

Book Review

Human Resource Management: Concepts, Practices & New Paradigms by Amitabha Sengupta, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2018, 504 pp., Rs. 495

The book titled “Human Resource Management: Concepts, Practices, and New Paradigms” is an excellent source to understand HR in its most contemporary form in the Indian context. In this book the author has attempted to throw light on various aspects of human resources, with relevant cases from the Indian industries to make the textbook an enriching experience for academicians and practitioners alike. Practitioners can use this book to make practical interventions at various levels in multiple ways.

The book comprises 18 chapters, which have been classified into 9 clusters. Each cluster consists of two chapters. The clusters are titled as Old HR-New HR, Plan and Acquire, Development and Growth, Engage and Perform, Reward and Compensate, Decent Workplace: Compliance and Dialogs, Workplace Legislations, Regulations, and Debates on Labor Law Reforms, Transformation of Work and Work Relationships, HR Blue Ocean, Human Resource Management in the Service Sector; and Innovate and Transform. Each section introduces the chapters entailed in that particular section. Further, each chapter begins with an opening case. Cases are

based on industries throughout the chapters across all clusters, making the book very engaging and relevant for students, researchers, practitioners and managers.

The first section vividly discusses the emergence of new HR and how it plays a crucial role as a business partner in the organization. The first chapter emphasizes that while the focus on consistency and administration may be dated, but the fundamental processes of talent acquisition, management, development and recognition are still relevant. The chapter further discusses various models of HRM wherein though the classification style may vary the core discussion revolves around hard-soft models and normative-prescriptive models. In addition, in this chapter, the author also highlights how HRM evolves consistently at a constant pace to keep up with the influence of technology, globalization, demographic changes and digital revolution.

The second chapter deliberated the role of HR as a business partner. Traditionally HR has been primarily labeled as a reactive process-driven function. However as per Dave Ulrich’s model, explained in the chapter, if HR is aligned

with strategic business focus, it is bound to be a business partner in an organization. However in order to function effectively as a business partner, the HR needs to be proficient in certain competencies like functional expertise, change management and business knowledge.

The second section explores the potential of HR in human resource planning, recruitment and selection. The third chapter focuses on forecasting the future demands of HR in an organization and how that influences the planning aspect for HR professionals. HR planning is not solely about generating supply and demand numbers, but also about establishing objectives. Further, HR needs to ensure the implementation of programs so that both internal and external HR planning can be carried out in an efficient manner. The author specifies how this process of planning is influenced by multiple factors in the business environment. Internal factors consist of quality of information, business strategy, organization's growth cycles and time horizon of short/long term needs. On the other hand there are also external factors including technological, social, political, legal, geographic and demographic. In addition, steps of human resource planning, tools (qualitative and quantitative) have been specified along with its usage. The internal and external sources of forecasting reinstate the significance of planning in this day and age of mass layoffs.

The fourth chapter focuses on the value of the functions of recruitment and selection. Further methods of recruitment, success factors for effective execution of these methods and their appli-

cation in the industry are discussed. The author has also dealt with various selection tools that are used across organizations. The influx of millennials and its effect on recruitment and selection is indicated along with the impact of social media usage for these processes.

The third section explores the critical importance of learning, training, development and competency management. The fifth chapter elucidates the process of identifying training needs, designing of the training process and various methods of training. Appropriate training identification and execution, help develop employees in the right direction for their own career as well as for the benefit of the organization. In order to meet the customer's expectations in this rapidly changing environment, it is imperative that employees regularly update their skills and competencies. Evaluation of training and its importance was also highlighted in this chapter. The chapter ends with a gaze into the future of learning via technology, self-directed learning tools and virtual work arrangements.

The sixth chapter is relevant and unique to this book of HR. Not only does it explain basic terminologies of competency management but also takes the reader through the evolution of competency studies and application of competency centers. The author highlights how competency linkages between various HR functions ensure accuracy and impact of the process in a more scientific manner as compared to the earlier traditional approaches. With the advent of virtualization of the workplace, new com-

petencies and their mapping has to be in focus.

The fourth cluster entails employee engagement and performance management system. The seventh chapter reinforces the significance of employee engagement for not only business delivery and performance, but also for establishing an employee's emotional connect with his/her respective organization. This attributes of employee loyalty and retention which is especially tougher for the energetic millennials. The author further describes the multiple models of employee engagement, barriers to engagement of employees and the methods of measurement of employee engagement which are critical for professionals to build loyal employees who are engaged and retainable.

The eighth chapter explains performance management, its features and instruments. Further the author deliberates on the differences between performance management and appraisal elaborating the appraisal process and methods. Performance management is critical for the long term success of every organization. In an ideal scenario, the personal objectives of employees are aligned with those of the organization through robust performance management system.

In Cluster five, reward and compensate, the author helps readers to understand the competitive focus compensation needs to emphasize on. In chapter nine, the author gives a holistic view about compensation and its relatedness with other functions in an organization. Various financial, non-financial and psycho-

logical elements, which build compensation, have been discussed for clarity in conception. This chapter also discusses the influencing factors which affect the structure of a compensation plan. Concepts of compensation have been dealt with plenty of examples.

The tenth chapter focuses on important strategic aspects of compensation. This chapter enables readers to comprehend the significance of customization for special groups ranging from shop floor executives to CEOs. Further it highlights the compensation structure and future for the special groups.

The sixth cluster is about decent workplace: compliance and dialogs, which comprises the critical role of industrial relations and labor laws. Chapter eleven reaffirms the importance of maintaining harmonious relationship between employer and employee. This chapter elucidates the concept of industrial relations and role of government to become a watchdog and ensure that decent workplace environment is maintained.

Chapter twelve starts with the relevance of laws especially in the ever changing labor market. This chapter also gives a glimpse of the evolution of labor laws in India. The author has aptly included cases to understand the progress and application of laws in practice.

Cluster seven focuses on transformation of work and work relationships where the emphasis is on the transition of HR from traditional to contemporary

practices and the involvement of technology in this journey. Chapter thirteen takes us through the history and growth of the significance of HR Analytics. Keeping in mind the dynamic environment in organizations today, this chapter focuses on how technology is infused with HR functions.

Chapter fourteen takes us through the history of employee relations from 1976 to 2000 and into the new millennium. This helps the reader understand the transition over the decades in a vivid manner. The involvement of various stakeholders, their contribution in maintaining employment relations in the present scenario and the foreseeable future has been dealt with in the later part of the chapter.

Cluster eight is about the HR Blue Ocean, wherein the author talks about the upcoming and important small and medium industries and the booming service industry. Chapter fifteen helps students, general readers, entrepreneurs, prospective entrepreneurs to understand the importance of human resource function in the SME sector. The chapter discusses the unique challenges faced by SMEs, linkages between performance and HRM in SMEs and various adoption processes.

Chapter sixteen focuses on the emerging trends in the service sector. The chapter starts with the basic differentiation of human resource function practices vis-à-vis manufacturing sector, followed by normative approaches to HR functions. Different models and issues related to service sector were discussed.

The final Cluster exemplifies the criticality of innovation and transformation in this dynamic and chaotic environment. Chapter seventeen discusses the triggers which are responsible for organizational transformation and change. The author deliberates on process and stages of organizational transformation, role of HR professionals and change management.

Chapter eighteen brings forth the significance of innovation in organizations. Besides the definition, the author highlights the conditions and characteristics of innovation in HR. Further, there is interesting insight into how to create a culture of innovation in an organization. In today's environment, HRM can have a direct impact on innovation by creating a strategic focus of employee development strategy.

Overall this book skillfully amalgamates traditional and contemporary approaches to HR, which is in sync with the changing scenario in the industry. This book can be an excellent reference for practitioners be it for consultancy, organizational development or suggesting interventions. The numerous industrial cases and examples not only make this book theoretically enriching but practically viable as well.

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