

Changing Role of Human Resource Manager: A Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

In exuberant times and disruptive environment, over the last few decades, human resource managers apart from being administrators and recruiters are playing an important role in retaining qualified talent considering them as the most valuable asset in the organisation to achieve business goals. Earlier human resource managers focus on maintaining employee-employer relations, restricted to folders and spread sheets but in a dynamic business world, HR managers assist in planning, strategy formulation, decision making, in hiring and retaining talent, nurturing employees, collaborating with stakeholders and providing innovative and excellent work culture. Witnessing a massive change, HR role has brought a transformational change in organisations to shape them for their survival and developing the value of employees. Human resource management can no longer be restricted to the functions of recruitment, selection, training and development, payrolls, retention, ensuring healthy work environment, but it should focus on the strategic business goals of the organisation. Changing work culture, organisation's unusual shapes, increasing complexities of business, technology, organisational structure, employees need to update their skills to work in Matrix global organisations. In 21st-century, the core competency of HRM is to make a balance between outside business environment and corporate strategies resulting in radical re-orientation of mind-sets. This paper focuses on the importance of HR function and the changing role of HR Manager in the present challenging times.

Keywords: HR Manager, Organisational Culture, Employee Retention, Workforce Diversity, Performance Appraisal, Competitive Advantage

Introduction

Global competition and market conditions have drastically changed the new business processes, standards, technological advancements and management practices. Without efficient human resource management practices, it would be difficult for organisations to survive. The HR department must look into the needs of the employees to cope up with workforce diversity. Strategic human resource planning is required to hire skilled employees in terms of knowledge, creativity, talent and education. Now a days, organisations are having a separate department- human resource department -which acts as an intermediary between the human resources and an organisation. The concept of industrial betterment came into being during 1850-1950's period, when American business leaders introduced plans for employee's welfare, productivity, scientific management to consider employees not as only resources, personnel departments focusing on training facilities and working with unions for compensation packages. During 1960s-1980s, theories on motivation, industrial psychology-focusing on employee needs and various Acts were introduced to transform workplace culture. During 1990s-2010s, globalization and emerging technologies, HR function has become more of building organisational culture, employee engagement rather than administrative one. The major task before HR manager is to hire, retain best employees, adding value to the organisation, maintaining happy, productive and innovative workforce. In exuberant times and disruptive environment, over the last few decades, human resource managers apart from being administrators and recruiters are playing an important role in retaining qualified talent considering them as the most valuable asset in the organisation to achieve business goals. Earlier human resource managers focus on maintaining employee-employer relations, restricted to folders and spread sheets but in a dynamic business world,

HR managers assist in planning, strategy formulation, decision making, in hiring and retaining talent, nurturing employees, collaborating with stakeholders and providing innovative and excellent work culture. Witnessing a massive change, HR role has brought a transformational change in organisations to shape them for their survival and developing the value of employees. Human resource management can no longer be restricted to the functions of recruitment, selection, training and development, payrolls, retention, ensuring healthy work environment, but it should focus on the strategic business goals of the organisation. Changing work culture, organisation's unusual shapes, increasing complexities of business, technology, organisational structure, employees need to update their skills to work in Matrix global organisations. In 21st-century, the core competency of HRM is to make a balance between outside business environment and corporate strategies resulting in radical re-orientation of mindsets. 98% of Indian working individuals comprise of young population. Millennials, generation X with advent of new technologies, jobs demand, a huge gap between the education curriculum and organisation's job requirements based on skills, innovation and design -it becomes critical for HR managers to build a sustainable approach towards right balance for future. The younger workforce attitude has shifted from focus on learning to focus on pay and promotion. Performance ratings, role definitions, periodic constructive feedback, flexible work options, priority to health and wellness, liberal environment are the various aspects expected by employees from their prospective organisations. The traditional method of gaining competitive advantage should be supported by organisational capability through effective human resource management practices.

Review of Literature

- **Anupama Gupta** (2010) has discussed the challenges faced by human resource manager in dynamic economic environment. Shortage of skilled manpower is the main issue. The HR department should design policies to retain talent and take into consideration the role of different stakeholders.
- **Tripathi** (2008) has emphasised on the role of human resources in bringing competitive advantage by focusing on the competencies, commitment and culture. HRD practises and policies affect performance indicators and should be supportive to progressive climate.
- **Mathur et. al** (1996) in a study has examined the effect of external, social, cultural factors on internal work culture and HRM practices in public and private organisations in India. He concluded that private sector organisations use more effective human resource policies such as feedback, performance-based reward systems, supervisory controls, employee engagement et cetera as compared to public sector.
- **Hassan** (2007) has examined the relationship between HRD practises and organisational values and employs perspective in this context. There is a positive relationship between performance appraisal and promotion, training and development, learning, performance guidance and organisational values such as creativity, quality, delegation and human behaviour.
- **Sangeeta Trehan and Karan Sethia** (2014) in their research have discussed the effect of internal and external factors on HRM practices which result in improvement in overall corporate performance. They concluded that HR practices based on training, performance, team development will support healthy and innovative environment. They found that there is a positive relationship between organisational performance and HRD practices.

Methodology

The paper is based on the data obtained from secondary sources such as online journals, articles, various websites, books and online newspaper editions. The objective of the study is to identify the focus areas in the context on Human Resource Management, the strategic role of Human Resource Manager and suggestions to improve the organisational effectiveness and efficiency with the help of Human Resource Manager's initiatives.

Focus areas

New and agile organisational structure: HR managers need to formulate workforce models and agile approach based on business requirements and talent needs. Innovative hiring strategies, balanced work environment, restructuring -roles and responsibilities of employees, rewarding teamwork, finding new ways to motivate employees, open workspaces etc. are the factors that help HR managers for driving organisational transformation.

Recruitment: To meet the requirements of jobs, a proper blend of all qualities in a candidate is difficult task. It is easy to recruit employees at junior levels as compared to senior level jobs. Moreover small businesses face problems in identifying right skilled persons to match the desired positions. There is no much response from the candidates for job vacancies .As small organisations don't follow modern methods of hiring candidates, make low quality job descriptions, conduct interviews by owners only. Most of these concerns do not have allocation of funds towards framing HR teams and providing a higher salaries to talented staff and even unable to fulfil existing employee's expectation by providing competitive benefits

Employees as internal customers: Recruitment to talent management policies can be formulated in such a way that employees with the knowledge of technology should support these in achieving business goals. Managers should treat their employees as evergreen customers. Certain steps such as mentoring and coaching to young as well as senior employees to develop leadership traits, improving overall efficiency and valuing them- can bring long lasting employee branding.

Retention mechanisms: Traditional and classical talent retention mechanisms need to align with the quick feedback systems and retention policies for different segments of people. Annual appraisals and long management cycles are becoming out of date. Flexible working schedules, in-time promotions, increments along with salary, equality programs-entertaining ideas and suggestions from employees, career progression opportunities, productivity-based incentives, referral plans for cost effectiveness, recreational activities, employee accountability, feedback systems etc. will help in retaining the talented pool.

Adding value: Rapidly adopting digitisation and strategic business changes are making the HR managers as future value creators. Focus on recognising hidden potential, talent of human capital, cultivating capabilities to meet the needs of cut-throat competition- managers play a strategic role in framing processes to fulfil every customer needs.HR function revolves around top management, employees at all levels and serving every aspect in corporation. By adopting proactive approach, HR manager fills the gap between issues and solutions.

Focus on culture and diversity: Business organisations keeping in mind diversity in terms of gender, age, cultural background, ethnicity, geography, groups, languages, religion etc. to provide healthy work environment, strong culture and highly engaged employees. The HR department plays an important role in creating awareness among employees about attitudes, values, and beliefs by developing programs and integrating the interests of stakeholders. Cultural and diversity issues -managed prudently can lead to innovative solutions, increased productivity, and better retention and competence levels, venturing into new opportunities.

Various initiatives like counselling, hobby clubs, support groups, cross cultural events, job rotations can be undertaken to improve performance and employee engagement. Employees don't do work only for pay packages but they expect a healthy work culture, HR initiatives, value, respect and dignity of human resources. Caring culture and recognising employees attitudes will help in creating a healthy work life balance. HR manager should adopt a flexible approach to understand the needs and requirements of the culture and climate.

Outcome- driven approach: HR manager assist the top level management in achieving desired outcomes considering budgets, talent assignments ,key performance indicators, hiring right employees for right jobs, analysing internal environment, highly engaged teams efficient in technology and well versed with Artificial Intelligence, block chain, internet of things etc. A combination of insights, vision and strategy rather than hierarchical leadership can lead to a continuous improvement process.HR managers are leading and facilitating the business outcomes making a great workplace for employees.

Informal performance appraisals: Unlike traditional performance appraisals, presently, HR departments are conducting regular, real-time and casual feedback and informal communications. HR manager becomes aware of the expectations and performance of the employees that helps him to plan for future training requirements, delegation of responsibilities, positive relationships with employees.

Conflict -resolution skills: For a less stressful work environment and rapport with colleagues, there should be development of skills among employees/ leaders- listening empathetically, understanding another's perspective and defusing conflicts .There should be common platform /redressal machinery, counselling for employees to keep their views at the same time and building stronger teams for future.

Learning culture: At every level of organisation, workforce should be given training to adapt to any changes in the business environment and to make the organisation more competitive. Developing cultural intelligence among employees will help them to respond to distributed teams from different social- cultural background with understanding, inclusiveness and respect and acceptance. Several learning and development initiatives can be introduced to discern skill gaps to future growth of organisation. Performance related issues and exploitation of potential opportunities with AI system will drive human capital management.

Self-awareness skills: With these skills employees become reflective leading to achieve higher performance. Self-aware employees become adaptive to particular situations and help in improving performance.HR manager helps the employees to learn healthy self-awareness skills to face any kind of challenge.

Health apps: Making physical fitness a priority, apps should be created with the help of technological tools to monitor the physical and psychological well-being by tracking employees' daily productivity levels. These apps help employees to adopt healthy life style and better living.

HR Analytics tool for Decision Making: HR Analytics helps the HR manager in taking important decisions such as motivating employees, recognizing high performing employees, reasons for attrition, means to engage employees, skills required.

Submergence of data: With introduction of various technology tools, organisations have a problem in handling large amount of data and face issues like privacy, safety of information, trust etc. Tools such as employee referral software, applicant tracking system, learning management system creates a huge data to handle with. HR Managers are not proficient in implementing various technological tools and avoid joining training programs.

Shortage of skilled manpower: Human capital flight or brain drain is the main reason for lack of skilled workforce. Foreign/international corporation's lucrative opportunities, long-term career progression, competitive rewards package and strong organisational culture push the employees to switch over to other opportunities over a short period of time.

Employee engagement: Organisations are adopting various measures to engage employees productively. Considering more working hours, stress levels, exhaustion and less efficiency, employees should be given an opportunity to express their views or ideas creating a sense of involvement in various aspects of management and business-making the job more interesting. All these efforts would lead to higher productivity levels and reduce absenteeism, mistakes, and conflicts and reap manifold benefits in future.

Rewards and promotion: Organisations should adopt transparent and fool proof criteria to acknowledge good work and performance. Employers are adopting -open pay structure systems, fairness, inclusion, equal opportunity, recognizing top performers, avoiding favouritism, legal wages, incentives, organising competitions, role-specific pay ladders etc. to encourage employees to be more committed.

Redressal of Grievances: HR managers should ensure a proper mechanism to handle employees' problems and complaints. HR manager should ensure fair, quick and effective resolution of the grievances. Government of India has made legal provisions for different industrial concerns to deal with employees issues.

Attrition: With approximately 16.4% average annual attrition, HR manager is facing a major problem of changing jobs by employees within 12 months. Although there is an adequate supply of required manpower at initial stages but there is huge gap at middle and senior levels to retain the talented employees.

Transformative Organisation : Playing a role of change maker, having faith in Gen Y, organising brainstorming and problem solving sessions, creating brand ambassadors -to penetrate student's campus, aligning organisation's policies with other interests of young professionals, desired employee behaviours and cultivating exceptional performance levels- HR managers need a deeper understanding of evolving business models and focus on capability development organisations.

Facilitating cultural shift: HR managers need to create a culture that empowers employees to face digital disruptions. HR manager should focus strategically on various issues to nurture business environment system and sustaining high performance culture such as mentoring, coaching, career plans, global exposure, experience, action learning, innovative talent practices, rotational policies etc. to support and strengthen core purpose and values.

Legal challenges: HR managers need to keep themselves abreast with legal knowledge relating to various issues in business environment. Various laws, statutory obligations, Trade Union's attitude towards management should be abided by HR manager to have harmonious relations.

Mergers & Acquisitions: Mergers and acquisition, there is a challenge to integrate the two organisations to bring the synergetic effect. HR managers of the acquiring company need to focus on retaining key personnel of the acquired company. If the employees do not perceive the positive work culture of the acquiring company, they will leave the organisation and all efforts becomes meaningless. HR practices of acquired and acquiring company may differ from each other such as development of human resources, performance appraisal, compensation, workers participation in decision-making, career advancement, work culture etc. In each situation HR managers find it difficult to integrate people's feelings like stress, fear of loss of jobs, anxiety, transfer to new locations, new roles, assignments, change in power ,status, new organisation culture ,work practices.

Talent redundancy: In HR context, knowledge worker's jobs are more challenging-technical and behavioural competence as most of the jobs are into IT/IT enabled services, organisation's ability to provide latest technology, autonomous and decentralised decision-making, facilitative leadership, open communication structures, immediate and frequent feedback, turnover rate of knowledge workers is higher as compared to other workers, seeking lifelong learning, work life balance, flexible work schedules, telecommuting, Job sharing, health promotion, on-the-job childcare.

Suggestions

In changing times of creativity and innovation, organisations hire employees with varied skills and from different groups/ gender to meet social responsibility .Organisations are focusing on higher productivity, greater employee effectiveness and human resource transformation. Certain steps can be taken by the human resource department to improve organisation's performance:

- To formulate fair organisation policies irrespective of gender, religion, race, caste, age, nationality etc.
- To develop employee-focused learning and technology advancement programs, mentoring, focus on work related specific skills, in-house training, to work in diverse work teams to improve their performance-specifically underprivileged employees.
- To utilize the services of technical training institutions, professional associations, community colleges for inculcating functional/strategic and cognitive skills.
- To develop new philosophies/techniques to upgrade quality standards to increase productivity levels and overall efficiency to survive in competitive environment.
- To give consideration to attitudinal barriers for introducing modern methods of training, management styles, quality improvement, and HR systems for leadership etc.
- To act as a catalyst to promote smooth acceptance of organisational change for introducing techniques like Kaizen, business process reengineering.
- To integrate HR plans to new processes by taking through the external consultants and outsourcing firms assistance can be taken in managing payrolls ,legal compliance, recruiting and staffing with growth, investing in formulation of HR systems.
- To formulate sound human resource practices with strong business knowledge to meet corporate governance and social responsibility.
- To take more initiatives to improve documentation, security and trust levels of employees.
- To avoid unethical practices- unrealistic view of the organisation and jobs to attract candidates, discriminatory practices in selection criteria, showing preference to particular groups for career advancement, giving incentives/benefits much higher in

comparison to contributions, offering attentive work schedules to favoured employees, inadequate safety measures, weakening trade unions by manipulating leaders- ethical practices should be followed for long term survival.

- To reduce the costs in HR functions- behavioural costing techniques should be followed.
- To hire knowledgeable persons to facilitate the change in mind-sets from individualised career management to organisational commitment
- To discuss issues like salary increments, bonus motivation, conduct of satisfaction surveys, involvement in CSR activities, flexible work schedules, investment in training facilities, Retention bonus policies-opinion of employees should be taken.
- To introduce wellness and healthy work life initiatives keeping in mind needs of various employees.
- To act as a role player/model to demonstrate appropriate behaviour in specific situations.
- To conduct staff informative webinars and enrich virtual experience and structured performance appraisals

Conclusion:

Globalisation and liberalisation and internationalisation of operations have led to the growth of economies but at the same time they have posed many concerns for the HR managers. To understand workforce diversity, psychology, encouraging them to perform better, maintaining unity, retaining the talented workforce has become a challenge for HR managers. COVID-19 crisis has forced the business organisations to look at their HR processes and operations through a digital way. Virtual methods of recruitment, technologies like AI ,robotic process automation, machine learning etc. have led to create a range of scenarios, re-plan the priorities, managing remote workforce, digitalization of HR functions, new workforce models, adoption of changing ways of working etc. Talent acquisition will be more impacted. To improve the organisational efficiency and sustainability, human resource policies should aim at formulating organisational structure with workforce diversity, innovative work environment and division of tasks, delegation of responsibilities, managing knowledge, leadership development and continuous improvement.

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