business strategy (see Chapters 2 and 3). The notion of the 'HRM cycle' is also a simple model that serves as a heuristic framework for explaining the nature and significance of key HR practices and the interactions among the factors making up the complex fields of HRM.

The Harvard model of human resource management

The analytical framework of the 'Harvard model' offered by Beer et al. consists of six basic components:

1. situational factors
2. stakeholder interests
3. HRM policy choices
4. HR outcomes



5. long-term consequences
6. a feedback loop through which the outputs flow directly into the organization and to the stakeholders.

The Harvard model for HRM is shown in Figure 1.5.

The *situational factors* influence management's choice of HR strategy. This normative model incorporates workforce characteristics, management philosophy, labour market regulations, societal values and patterns of unionization, and suggests a meshing of both 'product market' and 'sociocultural logics' (Evans and Lorange, 1989). Analytically, both HRM scholars and practitioners will be more comfortable with contextual variables included in the model because it conforms to the reality of what they know: 'the employment relationship entails a blending of business and societal expectations' (Boxall, 1992, p. 72).

The *stakeholder interests* recognize the importance of 'trade-offs', either explicitly or implicitly, between the interests of owners and those of employees and their organizations, the unions. Although the model is still vulnerable to the charge of 'unitarism', it is a much more pluralist frame of reference than that found in later models.

HRM policy choices emphasize that management's decisions and actions in HR management can be fully appreciated only if it is recognized that they result from an interaction between constraints and choices. The model depicts management as a real actor, capable of making at least some degree of unique contribution within environmental and organizational parameters and of influencing those parameters itself over time (Beer et al., 1984).

HR outcomes are high employee commitment to organizational goals and high individual performance leading to cost-effective products or services. The underlying assumptions here are that employees have talents that are rarely fully utilized at work, and that they show a desire to experience growth through work. Thus, the HRM model takes the view that employment relations should be managed on the basis of the assumptions inherent in McGregor's (1960) approach to people-related issues, which he labelled 'Theory Y'.⁴

The *long-term consequences* distinguish between three levels: individual, organizational and societal. At the level of the individual employee, the long-term outputs comprise the psychological rewards that workers receive in exchange for effort. At the organizational level, increased effectiveness ensures the survival of the organization. In turn, at the societal level, as a result of fully utilizing people at work, some of society's goals (e.g. employment and growth) are attained. A strength of the Harvard model is the classification of inputs and outcomes at both the organizational and the societal level, creating the basis for a critique of comparative HRM (Boxall, 1992). A weakness is the absence of a coherent theoretical basis for measuring the relationship between HR inputs, outcomes and performance (Guest, 1997).

A *feedback loop* is the sixth component of the Harvard model. As we have discussed, the situational factors influence HRM policy and choices. Conversely, however, long-term outputs can influence the situational factors, stakeholder interests and HR policies. The feedback loop in Figure 1.5 reflects this two-way relationship.

The Harvard model clearly provides a useful analytical basis for the study of HRM. It also contains elements that are analytical (i.e. situational factors, stakeholders, strategic choice levels) and prescriptive (i.e. notions of commitment, competence, etc.) (Boxall, 1992).

The Guest model of human resource management

David Guest (1989, 1997) has developed a more prescriptive theoretical framework, reflecting the view that a core set of integrated HRM practices can achieve superior individual and organizational performance. According to Guest, HRM differs from personnel management, and he attempts to identify the major assumptions or stereotypes underpinning each approach to employment management (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Points of difference between personnel management (PM) and human resource management (HRM)

	PM compliance	HRM commitment
Psychological contract	Fair day's work for a fair day's pay	Reciprocal commitment
Locus of control	External	Internal
Employee relations	Pluralist Collective Low trust	Unitarist Individual High trust
Organizing principles	Mechanistic Formal/defined roles Top-down Centralized	Organic Flexible roles Bottom-up Decentralized
Policy goals	Administrative efficiency Standard performance Cost minimization	Adaptive workforce Improving performance Maximum utilization

Source: Guest (1987)

HRM, according to the stereotypes shown in Table 1.1, is distinctively different from personnel management because:

- it integrates HR into strategic management, it seeks behavioural commitment to organizational goals
- the perspective is unitary with a focus on the individual
- it works better in organizations that have an 'organic' structure
- the emphasis is on a full and positive utilization of HR.

Implicit in the contrasting stereotypes is an assumption that HRM is 'better'. However, as Guest correctly states, 'this fails to take account of variations in context which might limit its effectiveness ... human resource management can most sensibly be viewed as an approach to managing the workforce' (1987, p. 508).

The central hypothesis of Guest's (1997) model is that if an integrated set of HR practices is applied in a coherent fashion, superior individual performance will result. It also assumes that this will result in superior organizational performance. The 'Guest model' has six components (Table 1.2):

1. an HR strategy
2. a set of HR policies
3. a set of HR outcomes

4. behavioural outcomes
5. a number of performance outcomes
6. financial outcomes.

The model acknowledges the close links between HR strategy and general business strategies: differentiation, focus, and cost (see Chapter 2). The 'core' hypothesis, however, is that HR practices should be designed to lead to a set of HR outcomes of 'high employee commitment', 'high quality' and 'flexibility'. Like Beer et al., Guest sees high employee commitment as a critical HR outcome, concerned with the goals of binding employees to the organization and obtaining behaviour outcomes of increased effort, cooperation and organizational citizenship. Quality refers to all aspects of employee behaviour that bear directly on the quality of goods and services. Flexibility is concerned with employees' receptiveness to innovation and change. The right-hand side of the model focuses on the link between HR practices and performance. Only when all three HR outcomes – commitment, quality and flexibility – are achieved can we expect superior performance outcomes. As Guest (1989, 1997) emphasizes, these HRM goals are a 'package'; 'Only when a coherent strategy, directed towards these four policy goals, fully integrated into business strategy and fully sponsored by line management at all levels is applied will the high productivity and related outcomes sought by industry be achieved' (1990, p. 378).

Table 1.2 The Guest model of human resource management (HRM)

HRM strategy	HRM practices	HRM outcomes	Behaviour outcomes	Performance outcomes	Financial outcomes
Differentiation (innovation)	Selection	Commitment	Effort/ motivation	High: Productivity Quality Innovation	Profits
	Training				
Focus (quality)	Appraisal	Quality	Cooperation	Low: Absence Labour turnover Conflict	Return on investment
Cost (cost-reduction)	Rewards				
		Job design	Flexibility	Organizational citizenship	Customer complaints
	Involvement				
	Status and security				

Source: Guest (1997)

Guest (1987, 1989, 1997) recognizes a number of conceptual issues associated with the HRM model. The first issue is that the values underpinning the model are predominantly individualist-oriented; 'There is no recognition of any broader concept of pluralism within society giving rise to solidaristic collective orientation' (Guest, 1987, p. 519). The second conceptual issue concerns the status of some of the concepts. For example, the important concept of commitment is suggested to be 'a rather messy, ill-defined concept' (Guest, 1987, pp. 513–14). A third issue is the explicit link between HRM and performance. This raises the problem of deciding which types of performance

indicator to use in order to establish these links (see Chapter 14). It has been argued elsewhere that Guest's model may simply be a polar **ideal type**, first developed by the German sociologist Max Weber, towards which organizations can move, thus positing unrealistic conditions for the practice of HRM (Keenoy, 1990, p. 367). It may also make the error of criticizing managers for not conforming to an image that academics have constructed (Boxall, 1992). Furthermore, it presents the HRM model as inconsistent with collective approaches to managing the employment relationship (Legge, 1989).

In contrast, the strength of the Guest model is that it clearly maps out the field of HRM and classifies the inputs and outcomes. The model is useful for examining the key goals usually associated with the normative models of HRM: strategic integration, commitment, flexibility and quality. Guest's constructed set of theoretical propositions can also provide a framework for a critical dialogue on the precise nature of HRM and the tensions between 'hard' and 'soft' versions (Legge, 2005). The constituents of Guest's model linking HRM and performance can be empirically tested by research.

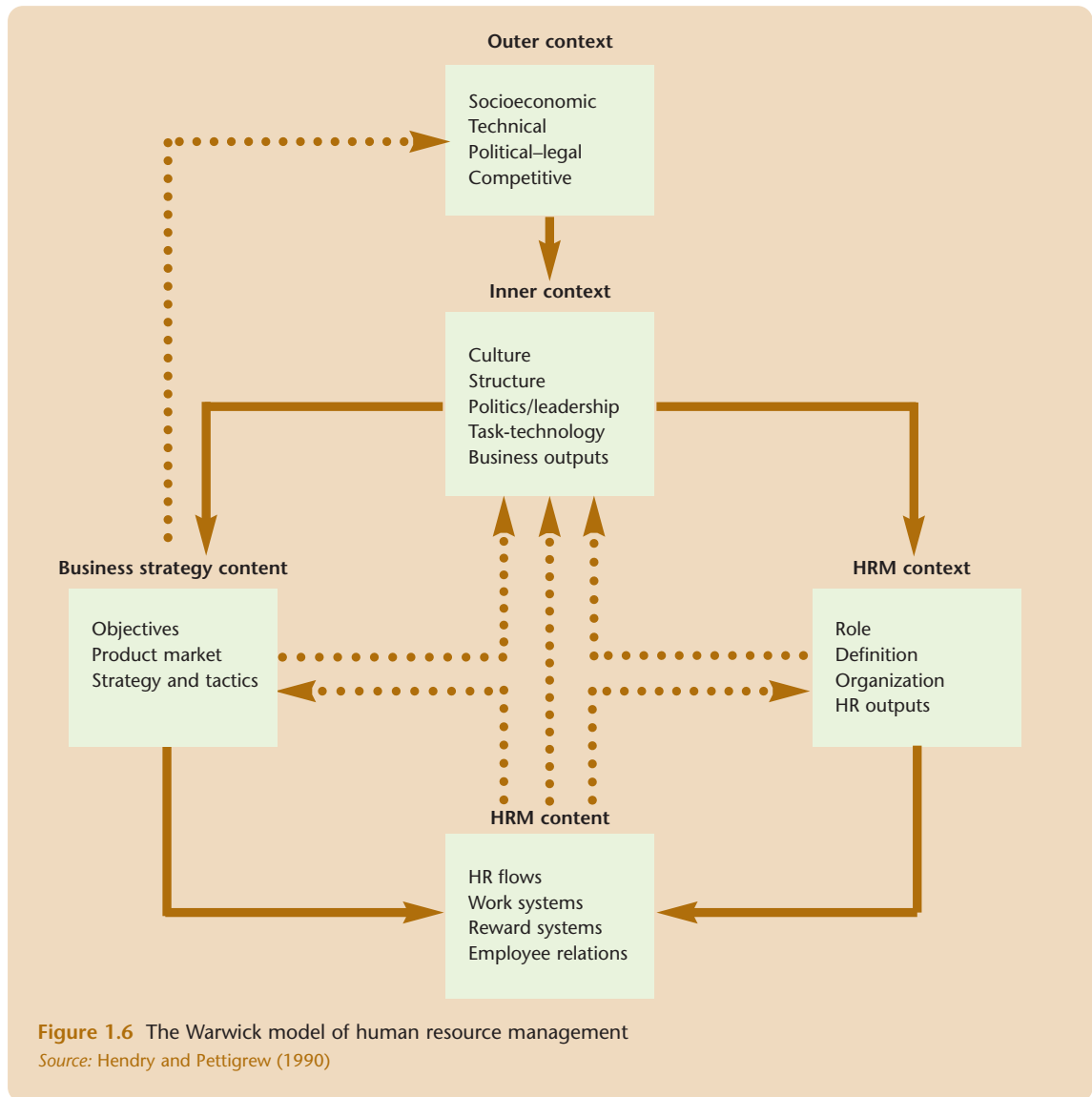
The Warwick model of human resource management

The Warwick model emanates from the Centre for Corporate Strategy and Change at the University of Warwick, UK, and with two particular researchers: Hendry and Pettigrew (1990). The Warwick model extends the Harvard framework by drawing on its analytical aspects. The model takes cognisance of business strategy and HR practices, the external and internal context in which these activities take place, and the processes by which such changes take place, including interactions between changes in both context and content. The strength of the model is that it identifies and classifies important environmental influences on HRM. It maps the connections between the outer (wider environment) and inner (organizational) contexts, and explores how HRM adapts to changes in the context. The implication is that those organizations achieving an alignment between the external and internal contexts will experience superior performance. A weakness of the model is that the process whereby internal HR practices are linked to business output or performance is not developed. The five elements of the model, shown in Figure 1.6, are:

1. outer context
2. inner context
3. business strategy content
4. HRM context
5. HRM content.

The Storey model of human resource management

The Storey model attempts to demonstrate the differences between what John Storey terms the 'personnel and industrial' and the HRM paradigm by creating an 'ideal type'. Storey devised the model by reconstructing the 'implicit models' conveyed by some managers during research interviews. We should note that the usage of 'ideal type' is a popular heuristic tool in the social sciences. It is a 'mental construct' and, in its conceptual purity, cannot be found in any workplace. Its purpose is 'to simplify by highlighting the essential features in an exaggerated way' (1992, p. 34). Storey's model characterizes HRM as 'an amalgam of description, prescription, and logical deduction' (Storey, 2001, p. 6). The four main elements in his HRM model (Table 1.3) are:



1. beliefs and assumptions
2. strategic aspects
3. the role of line managers
4. key levers.

According to the stereotypes depicted in Table 1.3, HRM attempts to increase trust and employee commitment and aims to go 'beyond the contract'. The strategic aspects of Storey's model show HRM as central to corporate planning. The third component, line management, gives HRM specialists a 'transformational leadership' role in the organization. Research evidence from 15 UK 'core' organizations, studied by Storey (1992), suggests that line managers have emerged in almost all cases as the key players in HR issues. The key levers are shown in the lower portion of Storey's

Table 1.3 The Storey model of human resource management

Personnel and industrial relations (IR) and human resource management (HRM): the differences

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Personnel and IR</i>	<i>HRM</i>
Beliefs and assumptions		
Contract	Careful delineation of written contracts	Aim to go 'beyond contract'
Rules	Importance of devising clear rules/mutuality	'Can do' outlook; impatience with 'rules'
Guide to management action	Procedures/consistency/control	'Business need'/flexibility/commitment
Behaviour referent	Norms/custom and practice	Values/mission
Managerial task vis-à-vis labour	Monitoring	Nurturing
Nature of relations	Pluralist	Unitarist
Conflict	Institutionalised	De-emphasised
Standardisation	High (for example 'parity' an issue)	Low (for example 'parity' not seen as relevant)
Strategic aspects		
Key relations	Labour–management	Business–customer
Initiatives	Piecemeal	Integrated
Corporate plan	Marginal to	Central to
Speed of decision	Slow	Fast
Line management		
Management role	Transactional	Transformational leadership
Key managers	Personnel/IR specialists	General/business/line managers
Prized management skills	Negotiation	Facilitation
Key levers		
Foci of attention for interventions	Personnel procedures	Wide-ranging cultural, structural and personnel strategies
Selection	Separate, marginal task	Integrated, key task
Pay	Job evaluation; multiple fixed grades	Performance-related; few if any grades
Conditions	Separately negotiated	Harmonisation
Labour–management	Collective bargaining contracts	Towards individual contracts
Thrust of relations with stewards	Regularised through facilities and training	Marginalised (with exception of some bargaining for change models)
Communication	Restricted flow/indirect	Increased flow/direct
Job design	Division of labour	Teamwork
Conflict handling	Reach temporary truces	Manage climate and culture
Training and development	Controlled access to courses	Learning companies

Source: Storey (1992)

model and are issues and techniques strongly featured, explicitly or implicitly, in researcher–manager interviews on HRM. Storey found considerable unevenness in the adoption of these key levers (performance-related pay, harmonization of conditions, the learning company). The ‘implicit models’ of the managers were used to devise a checklist of 25 key HRM variables to measure the degree of movement from one approach to the other in the ‘core’ organizations (Storey, 1992).



REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Reviewing the five models, what beliefs and assumptions are implied in them? For example, look at the direction of the arrows in Fombrun et al.’s model: what is the message for managers? What similarities and/or differences do you see? How well does each model define the characteristics of HRM?

Personnel management versus human resource management

It should be clear by now that an important part of the debate on HRM centres on the critical question: ‘How does HRM differ from the deeply rooted personnel management model?’ In the UK, in particular, it has proved difficult to arrive at an agreed meaning and significance of HRM. For some, HRM represents a new approach to managing people. For others, it is simply a relabelling and repackaging of ‘progressive’ personnel management (e.g. Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Noon, 1992).

The review of the HRM models suggests that there is a difference between HRM and traditional personnel management, and these differences are not just a matter of semantics. This assertion is based upon a number of previously stated arguments. First, HRM is, in theory at least, integrated into *strategic planning*; as Hendry and Pettigrew (1990, p. 36) state, ‘the strategic character of HRM is indeed distinctive’. Second, the HRM model emphasizes the importance of the ‘*psychological contract*’. Whereas personnel management is built on a legally constructed exchange – ‘you do this work for that level of pay’ – HRM attempts to build a cognitive construct concerned with developing a ‘reciprocal commitment’ and obligation between each of the parties. In this sense, the concept of employee commitment ‘lies at the heart of any analysis of HRM’ (Guest, 1998, p. 42). Third, the HRM paradigm explicitly emphasizes the importance of *learning* in the workplace. Fourth, HRM has overall focused heavily on the *individual* and the way in which individuals might be motivated and managed to achieve individual and organizational goals. The role of workplace trade union representatives and the *collective* aspects of relations between the workforce and management are marginalized. The rise in prominence of HRM has coincided with a period of decline in trade union membership (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998), which has led critics of HRM to argue convincingly that this approach to employment management represents a renaissance of unitarism or non-union employment strategy (see Chapter 11). Fifth, the theoretical models conceptualize HRM as a *proactive* central strategic management activity that is different from personnel management, with its implied passive connotations. Sixth, three of the HRM models make explicit reference to performance outcomes, and one compelling claim for HRM is that if organizations adopt this distinctive approach to employment management, the organization’s financial ‘bottom line’ will improve.

The positive claim that a coherent ‘bundle’ of HR practices will, when aligned with

organizational strategy, result in higher performance is an area of continuing research (see Chapter 14). The HRM phenomenon is 'highly controversial', certainly among the academic community, and its antecedents, its defining characteristics and its outcomes are much disputed (Storey, 2001). However, as others have suggested (Legge, 2005), what may be of more significance is not the message, but the messenger; HRM represents the 'discovery' of human capital as an asset by chief executives, and the message itself is being taken more seriously. The core argument of this chapter is that it is legitimate to define HRM as a particular approach to the management of the employment relationship with a distinctive set of HR policies and practices designed to produce specific outcomes: securing greater employee commitment and organizational performance.

Over the last decade, there has been incontrovertible evidence of a fall in the importance attached to 'collectivism' and a renaissance of 'individualism' in the management of the employment relationship in UK-based organizations (Kersley et al., 2005; Millward et al., 2000). A symbolic desire by employers to move towards 'individually oriented' cultures is the growth of contingency pay (Bacon and Storey, 1993). Many HRM techniques could exist within either an HRM or a traditional personnel management model, depending upon both circumstances and strategic choice (Keenoy, 1990). But also, the fairly extensive uptake of individual, rather than 'bundles' of, HR practices supports the view that a large proportion of UK organizations are still preoccupied with cost-focus strategies – the so-called 'hard' HRM model (Legge, 2005; Storey, 2001). In appraising the empirical evidence, there appears to be a disjuncture between knowledge of the normative HRM model and management practice. Despite many organizations looking for some magic formula that will provide a competitive advantage, relatively few organizations have integrated HRM planning into strategic business planning, a central element in the HRM model.



HRM IN PRACTICE 1.3

HR HAS MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE TO VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

SHANN KLIE, *CANADIAN HR REPORTER*, 22 MAY 2006, PP. 3–4

When Catherine Connelly's mother worked as a school librarian, she was completely dependent on volunteers to run the library programmes successfully. But there were limits as to what she could ask her volunteers to do because the dynamic between volunteers and their managers was very delicate. 'It's almost like they're a guest in your organization,' said Connelly, an assistant professor of

HRM and management at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University in Canada. 'You can't be as bossy as you would ordinarily be. Volunteers are there doing you a favour.'

But volunteers are immensely valuable to the economy. Unfortunately many organizations have difficulty retaining volunteers and frequently accept low levels of performance, said Connelly. Employ-

ers assume the experiences, attitudes and behaviours of volunteers are identical to those of paid employees, but they can't be motivated with promises of financial rewards and they have tenuous links to their organizations, she said.

But even though there are many differences between managing volunteers and paid staff, there are also a lot of similarities and HR professionals can

play a big part in effectively managing this increasingly important workforce, said Marlene Deboisbriand, president of Volunteer Canada, an Ottawa-based group that promotes the role and value of volunteering. 'People mostly think of HR as paid human resources, but at least in the voluntary and non-profit sector, it includes voluntary human resources as well', she said.

The same challenges HR faces with paid staff – recruitment, retention, diversity, health and safety, screening and risk management – also apply to the management of volunteers, she said.

In some organizations, the responsibility of managing volunteers falls to the same HR professional who manages paid staff, said Connelly. 'HR has a lot to offer these organizations, but we need to be careful about transplanting HR theories from the business school directly into a voluntary or non-profit organization', she said. She compared volunteers to contract and temporary workers. Volunteers tend to have a more marginal

position within the organization and might volunteer at an organization to get a foot in the door or gain work experience, she said.

The same challenges HR faces with paid staff – recruitment, retention, diversity, health and safety, screening and risk management – also apply to the management of volunteers.

One of the best ways to motivate volunteers is to give them tasks that match the reasons they have for volunteering – be it learning a new skill or being more involved with people, said Connelly. 'You need to be careful that you're giving tasks to volunteers that keep them interested', she said. 'But you still have to be very careful about the impact on paid staff. You don't want to be giving all the fun, interesting, nice tasks to volunteers, because then the paid staff will resent the volunteers coming in and taking all the good stuff. No one wants to

be stuck just stuffing envelopes.'

In organizations where the management of volunteers falls under the purview of a volunteer manager, usually someone outside of HR, the HR department still has an important role to play, said Deboisbriand. HR needs to build links with volunteer managers, because these managers are doing a lot of the same functions as HR and can benefit from HR expertise, she said. 'It's really important that volunteers receive the proper training, especially if they're working in high-risk jobs in hospitals or as counsellors for disadvantaged populations such as the homeless and drug addicts', said Deboisbriand.

Just as no employer would consider hiring an employee without a thorough interview and screening process, the same applies to taking on new volunteers. But HR and volunteer managers have to walk a fine line because volunteers might find the typical screening process invasive, said Deboisbriand. To date, the management of volunteers hasn't been studied from an HR perspective, said Connelly.

Paradoxes in human resource management

The more critical evaluations of HRM models expose internal paradoxes. Paradox involves ambiguity and inconsistency, two or more positions that each sound reasonable yet conflict or even contradict each other. The use of paradox is one of a number of well-established techniques used by social scientists to engage their audiences and to encourage them to view social reality differently (Crow, 2005). Paradox is inherent in HRM, similar to what Charles Dickens (1859 [1952], p. 21) wrote in *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way ...

For our purposes here, paradox results when managers, in pursuit of a specific organizational goal or goals, call for or carry out actions that are in opposition to the very goals the organization is attempting to accomplish. Critics of the HRM model have drawn upon the Weberian notion (Weber, 1968) of a **paradox of consequence**, arising from HR policies and practices. For example, new organizational designs have been introduced to improve productivity and employee autonomy. On the other hand, the productivity benefits arising from the new organizational forms are accompanied by a number of deleterious consequences on the psychological contract, which have the effect of undermining other espoused goals such as loyalty and commitment. More broadly, there is ambiguity with regard to whether the main role of the HRM function is a 'caring' or a 'controlling' one (Watson, 1986), and whether these ambiguities are exacerbated by the contradictions of capitalist employment relations and patriarchy (Legge, 2005). Townley (1994), for example, applying the work of Michel Foucault, offers a convincing argument that HR practices produce knowledge about work activities and employees' behaviour that enables the workforce to be more easily controlled. A whole battery of HR practices are designed to make employees more 'governable' and to bring order and stability to organizational life.

Legge's (1995, 2001, 2005) incisive critique of the HRM phenomenon identifies further ambiguities in the 'soft' and 'hard' schools of HRM. As such, she contrasts the 'rhetoric' and 'reality' of HRM where, for example, the rhetoric that asserts 'we are all managers now' owing to 'empowerment' conceals the legitimate question of whether a social group holding privileges and material returns can hold on to power: 'Paradoxically, then, a rhetoric adopted to enhance managerial legitimacy might prove the thin end of the wedge for at least some of its advocates' (Legge, 1995, p. 56). Similarly, the inclusion of the HR director in the strategic management team, the process of 'decentralization' or the act of 'giving away HR management' to line managers, and the outsourcing of HR activities might ultimately lead to the demise of the HR professional (Andolšek and Štebe, 2005; Caldwell, 2001; Klass et al., 2005): the 'Big Hat, No Cattle' syndrome (Ferne et al., 1994). As Legge (2005) points out, all this might undermine the perennial quest of HRM specialists for centrality and credibility. Armstrong (1989) has argued that short-term accounting controls practised in UK companies might well undermine long-term HR goals oriented towards employee development. In addition, the HRM rhetoric on investment in work-based learning is, according to Lyon and Glover (1998), at odds with the reality of 'HRM's organizationally sponsored ageism'.

One notable feature of much of the HRM literature is the tendency for the research and debate on the HRM model to be gender-blind. More recently, however, there has been more interest in the gender implications of HRM models (Dickens, 1994, 1998). Within that interest, Dickens has suggested that the HRM model might undermine the promotion of equal opportunities and that the gender equality assumption in the HRM model, which emphasizes the value of diversity and individual learning and development, is part of the rhetoric rather than the reality. Theoretically, one of the most important consequences of gender analysis in the HRM approach is its power to question research findings and analysis that segregates studies of HRM from those of gender divisions in the labour market (Dex, 1988), patriarchal power (Witz, 1986), issues of workplace inequality (Phillips and Phillips, 1993) and 'dual-role' work-family issues (Knights and Willmott, 1986; Platt, 1997). More importantly, however, including the development of gender in the study of the HRM model has a potential to move the HRM debate forward by examining the people who are deemed to be the

'recipients' of HRM theory and practice (Mabey et al., 1998b). Throughout this book, we emphasize that paradox is an inherent ongoing part of the employment relationship. By illustrating and explaining the inevitable paradoxes, we hope to encourage a deeper understanding and sensitivity with respect to HR-related issues.

Studying human resource management

This book presents a detailed examination of definitions, theories, historical developments and practices in the field of HRM, and in so doing exposes differing *standpoints* found in the management literature. Differing standpoints give rise to different perspectives, which in turn provide meaning, legitimacy and justification for people's actions. When people ask, 'What's your perspective on this?', they might just as well be asking, 'What is your own bias on this?', as each perspective is a particular bias, based on how *you* 'see' the issue and what vested interests are the most important to you (Pratt, 1998). Thus, perspectives are a 'lens' through which we view the world of work and organizations. When we refer to a perspective on HRM, we are speaking of an interrelated set of beliefs, values and intentions, which legitimize actions.

In our treatment of HRM, we present two standpoints: mainstream and critical. Although there are variations and tensions, *mainstream* management analysis makes a number of assumptions. They are that the managerial process takes place in rationally designed organizations to accomplish strategic goals; work organizations are harmonious bodies tending towards a state of equilibrium and order; and the basic task of managers is to manage resources for formal organizational ends. Thus, the mainstream perspective becomes inseparable from the notion of efficiency. The focus of much of the research and literature on management using this 'lens' is about finding the 'winning formula' so that more managers can become 'effective' (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Common to all variations of mainstream perspectives is a failure to connect management processes to the 'master discourse' on market economics and globalization.

In contrast, *critical* perspectives on management set out to discover the ways in which power, control, conflict and legitimacy impact on employment relations. As is the case with mainstream perspectives, critical perspectives are based on numerous theoretical ideas. Obviously, the starting point is critique per se: the identification of the limitations, paradoxes, contradictions and ideological functions of orthodoxy (see, Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Mills and Simmons, 1995; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). In critical social analysis, *historical* and *contextual* considerations are underlined. Consequently, HRM theory and practice can only be understood as part of a management process located within a set of structural contingencies. This approach to studying HRM downplays the 'rhetoric-versus-reality' type of analysis and the clichéd distinctions between 'hard' and 'soft' HRM models by attending to the interplay of economic forces, power and conflict (Watson, 2004). In writing this text, we have found concepts from both mainstream and critical perspectives to be helpful for analysing HRM, albeit through the prism of our own bias. We hope that our approach to HRM will encourage the reader to question, to be sceptical and to seek multicausality when analysing employment relations in the contemporary workplace.



STUDY TIP

Evaluating the debate on HRM more effectively means having an appreciation that most scholarly writing is 'embedded' within a dominant perspective (Reinharz, 1988, p. 168). Thus, Reinharz argues, 'we need to treat scientific writing not only as a source of information as defined by the author, but also as a text revealing something about the author'.

Obtain a copy of T. Keenoy's (1990) article, 'Human resource management: rhetoric, reality and contradiction' (*International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1(3), 363–84) and a copy of G. Prahalad and C. Hamel's (1990) article 'The core competencies of the corporation' (*Harvard Business Review*, May–June, 79–91). Compare how the authors define HRM and describe its role in the organization. What asides, examples and taken-for-granted assumptions do the authors make? Are the authors 'silent' on some HRM issues (e.g. gender, discrimination, race/ethnicity, ageism)? After comparing the two articles, to what extent do the texts reveal something about the authors' 'lens' or perspective?

Chapter summary

- In this introductory chapter, we have emphasized the primacy of managing people, individually and collectively, over other resources in the workplace. We have examined the development of the HRM model and emphasized that, since its earliest inception, it has remained highly controversial. In terms of its being a set of ideas associated with the management of employees, we have portrayed the HRM phenomenon as a historical outcome of rising neoliberalism ideology, much as the 'Social Contract' of the 1970s was an outcome of Keynesian economic planning. In the UK and USA, the HRM phenomenon emerged during the political era of Thatcherism and Reaganism (Guest, 1990). As such, HRM reflected an ascendancy of a new political and economic ideology and the changed conditions of national and global capitalism.
- To show the polysemy of the term 'human resource management', we have examined five theoretical models. We have discussed whether HRM now represents a new orthodoxy. Certainly, the language is different. The US models include those of Fombrun et al. and Beer et al. For Fombrun et al., HRM portrays an approach to managing employment relations that emphasizes the interrelatedness and coherence of HR practices; it is also one of the first models to explicitly suggest that specific bundles of HR practices lead to performance outcomes. The Harvard HRM model provides a useful analytical framework for studying HRM. It contains analytical elements, such as situational factors, stakeholder interests and strategic choice, and prescriptive elements stressing notions of employee commitment and competence.
- We have also examined HRM models developed by UK academics including Guest, Hendry and Pettigrew, and Storey. Guest has identified key features of personnel management and HRM that allow for comparative measurement. His model acknowledges the close links between HR strategy and general business strategies. Like Beer et al., Guest sees high employee commitment as a crucial outcome of HRM. The model developed by

Hendry and Pettigrew extended the Harvard framework, drawing on its analytical aspects by connecting the outer (wider environment) and inner (organizational) contexts, and exploring how HRM adapts to changes in the context. Storey sees HRM as a combination of description, prescription and logical deduction. His model of HRM focuses on four key elements: beliefs and assumptions, strategy, the role of line managers and key levers. Storey has also identified the 'Jekyll and Hyde' quality of HRM, or what are called 'soft' and 'hard' versions of HRM (Storey, 1989; Sisson and Storey, 2000).

- Whereas personnel management is built on a legally constructed exchange – 'You do this work for that level of pay' – HRM builds a cognitive construct concerned with developing a 'reciprocal commitment' and obligation between each of the parties. Managing the psychological contract is an important task for managers in the contemporary workplace. On balance, we consider that the 'soft' HRM metaphor is different from personnel management because it represents a different 'mindset' and approach to managing people in the workplace. In essence, 'soft', or what others have called 'high-commitment', HRM sees employees – managerial and non-managerial – as part of the solution rather than the problem. This distinctive approach may be summed up in this way: people empowered and continuously learning are central to organizational success.
- Paradox is an ongoing part of the employment relationship. The more critical evaluations of HRM expose internal paradoxes. Throughout this book, we illustrate and explain some of these inevitable paradoxes to encourage a deeper understanding of HR-related issues.
- Finally, the HRM discourse should be considered within the wider debates on globalization, competitive advantage and changing public policy. Every management function involves the execution of HR activities, so HRM has an enduring role in the task of designing work, resourcing the organization, motivating and controlling all employee groups, and managing the contradictions inherent in capitalist employment relations.

Key concepts

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ● Employment relationship | ● Paradox of consequence |
| ● Human resource management | ● Personnel management |
| ● Ideal type | ● Psychological contract |
| ● Management | ● Theoretical perspective |

Chapter review questions

1. What is human resource management and what role does it play in work organizations?
2. To what extent does the emergence of HRM reflect the rise and ideology of neoliberalism?
3. To what extent is HRM different from conventional personnel management – or is it simply 'old wine in new bottles'?

Further reading

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Practising human resource management



Searching the web

Enter the website of an HR-related organization (e.g. www.hrhq.com) and an HR-related magazine (e.g. www.peoplemanagement.co.uk). Write a report outlining the key issues facing managers and HR specialists. To what extent, if at all, do the current issues reflect underlying tensions and contradictions within the HR function?



HRM group project

Form a study group of three to five people, and go to the website of any of the following organizations or one that interests members of the group (Compaq Computer (www.compaq.com); Airbus Industries (www.airbus.com); Wal-Mart (www.walmart.com); Virgin Airlines (www.virgin.com)). Then go to the 'Company overview' of the site and look at the HRM department. Evaluate the goals of the HRM department in the light of the material contained in this chapter. Write a report that draws out the common features and identifies any key omissions (e.g. union–management relations) As a guide to your search, ask the following questions. How is the HRM department organized? Do the department's activities correspond to the key functional areas outlined in this chapter? Do the values listed here provide a good guideline for managerial behaviour at the company? Do the HR department's objectives emphasize the strategic role of HRM?

Chapter case study

SERVO ENGINEERING

Servo Engineering was founded in 1897 to manufacture mining equipment. Over the last 50 years, the company has developed as a leading manufacturer of commercial vehicle components. In 1965, Servo Engineering became a subsidiary of Zipton Holding Ltd, which merged in 1977 with American Ensign. This multinational company has manufacturing plants in the UK, the USA and Germany. In 2006, the UK group had four sites in the UK.

In recent years, the company replaced over half its conventional and numerical control machines with computer numerical control. In addition, the firm organized production into six 'self-managed teams' (SMT). The SMTs were product-centred: for example, one SMT would manufacture a whole component such as vacuum pumps or air compressors. Each SMT operated as a miniature factory within the larger factory, and each SMT had sufficient machinery to complete the majority of the manufacturing stages. Processes outside the scope of the SMT were subcontracted out, either to another SMT or to an external contractor. The number of workers in each SMT varied between 12 and 50. The SMT operated a three-shift system: 6 am to 2 pm, 2 pm to 10 pm, and 10 pm to 6 am. The division of labour within the SMT is as follows. The 'SMT supervisor' had overall responsibility for the SMT. The product-coordinator's job was to ensure the supply of raw materials and parts to meet SMT production targets. The 'charge-hand' acted as progress-chaser. Below the supervisory grades was a hierarchy of manual grades reflecting different levels of training, experience and pay. For example, the 'setter' was apprentice-trained and was paid a skilled rate to set up the machines for the semi-skilled operators. Semi-skilled workers received little training. In total, the firm employed 442 people. Just over half the

workforce belong to the trade union, AMICUS-AEEU, for collective-bargaining purposes.

The personnel manager at the factory was George Wyke, who had worked for the company for 25 years. Prior to becoming the personnel manager, he had been a union shop steward. He had no formal personnel management qualifications. The company gave SMT leaders considerable discretion for employee relations. To quote George Wyke: 'What the STM system has done as far as man-management [sic] is concerned, is that it has pushed that responsibility further down the chain, into the SMTs. So where somebody wants disciplining, they don't say to the personnel manager: "I want to sack this bastard. What can I do to get rid of him?" They know what they have got to do. The only time they will come to me is to seek advice on whether they are doing it right or wrong.' Although levels of unemployment were high in the area, the company had difficulty recruiting 'good' people at its factory in Yorkshire. Also, absenteeism and turnover were high, as shown here.

<i>Absenteeism</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>Turnover rates</i>
5.3	January	34.4
5.7	February	20.4
8.0	March	27.5

The apparent low level of commitment among manual employees can be explained in two ways. First, shop stewards and workers expressed considerable discontent over the bonus scheme: the standard time allowed to complete a particular task was not considered adequate to earn a 'decent' bonus. Second, the way in which the SMTs were designed resulted in operatives performing narrow, repetitive tasks under close supervision. The personnel manager, George Wyke, is due to retire this

Christmas. The plant manager, Elizabeth Bell, has been concerned for some time over employee relations in the factory and the management style of George Wyke and some of the SMT leaders. Elizabeth Bell has decided to seek an external candidate to replace the incumbent personnel manager. Gleaning through the ads in

newspapers and journals, she also decided to drop the term 'personnel' and advertise for a 'human resource' manager.

Source: Adapted from The motor components company: Japanization in large-batch production. In J. Bratton (1992) *Japanization at Work* (pp. 103–30). Basingstoke: Macmillan – now Palgrave Macmillan.

Discussion questions

1. Describe the main features of George Wyke's approach to managing employment relations. How does Wyke's approach differ from the stereotyped HRM approach?
2. Discuss the contribution that an HRM professional could make to this company.



HR-related skill development

No skill is as important to managers as report-writing. Managers and HR specialists have to write progress reports, proposals, accident reports and evaluation reports to name but a few. You should use a formal report format if your subject matter is important to your organization, if your findings are extensive or if your readership is large or important. Many of the assignments in the sections 'Practising human resource management', ask you to write a formal report. Remember that a formal report, especially if it is to be sent outside the organization, is meant to reflect and maintain the organization's professional image. You will develop your skill at report-writing by going to our website (www.palgrave.com/business/brattonandgold4) and clicking on 'Report writing'.

Notes

1. Jeffrey Pfeffer (1998) *The Human Equation*, p. 5.
2. Maureen Shaw, COE (2002) Quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, January 16, p. M2.
3. Lynda Gratton (2005) Managing integration through cooperation. *Human Resource Management*, p. 153.
4. According to McGregor (1960; *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill), 'people work because they want to work', not because they have to work. Thus, the Theory Y view of people assumes that when workers are given challenging assignments and autonomy over their work assignments, they will respond with high motivation, high commitment and high performance.



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