

Rethinking, Re-viewing and Re-strategizing HRM for Future Work – A critical Review

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Abstract - This critical review explores the need for rethinking, re-viewing, and re-strategizing Human Resource Management (HRM) in the context of future work. As traditional HRM practices may no longer suffice in the face of changing work patterns and evolving workforce needs, this review paper seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for HRM practitioners and the necessary adaptation, re-strategizing and repositioning needed to both face the challenges and tap into the opportunities. To do this we have drawn on a range of literatures and empirical evidences from the existing literatures on HRM for future work. Our findings highlight the importance of adopting a more dynamic and flexible approach to HRM, one that is responsive to changing work environments and emerging technologies. Ultimately, the review argues that rethinking, re-viewing, and re-strategizing HRM is essential for ensuring that organizations can effectively manage and develop their human capital in the years to come.

Key Word: Human Resource Management (HRM), Future Work Place (FWP), HR Function (HRF)

I. Background & Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a crucial function within organizations, responsible for managing the people who make up the workforce (Grobler et al., 2016). Traditionally, HRM has focused on tasks such as recruitment, selection, training, compensation, and performance management (Jackson et al., 2014). Human Resource Management (HRM) as a field of study and practice has since inception focuses on the management of people within organizations. It emerged as a distinct field in the mid-20th century as a response to the changing nature of work and the increasing complexity of organizations. HRM is based on the premise that employees are a valuable and strategic asset that can contribute to the success of an organization (Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R., Gerhart, B., & Wright, P. M. (2017)

Prior to the emergence of HRM, personnel management was the predominant approach to managing employees, which was largely focused on administrative tasks such as payroll, benefits, and compliance with labour laws. However, HRM takes a more strategic approach to managing people, focusing on aligning human capital with organizational goals, developing and retaining talent, and creating a positive work culture (Jackson, S. E., Schuler, R. S., & Jiang, K. (2014)

One of the key drivers of the emergence of HRM was the need for organizations to adapt to the changing business environment. The 1960s and 1970s saw a shift towards service and knowledge-based industries, which required a more specialized and educated workforce. This led to a greater emphasis on recruitment and selection, training and development, and performance management. HRM also emerged as a response to globalization, which created a need for organizations to manage a diverse and geographically dispersed workforce (Boxall, P., & Purcell, J. (2011)

Over the years, HRM has continued to evolve, with new theories and practices emerging to address changing organizational needs and workforce dynamics. For example, the resource-based view of HRM suggests that human resources are a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991), while the social exchange theory posits that employees are motivated to engage in productive behaviors when they perceive that their employer values and rewards their contributions (Blau, 1964). The institutional theory suggests that organizations conform to societal norms and expectations in order to gain legitimacy and maintain survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Today, HRM is a critical function within organizations, playing a vital role in driving organizational success and ensuring a productive and engaged workforce. It encompasses a range of activities, including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, compensation and benefits, and employee relations (Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R., Gerhart, B., & Wright, P. M. (2017)). HRM has become an interdisciplinary field, drawing on insights from fields such as psychology, sociology, and economics to inform its practices (Schermerhorn, J. R., Bachrach, D. G., & Hunt, J. G. (2017)).

HRM has emerged as a critical function within organizations, focused on managing people to achieve organizational goals (Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R., Gerhart, B., & Wright, P. M. (2017)). It has evolved over time, with new theories and practices emerging to address changing organizational needs and workforce dynamics. HRM will continue to play a critical role in managing people in the 21st century workplace (Jackson, S. E., Schuler, R. S., & Jiang, K. (2014)).

However, as the nature of work and the workforce continue to evolve, there is a growing need to rethink, review, and re-strategize HRM practices to meet the challenges of the future. The changing nature of work is being driven by a range of factors, including advances in technology, globalization, and demographic shifts (Van der Heijden, 2015). For example, the rise of the gig economy and the increasing prevalence of remote work are challenging traditional employment structures and requiring organizations to adopt more flexible approaches to HRM (Berg & Kalleberg, 2018; Golden, 2018). Additionally, demographic changes such as aging populations and increasing diversity are placing new demands on HRM practices, such as the need to promote intergenerational collaboration and to address issues of inclusivity and equity (Parry & Tyson, 2011; Shen & Chanda, 2011).

To address these challenges, HRM practitioners need to adopt a more dynamic and flexible approach to their work. This may involve rethinking traditional HRM practices and developing new strategies and policies that are better aligned with the changing nature of work (Guest et al., 2017; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). For example, organizations may need to focus more on skills development and continuous learning to ensure that their workforce is equipped to adapt to changing job requirements (Kwak et al., 2017). They may also need to develop more inclusive and flexible work arrangements that accommodate a range of different working styles and life situations (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

In view of the above, this review paper aims to identify the drivers for future work change, along with the attendant challenges and opportunities for HRM in order to both guide practitioners on how to position themselves against these inevitable developments whilst proffering a need for a re-thinking, re-viewing and re-strategizing HR for future work challenges.

II. Literature Review

2.1 The Changing Nature of Work – Driving forces, Challenges and Opportunities for HR

The changing nature of work is an increasingly important area of focus and consideration for HRM due to a range of factors or driving forces along with the attendant challenges and opportunities it poses to the traditional HRM Practices as discussed below:

Advances in Technology: Advances in technology have been a key driver of change in the workplace, with the rise of automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning leading to the displacement of some jobs and the creation of new ones (Davenport & Kirby, 2015). For instance, the increasing use of algorithms and digital platforms has given rise to the gig economy, where individuals work independently on a project-by-project basis, rather than in traditional employment structures (Berg & Kalleberg, 2018). Whilst scholars have identified some opportunities this brings for HR, others have identified challenges this development is likely to bring to HRM for future work. For instance, it has been argued that Technology has enabled companies to hire talent from anywhere in the world Baldwin, T. (2020). This means that HR must compete with other companies globally to attract and retain top talent. According to a survey by LinkedIn, 70% of recruiters say that they have difficulty finding skilled candidates. (LinkedIn, 2021). Also, whilst Strohmeier, S. (2020), Deloitte. (2019), KPMG. (2019) and others have supported that HR can use AI and automation to streamline

administrative tasks, such as payroll and benefits administration for achieving effectiveness and efficiency. It's argued that it has also result in job loss and workforce restructuring (Brynjolfsson, E., & Mitchell, T. (2017), Autor, D. (2015), Arntz, M., Gregory, T., & Zierahn, U. (2016) Manyika, J., Chui, M., & Miremadi, M. (2017). According to a report by the World Economic Forum, by 2025, 85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labor between humans and machines. (World Economic Forum, 2020). Kruse, K. (2018), Meister, J. (2019), (Bersin, J. (2018) and others have also argued that Technology is likely to be used to enhance employee engagement by providing personalized learning and development opportunities. According to a survey by Gallup, 87% of millennials rate "professional or career growth and development opportunities" as important in a job. (Gallup, 2016). Some scholars have however raised concerns about the potential for technology to create feelings of isolation or disconnection among employees if not implemented properly. Others have pointed out that relying too heavily on technology for employee engagement could limit the potential for face-to-face interactions and human connection in the workplace (Davidson, J. (2018), Kurland, N. B., & Bailey, D. E. (1999), Marr, B. (2018), Rosen, L. D., Lim, A. F., Felt, J., Carrier, L. M., Cheever, N. A., & Lara-Ruiz, J. M. (2014).

Flexible Working arrangement: This shift towards more flexible work arrangements is challenging traditional HRM practices and requires organizations to adopt new approaches to managing their workforce. One example of this is the rise of remote work, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Golden, 2018). This trend has forced organizations to develop new policies and procedures to manage remote workers, including the use of technology to support communication and collaboration. Scholars have identified key opportunities this may bring to HR, such as attracting top talents (World Economic Forum, 2021), Increased productivity (Society for Human Resource Management, 2018), Cost saving (Harvard Business Review, 2019). However , others have identified challenges ranging from communication and collaboration (Gartner, 2021), compliance with relevant laws and regulations especially on issues relating to data security and confidentiality (International Labour Organization, 2017), and employee burn out (Harvard Business Review, 2019).

Demographic Shift: Demographic shifts are another key driver of change in the nature of work. As populations age and become more diverse, HRM practices must evolve to meet the needs of different groups of workers. For instance, the aging of the workforce has led to a growing need for organizations to develop programs and policies that support the health and wellbeing of older workers, as well as programs that promote intergenerational collaboration and knowledge transfer (Parry & Tyson, 2011). Several scholars have argued that this will bring some opportunism for HRM. For example McKinsey & Company. (2018) have argued that Demographic shift will result in diversity which can also lead to greater creativity, innovation, and problem-solving in the workplace. In a study conducted, McKinsey found out that companies with more diverse executive teams outperform their less diverse peers. (McKinsey & Company. (2018). It is also believed that demographic shift is expected to lead to a larger and more diverse talent pool, providing organizations with a broader range of potential employees. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the labor force will grow by 5.2 million people between 2019 and 2029, with the largest increase in the 65-and-older age group. (Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). However, Age discrimination has been identified as a significant issue in the workplace, particularly as the population ages. For example, a study by AARP found that 61% of workers over 50 had experienced or witnessed age discrimination in the workplace. (AARP. (2018). Demographic shift is also likely to lead to a shortage of skilled workers in some industries, particularly as the baby boomer generation retires (National Center for Education Statistics (2019). For example, a study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields has not kept pace with demand, leading to a skills gap in these areas. (National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Lastly, with a larger talent pool, organizations are likely to face increased competition for highly skilled worker. For example, a study by Hays found that 92% of employers in the United States struggle to find candidates with the right skills, leading to increased competition for these candidates. (Hays. (2019).

Diversity: Increasing Diversity is another important driving force for change in the nature of work which has triggered both challenges and also opened opportunities for HRM. Scholars have argued that Diversity has brought in Innovation and creativity as diverse workforce brings together individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, which can lead to new perspectives, ideas, and solutions to problems

which can help organizations become more innovative and creative, leading to a competitive advantage (Cox, T. (1993), Jackson, S. E., & Ruderman, M. N. (1999). Also according to Johnson, S. K., & Chang, C. H. (2010) and Pelled, L. H. (1996) supported that Diversity will improve decision-making as diverse workforce can lead to better decision-making, because different perspectives are considered and a wider range of solutions are explored. This can lead to more effective decision-making and better outcomes for the organization (Johnson, S. K., & Chang, C. H. (2010). However, increasing diversity of the workforce has also led to new challenges for HRM practices, including the need to address issues of inclusivity and equity (Shen & Chanda, 2011). This includes developing policies and programs that promote diversity and inclusion, as well as training and development programs that help employees to work effectively in a diverse environment. Discrimination and bias can be a significant threat to organizations that fail to properly address and manage diversity. Discrimination and bias can lead to decreased morale, productivity, and increased legal liability (Cox, T. (1993), Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2001). Lastly, Richard, O. C., McMillan-Capehart, A., & Cox Jr, T. (2018) added that managing diversity in the workplace can be challenging, as it requires a different approach to management and communication. HR will need to invest in training, resources, and policies to effectively manage a diverse workforce.

In conclusion, the changing nature of work is being driven by a range of factors, including advances in technology, globalization, and demographic shifts. HRM practices must evolve to meet these challenges and adopt new approaches to managing the workforce. This includes developing policies and procedures that support flexible work arrangements, addressing issues of inclusivity and equity, and promoting intergenerational collaboration and knowledge transfer.

2.2 How to Position HR for future Work Challenges

In order to respond to the challenges future work driven by technological advancement, diversity, shifting demographics etc several suggestions have been made in the body of literature on how to position HR to maximize the gains of these developments whilst minimizing its challenges. Here are some ways that HRM can handle the challenges of future work:

- 2.2.1 **Upskilling and reskilling employees:** As technology continues to advance and job roles change, HRM can help to prepare employees for these changes by providing training and development opportunities to upskill and reskill them. This can help to ensure that employees have the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt to changing job requirements and remain competitive in the job market (Bocken, N. M., Short, S. W., Rana, P., & Evans, S. (2014).
- 2.2.2 **Implementing flexible work arrangements:** With changing workforce demographics and technological advances, employees are increasingly seeking more flexible work arrangements. HRM can help to address this challenge by implementing flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, job sharing, and flexible scheduling. This can help to improve employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention (Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2006).
- 2.2.3 **Managing diversity and inclusion:** With an increasingly diverse workforce, HRM can help to manage diversity and inclusion by implementing policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion, such as diversity training, mentoring programs, and diverse recruitment strategies. This can help to improve employee engagement, creativity, and productivity. (Richard, O. C., McMillan-Capehart, A., & Cox Jr, T. (2018).
- 2.2.4 **Reducing employee turnover:** With an increasingly competitive job market, employee turnover can be a significant challenge for organizations. HRM can help to address this challenge by implementing policies and practices that promote employee retention, such as employee recognition programs, flexible work arrangements, and career development opportunities (Tsai, W. C., & Tai, W. L. (2003
- 2.2.5 **Leveraging technology:** With the increasing use of technology in the workplace, HRM can help to leverage technology to improve employee productivity, engagement, and retention. This can be done by implementing digital HR systems, using data analytics to inform HR decisions, and leveraging social media and other digital platforms to improve employee communication and engagement (Boudreau, J. W., & Ramstad, P. M. (2007).

III. Discussion & Recommendation

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a dynamic field that is constantly evolving due to changing business environments, workforce demographics, and technological advancements. In recent years, HRM has faced several challenges, including increasing competition for talent, changing workforce expectations, and the impact of technology on work. As a result, there has been a growing need for organizations to rethink, review, and strategize their HRM practices to prepare for the future of work. This paper therefore calls on Organizations and HR Practitioners to these three methods of aligning their HRM Approach and Practices to the changing technological and global dynamics:

Rethink HRM: To rethink HRM for the future of work, organizations need to move beyond traditional HR practices and adopt a more strategic and holistic approach. This includes developing an HR strategy that is aligned with the overall business strategy, integrating HR processes across the organization, and leveraging technology to enhance HR processes. Organizations also need to focus on developing a diverse and inclusive workforce that can adapt to changing business environments and customer needs. One of the ways to rethink HRM is to adopt a talent management approach. Talent management involves the identification, development, and retention of top performers, and it can help organizations to stay competitive in the market (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Another way to rethink HRM is to adopt an agile approach. Agile HRM involves the use of iterative, flexible, and collaborative methods to manage HR processes and respond to changing business needs (Bersin, 2018).

Review HRM: To review HRM, organizations need to assess their current HR practices and identify areas for improvement. This can be done through the use of HR metrics and analytics, which can help organizations to measure the effectiveness of their HR practices and identify areas for improvement. HR metrics can include measures such as employee turnover, engagement, and productivity. Another way to review HRM is to conduct an HR audit. An HR audit involves a comprehensive review of an organization's HR practices to ensure compliance with legal requirements, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that HR practices are aligned with organizational goals (Jackson, Schuler, & Werner, 2011).

Re-strategize HRM: To re-strategize HRM, organizations need to develop a future-focused HR strategy that aligns with the organization's overall business strategy. This involves identifying the skills and competencies that will be required in the future and developing a plan to acquire and develop those skills. It also involves developing a flexible and adaptable workforce that can respond to changing business needs. Another way to strategize HRM is to adopt a design thinking approach. Design thinking involves a human-centered approach to problem-solving, which can help organizations to develop innovative HR practices that meet the needs of employees and the organization (Brown, 2009).

Rethinking, reviewing, and re-strategizing HRM for future work is critical for organizations to remain competitive and meet the needs of their employees. To do this, organizations need to adopt a strategic and holistic approach to HRM, leverage technology to enhance HR processes, and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce that can adapt to changing business environments. Organizations also need to assess their current HR practices and identify areas for improvement, and develop a future-focused HR strategy that aligns with the organization's overall business strategy.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the key drivers for change in future workplace and the opportunities, challenges and recommendations on how HR Practitioners can better position them themselves to combat these challenges whilst harnessing the opportunities developments in technologies and globalization amongst others have brought. In addition to reviewing literatures, this paper has guided HR Practitioners on how to re-think, review and re-strategize their HR Practices to ensues it's adaptive , engaging , wholistic and strategic enough to not only face but overcome the challenges of future work.

In conclusion, I believe that rethinking, re-viewing, and re-strategizing HRM is essential for organizations to effectively manage and develop their human capital in the face of changing work patterns and evolving workforce needs. As such, HRM practitioners need to stay attuned to these changes and be willing to adapt their practices accordingly to ensure that they can effectively support organizational goals and objectives

V. References

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