

# Strategic Human Resource Management in International Organizations

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## Abstract

This an initial study of Strategic Human Resources in Human Resource Management. This is important because in a globally competitive economy company longevity depends upon its more important aspect – their staff. This is principally governed by resource management principles and policies. This paper presents the results of a wide range of companies in different industries and with different ownership models using statistical methods. The results clearly show human resource practices have a positive impact on organisations.

**Keywords:** human resources, strategic, international organizations

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Human Resource Management

Currently, the academic area where the human resources of an organization can be a source of competitive advantage, provided that the policies for managing people are integrated with real strategic business planning and organizational culture (Chen & Hung, 2010). This methodology emphasizes the position of correspondence between human resource policies and organizational objectives. In many study of human resource management, they have focused on the links between human resource management and performance (Robinson, Pearce, & Mital, 2008; Guest, Michie, Conway, & Sheehan, 2003), and much of the growing body of international literature in the field is built on the principle that human resource management is linked closely to the emergent strategies, especially of large organizations, both public and private (Chen & Hung, 2010). A typical way to approach strategic human resource management (HRM) is to describe as “bridging” the theory of business strategy and HRM. The strategic HRM concentrates on the point that there should be a link between a business's strategy and the use of its human resources. According to this perspective, people management can be a key source of sustained competitive advantage (Robinson et al., 2008; Royal & O'Donnell, 2005). The main rationale for strategic HRM thinking is that by integrating HRM with the business strategy, rather than human resources strategies being a separate set of priorities, employees will be managed more effectively, organizational performance will improve and therefore business success will follow. The strategic HRM has a clear focus on implementing strategic change and growing the skill base of the organization to ensure that the organization can compete effectively in the future. The strategic human resources departments are future oriented and operate in a manner consistent with the overall business plan in the organization (Holbeche, 2004; Guest et al., 2003; Lynch, Kathleen, Bernie, & Maureen, 2012). In order to have a strategic role and get effective results in the organization, HRM departments should design their practices and functions reliable with the strategies and goals of the organization. In this paper, the study will use the available evidence and results from studies undertaken within the private sector to discover the experiences of public sector organizations during a historic when that sector has seen the implementation of private sector managerialism principles and techniques. All HRM functions should be designed to the requirements of the organization and support the strategic planning process. While the business is concentrated on low operational costs, the human resource (HR) strategy should reflect that strategy by introducing high levels of employee self-service. However, differentiated organizations rely on people to create value, so “a human capital management” strategy should be the priority (Lynch et al., 2012; Foster, 2010). Employee skills and competencies can be established and improved with methodically designed HRM functions. Organizations can have more efficient and motivated employees. The purpose of strategic human resource management is to improve business performance through people management. The

organizations need to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently to reach the desired goals and objectives. The questions raised for discussion are: How should organizations manage their main source – human resources? Does strategic human resource management support to meet the needs, the goals and objectives of the business? As should be adapted strategic human resource management to realize the performance? How should adapt strategic management of human resources to increase organizational performance? The key purposes of the study are:

- To investigate how can be better performing organizations attribute their good performance to the quality of their HRM or is the standard of their performance due to other factors?
- To investigate what makes an organization’s approach to HRM “strategic” and is there a satisfactory method of differentiating between an approach to HRM that might be considered “strategic” or one that is not seen to be strategic?
- To investigate the use of HRM strategic can demonstrate an enhanced organizational performance.

*1.2 Human Resource Management and Strategic Human Resource Management*

The terms of human resource management (HRM) and human resources (HR) have mainly changed instead of personnel management (PM) for the processes of dealing people in the organizations. Thus human resource management is well-defined as a strategic and comprehensible approach for the organization’s most valued assets based on the workers. Armstrong (1995) has summarized the comparison between PM and HRM as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences personnel management (PM) and human resource management (HRM)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Personnel management</i>	<i>Human resource management</i>
Goals and values	Incremental interventions in attracting, retaining, motivating workers	Strategic focus. competitiveness, profitability, survival, competitive advantage and workforce flexibility
Professionalism	Personnel managers are accountable for employees’ matters (for which they are trained)	Line managers are accountable for their staff (they are multi-skilled)
Relations	Limited trust, conflict and differentiation, control oriented	Harmony, mutuality of interests, active employee involvement
Employee management	Narrow in focus, individualized	Broad and team focused
Information and communication	Control information and communication, bureaucratic, secretive	Transparency, objectivity, honesty, trust and commitment

**Source:** Armstrong, (1995).

Nowadays, organizations focus the HR department as playing a major function in staffing, training and helping to manage people with the intention of people and the organization are acting at maximum capability in a greatly fulfilling manner (Armstrong, 2006a; Armstrong, 2006b; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). In the international business, HRM is increasingly considered a modern development to redesign employment relationships as a tool that has effectively replaced other management traditions like Personnel Management (PM) and Industrial Relations (IR) (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002). Human performance becomes increasingly variable in jobs of high complexity which HRM cloud play a major function in refining the quality of strategic management processes (Cetron & Davies, 2005; Carnall, 2007; McConville, 2006). Table 2 shown traditional human resource management and strategic human resource management.

Table 2. Traditional Human Resource Management and Strategic Human Resource Management

<i>Description</i>	<i>Traditional HRM</i>	<i>SHRM</i>
<b>Job Analysis and Planning</b>	Explicit job description	Broad job classes
	Detailed HR planning	Loose work planning
	Detailed controls	Flexibility
	Efficiency	Innovation
<b>Staffing</b>	Supervisors make hiring decisions	Team makes hiring decisions

	Emphasis on candidate's technical qualifications Layoffs Letting laid-off workers fend for themselves	Emphasis on fit of applicant within the culture Incentives to retire voluntarily Providing continued support to terminated employees
<b>Training and development</b>	Individual training Job-specific training "Buy" skills by hiring experienced workers Organization responsible for career development	Team-based training Generic training emphasizing flexibility "Make" skills by training less-skilled workers Employee responsible for career development
<b>Performance Appraisal</b>	Uniform appraisal procedures Control-oriented appraisals Supervisor input only	Customized appraisals Developmental appraisals Appraisals with multiple inputs
<b>Compensation</b>	Seniority Centralized pay decisions Fixed fringe benefits	Performance-based pay Decentralized pay decisions Flexible fringe benefits (cafeteria approach)
<b>Employee Rights and Discipline</b>	Emphasis on employer protection Informal ethical standards Emphasis on discipline to reduce mistakes	Emphasis on employee protection Explicit ethical codes and enforcement procedures Emphasis on prevention to reduce mistakes
<b>Employee and Labor Relations</b>	Top-down communication Adversarial approach Preventive labor relations	Bottom-up communication and feedback Collaboration approach Employee freedom of choice

Source: Fottler, (2013)

The strategic human resource management has differed from traditional human resource in a variety number of key elements of HRM (Fottler, 2013). According to Wright and McMahan (1992) claimed that the HR functions differ and that falls under the fact that the HR field functions has been created in isolation with minimal integration. Hence, if the HR practices fail to be fully integrated together, it will be able to integrate with the business strategy. Therefore; the challenge in defining strategic HR theory starts from the failure to achieve a real strategic integration between the HR practices (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Meanwhile, the SHRM emphasizes the need for HRM plans and strategies to be formulated within the context of overall organizational strategies and objectives, and to be responsive to the changing nature of the organization's external environment. Thus the overall themes of SHRM are the integration of all HRM functions, adherence to broad organizational goals and responsiveness to the external environment. The term strategy is used to explain both the processes (e.g. organizational restructuring) and the outcomes (market position) of chosen long-term directions (Nankervis, Compton, & Baird, 2000). The SHRM is concerned with ensuring a strategic 'right' between business and HRM strategies which necessarily concerns an evaluation of the likely impacts of both the external and internal organizational environment, the long-term goals of the organization and the ways in which HRM strategy will enable the adaptation of human resources towards these goals (Panayotopoulou, Bourantas, & Papalexandris, 2003).

### 1.3 Organizational Effectiveness and Performance

According to Henry (2011) the words "organizational effectiveness" became more recognized and transferred to being a concept from the status of a construct. The idea is related to issues such as the ability of an organization to access and engage resources and reach its aims (Baker & Branch, 2002). Frankel, (2008) stated that organization effectiveness (OE) is measured in terms of the ability of an organization or management to respond to threats and opportunities in a timely, effective, purposeful, and accurate manner, with full knowledge of conditions, objectives, opportunities and threats. An effective organization is able to use its access to historic and real time trends and status information in addition to knowledge of alternative strategies available to make decisions at the most appropriate level to achieve the greatest benefit for the organization. Measures of organizational effectiveness are therefore:

- Timeliness of decision
- Completeness of information on status, threats, opportunities, and available strategies and choices and their consequences at each division level
- Effectiveness of assignment of decision making responsibilities and required resources
- Methods of assuring the carrying out of the decisions - Follow up and intra-organizational updating or update management
- Feedback of all information generated by the decision

To sum up, organizational effectiveness is largely measurable in terms of the efficiency or use of information in decision making and carries through (Frankel, 2008). The theory of organizational performance defines as behavior or action relevant to the attainment of an organization's goals that can be scaled, that is, measured (Campbell, 1997; Campbell, Ilgen, & Pulakos, 1999).

Moreover, the theory states that the measurement options, be they ratings from a supervisor, peer, or self, a simulated work sample, or hard criteria (e.g. tallying revenue generated, costs saved, customer complaints, or some variant of a computerized performance assessment) besides being valid, reliable, and not deficient should be free of contamination from sources of variation that are not under the control of the individual (e.g. differences in technology impacting a person's performance). Organizational performance is one of the most broadly and extensively used dependent variables in organizational studies currently. In the strategy literature, organizational performance has been defined as the comparison of the value produced by a company with the value owners expected to receive from the company (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). In short, a theory of performance is necessary to determine: relevant dimensions of performance, performance standards or expectations related to performance levels, restrictions on how the situation should be measured when assessing performance, the number of performance levels or gradient and the extent to which performance should be based upon absolute vs. relative comparison standards (Boxall, Purcell, & Wright, 2007).

From table 3, if the company is inefficient but effective it might survive, but the cost of operational management, processes and inputs will be too high. Cost inefficient organizations do not have proper resource allocation management. Then the accounting perspective they might break even or have very little profit. Although, such organizations have excellent long term perceptions of the degree of the overall success, market share, profitability, growth rate, and innovativeness of the organization in comparison with key competitors. Inefficient – effective organizations should consider the assessment of their resource allocation. Usually, the morale in such entities is high. Delicate changes brought in the operations and introduced in a subtle manner should result the increase in the efficiency, which would lead organization to desired competitive advantage.

Table 3. The characteristics of effectiveness and efficiency

	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<b>Efficient</b>	Succeeds minimum cost. The company thrives.	Cost under control but fails to succeed. The company is bankrupting slowly.
<b>Inefficient</b>	Succeeds at a high cost. The company exists.	An expensive failure. The company is bankrupting fast.

Source: Zokaei & Simons (2006)

High effectiveness and high efficiency organizations are well known as high performance entities. They demonstrate excellence in their operational performance as well as strategic planning. Their outcome is productive, cost management is under control, tasks distributed and completed in a timely matter. Usually such organizations have high morale and staff commitment, which also results the highest quality of the outcome. Employees are well aware of the tasks they have been delegated to perform, they are also well informed of the indicators, which are used to assess their outcomes. Their performance and their attitudes lie along company's long term goals and vision (Zokaei & Simons, 2006).

#### *1.4 Major Functions of International Human Resource Management*

As a result of increased globalization and easy mobility and communications between countries, companies operate at international level. Key task for organizations which operate across international boundaries is to manage the dissimilar stresses of the drive for integration and differentiation (Charles, 2013; K, Kossek, & Ozeki,

1998). International Human Resource Management is a branch of management studies that inspects the design and effects of organizational human resource practices in cross-cultural contexts. Theoretical studies explained that International HRM is the interaction between three dimensions: HR activities, the types of people being engaged in the organization and the different countries that an organization is operating in (Adler & Ghada, 1993). International Human Resource Management is the process of sourcing, allocating and effectively utilizing human resources in a multinational organization. There are five functional areas as shown on table 4:

Table 4. Five functional areas of International Human Resource Management

<i>Five functional areas</i>	<i>HRM Activities</i>
<b>1. Recruitment and selection</b>	<p>Recruitment and selection are the processes through which an organization takes in new members. Selection requires choosing from the candidate whose qualifications most closely match the job requirements.</p> <p>Parent country national: the employee's nationality is the same as the organization's.</p> <p>Host country national: the employee's nationality is the same as the location of the subsidiary.</p> <p>Third country national: the employee's nationality is neither that of the organization nor that of the location of the subsidiary.</p>
<b>2. Development and training</b>	<p>The overall aim of the development function is to provide that adequately trained personnel in a company are capable to fulfil their goals, as well as to contribute to better performance and growth with their work. The development of employees can be treated as a special field of human resource management that includes planned individual learning, education, organization development, career development and training. Development and training of international human resource development programs can be created in two approaches :</p> <p>A <b>centralized approach</b>: training originates at the headquarters and corporate trainers travel to subsidiaries, often adapting to local situation.</p> <p>A <b>decentralized approach</b>: training is given locally; local people develop training materials and techniques for use in their own area. It is important that trainer must be qualified.</p>
<b>3. Performance evaluation</b>	<p>The performance evaluation is the effective function of international human resource management. It is regularly performed for administration or development intentions. In multinational companies, performance appraisals are usually done annually and use a standardized evaluation form. Performance evaluation is complex task for International HR managers because the organization must evaluate employees from different countries working in different subsidiaries. Performance evaluation depends on the organization's overall human resource management strategy.</p>
<b>4. Remuneration and benefits</b>	<p>Remuneration of employees plays an important role in hiring new employees because pay is the major source of people to live in the world. To develop an international system of compensation and benefits, firms have two primary concerns.</p> <p><b>Comparability</b>: A good compensation system disperses salaries to employees that are internally equivalent and competitive within the marketplace. The international organization must also consider the salaries of people who may transfer from other locations.</p> <p><b>Cost</b>: organizations struggle to reduce all expenses, and payroll is one of the largest.</p>
<b>5. Labour relations</b>	<p>The labour relations function identifies and defines the roles of management and workers in the workplace. The concept of labour relations varies greatly in different parts of the world.</p>

Source: CivilServiceIndia.com (2017)

## 2. Method

The purpose of the study is to define the strategic human resources management practices for the international organizations. Another purpose of the study is to reveal the perceptions of companies on strategic human resources management practices for the international organizations and clarify the development needs. Also it is investigated that whether the perceptions of strategic human resources management practices for the international organizations illustrate difference or not according to employee number, company age and capital structure. This study is important to express the strategic human resources management practices for the international organizations. The results in this study, it is possible to give valuable insights about the effect of strategic HRM practices for the international organizations. By considering the need of empirical studies in this

field, it is obvious that both the theoretical and empirical results of this research will give an important contribution to the related literature.

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

Different companies from various sectors (hospital, entertainment, construction, hospitality, retail and banking) participated to the research (n = 35) between December 2015- March 2016. The method of the research sampling is “convenience sampling”. The questionnaires are measurement instrument in this study.

2.2 Data Analysis

Data was analysed by SPSS. Cronbach alpha reliability value was computed in order to find the reliability of the scale. The reliability values are 0.877 for strategic HRM scale. The reliability value of scale is high for researches in social sciences. Descriptive statistical analysis (arithmetic mean and standard deviation) and Pearson correlation test were used to determine the strategic HRM in the international organizations perceptions. Also, one-way ANOVA test was used to determine the differences according to demographic qualifications.

2.3 Research Design

The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

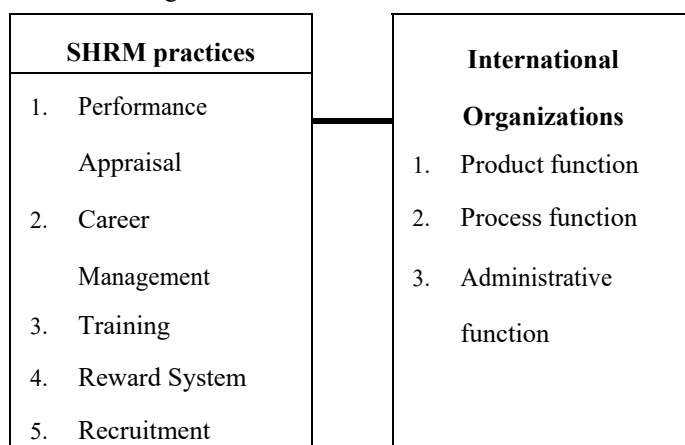


Figure 1. The research framework

3. Results

The outline of participating companies is shown in Table 5. Of 35 large participating manufacturing firms, the majority of responding companies are from hospital (34.29%), followed by construction (25.71%), banking (14.29%), hospitality (14.29%), retail (5.71%) and entertainment (5.71%). Pertaining ownership of company, 100 percent of the responded companies are 100% foreign owned company (37.14%), and joint ventures (62.86%).

3.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviations, reliabilities, and inter-correlations of the study variables are shown in Table 6. As shown in Table 6, 26 out of 28 inter-correlations are statistically significant. Correlations among SHRM practices dimensions are statistically significant, ranging from  $r = 0.44$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) to  $r = 0.66$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Besides, correlations between SHRM practices and international organizations are found to be significant, ranging from  $r = 0.14$  ( $p < 0.05$ ) to  $r = 0.49$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Correlation between reward system and product function ( $r = 0.06$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and recruitment and process function ( $r = 0.11$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), nonetheless, are low and insignificant. Correlation among international organizations dimensions are statistically significant, ranging from  $r = 0.47$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) to  $0.55$  ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 5. Participating Industry

<i>(N = 35)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Industry</b>		
<b>Hospital</b>	12	34.29
<b>Construction</b>	9	25.71
<b>Hospitality</b>	5	14.29
<b>Retail</b>	2	5.71

<b>Banking</b>	5	14.29
<b>Entertainment</b>	2	5.71
<b>ownership of company</b>		
<b>100% foreign owned company</b>	13	37.14
<b>joint ventures</b>	22	62.86

**Table 6.** Inter-correlation matrix

	1. Product function	2. Process function	3. Administrative function	4. Performance appraisal	5. Career management	6. Training	7. Reward system	8. Recruitment
1. Product function	1.000							
2. Process function	0.451**	1.000						
3. Administrative function	0.527**	0.552**	1.000					
4. Performance appraisal	0.286**	0.364**	0.426**	1.000				
5. Career management	0.245**	0.292**	0.355**	0.548**	1.000			
6. Training	0.362**	0.352**	0.427**	0.585**	0.360**	1.000		
7. Reward system	0.060	0.540**	0.343**	0.423**	0.560**	0.523**	1.000	
8. Recruitment	0.514*	0.112	0.286**	0.434**	0.427**	0.468**	0.381**	1.000

As shown on Table 7, the participating manufacturing firms referred their level of administrative function (M = 4.97, S.D. = 0.82), product function (M = 4.91, S.D. = 0.62) and process function (M = 4.69, 0.89) to be relatively high.

**Table 7.** Mean and standard deviations

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (S.D)
<i>International Organizations</i>		
<i>Administrative function</i>	4.97	0.82
<i>Product function</i>	4.91	0.62
<i>Process function</i>	4.69	0.89
<i>SHRM practices</i>		
<i>Performance appraisal</i>	4.34	0.48
<i>Training</i>	4.31	0.47
<i>Career management</i>	4.11	0.32
<i>Reward system</i>	4.03	0.48
<i>Recruitment</i>	4.00	0.84

The level of performance appraisal (M = 4.34, S.D. = 0.48) was found to be slightly higher than training (M = 4.31, S.D. = 0.47) career management (M = 4.11, S.D. = 0.32), reward system (M = 4.03, S.D. = 0.48), and recruitment (M = 4.00, S.D. = 0.84).

**4. Discussion**

The objective of this study was to inspect the SHRM practices in the international organizations. The statistical results obtained in this study showed that SHRM practices have a significant positive impact on international organizations. Only one of five SHRM practices, namely training was found to have both direct and indirect effect on all three dimensions of international organizations (product function, process function, and administrative function). This result entailed that when organizations have higher implementation level of training, it will advances the growth of employees' requisite skills and their potential to learn. Employees are able to generate new understandings and new ideas that will be useful for international organizations. The results of this study also offer several suggestions to manufacturing firms in Thailand to focus on training program. Employees undertake the training programs are expected to apply the knowledge acquired on the task and job assigned. Beside of these findings, the higher level of implementation of training, the more transfer and flow of

information and knowledge which will increase organizational learning and instil new ideas, leading to product function, process function and administrative function. Performance appraisal was found to have both direct and indirect effect on administrative function, but not only product function and process function. One of the possible explanations may due to administrative function is usually done within a shorter period of time since administrative processes and systems can be adjusted according to the needs of the international organizations. Feedback obtained from performance appraisal activities, usually conducted at least once annually can help organization further improve administrative processes. However, product function and process function take a longer period of times, may be several years to yield results to technical constraints faced during product and process actualization. The feedback from performance appraisal activities could not have any impact on product and process function. This means the higher level of implementation of fair performance appraisal, the higher level of employees' motivation towards their tasks. High motivation will help to increase employees' willingness to generate new ideas in order to increase administrative function.

Unpredictably, some SHRM practices (career management, reward system, and recruitment) were presented to be unrelated to international organizations (product function, process function, and administrative function). One possible reason for this insignificant relationship could relate to the fact that participating companies in Thailand perceived the level of implementation of career management ( $M = 4.11$ ), reward system ( $M = 4.03$ ), and recruitment ( $M = 4.00$ ) are relatively low compared to performance appraisal ( $M = 4.34$ ) and training ( $M = 4.31$ ). Conflicting to anticipation, both recruitment and reward system were negatively significant related to product and process function. One probable explanation could be due to the fact that the sampled companies are comprised of a combination of foreign-owned (37.14%) and joint-ventures (62.86%) companies. By foreign-owned manufacturing companies have different approaches in recruitment (Chang, Gong, & Shum, 2011). Commonly, the foreign-owned companies are aggressive and have clear selection criteria, and their recruitment decision rely on collaboration between HR director and manager while, locally-owned companies do not have clear principles in recruitment, and the recruitment decisions rely heavily on manager's individual judgment. For uniting these companies may have accounted for the undesirable relationship between recruitment and three dimensions of international organizations (product function, process function, and administrative function). In attempting to gain competitive advantage, both foreign-owned and joint-ventures companies have been under density to cut cost. Companies are more expected to use tight controls, minimize overhead, and follow economics of scale (Cathy, 2011; Böttcher & Neuhaus, 2015). Moreover, high strictly control may lead to most of the company's highly cost-sensitive and rewards. This could have accounted for the adverse relationship between reward system and three dimensions of international organizations (product function, process function, and administrative function). From this study, the results showed several important managerial implications. Firstly, managers can struggle to expand product function by providing adequate training program related to technology knowledge. Managers should integrate different sources and types of knowledge from business partners, as well as internal and external training programs. Secondly, for manufacturing sector would offer good performance appraisal to their employees. Fair performance appraisal reinforced employees' motivation leading to increase in administrative function.

## 5. Conclusion

Globalization and international competition are commercial norms. In this environment companies must work strategically regarding their greatest assess – staff capabilities, profiles training etc. and the associated administration. This paper outlines the importance of these inter-related factors however further work is needed.

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