**Leadership, Public Service for National Development: A Continental Approach**

# HRM Practices in Public Administration: Trends and Lessons Learned.

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# Layout

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# Introduction

- The key role of Human Resource Management (HRM) is to integrate organizational goals with policies and action sequences

- The main purpose of HRM in organizations today is to contribute to organizational effectiveness through enhancing the quality of work-life and ensuring high performance by employees

- It is a constantly evolving discipline, complex in nature and concerned with longer term people issues and macro-concerns about structure, quality, culture, values, commitment

**But**

HRM practice has not been so all along. The HRM we talk about today didn't emerge until the late 1980's

# HRM: Trends

- <span style="color:red">Summary</span>

| PERIOD | STATUS |
|---|---|
| Before 1940's | Welfare and administration |
| 1940's –mid 1970's | Labour/ Employment officers |
| Mid 1970's to 1990's | Personnel administration |
| 1990's to 2000 | Human resource management |
| 2000 to date | Strategic HRM |

# Trends: before 1960's

- Its early roots were in **welfare** championed by **social reformers** who showed genuine concern for their workers.

- From the 1940's HRM was primarily concerned with administrative activities or what we call **transactional aspects** including:

✓ advertising jobs,

✓ writing to applicants,

✓ organizing induction programmes,

✓ setting up training sessions,

✓ keeping employee records ( on matters like absence and discipline) and

✓ looking after the payroll.

# Trends: 1960's to 1970's

❖In the 1960's and 1970's, **negotiation** became a key aspect of employment as employers responded to growing trade union influence especially through **collective bargaining**

❖This aspect of negotiation was added as a function of the welfare officers.

❖In addition to their other roles, they were expected to be good negotiators and be competent in interpersonal skills.

# Trends: 1970's-1980's

- Between *1970 to 1980* the welfare officers acquired new title as **'employment/ labour managers'** and then **'Personnel officers'**

- They were however **NOT** considered members of the management team.

- Their roles involved :

➢collective bargaining,

➢recruitment and selection,

➢job evaluation,

➢training and employee control and

➢compliance with laid down policies and procedures.

# Trends: Cont'

- Tyson and Fell (1986) used the "building site" metaphor to describe the changing roles during that period:

  o **"clerk of works"** who ensured the fulfillment of the routine and immediate tasks.

  o **'contract managers'** whose role was mainly to interpret existing procedures, agreements and contracts only making minor modifications to these to adapt to new circumstances.

  o The **"architect"** who was required to decentralize authority and decision making to the line managers in various organizational units, allowing them to make crucial decisions concerning employee recruitment, selection, classification and remuneration and the like.

# Trends: Cont'

- Towards the end of the 1980's personnel officers began taking up more strategic roles in organizations.

- They started acquiring the role of **business partner** and could now work **with line managers** to identify needs, share in decision making to sustain high levels of performance.

-  This was also the time Public service HRM function became more differentiated with different bodies and agencies taking up various HR functions like Pay, recruitment.

- HR started being recognized as **specialist cum professional function** with new roles and responsibilities.
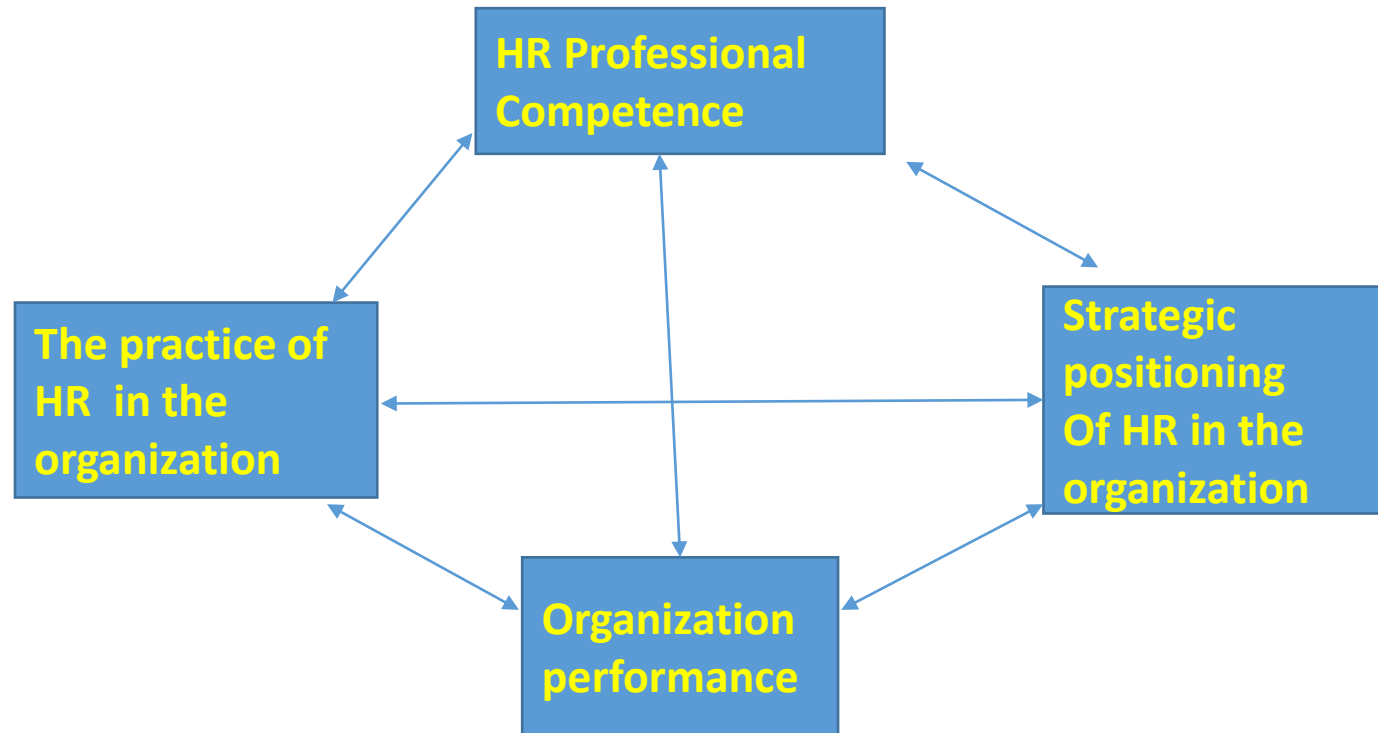
# Trends: New Public Management(NPM)

- The introduction of  New Public Management(NPM) in the 1990's  involved extension of private sector management' practices into the public sector.

- These new practices embraced new ways of managing public sector employees.

- Thus human resource management was included in the public sector reform agenda.

-  The demands for a new approach to management was supposed to  allow greater flexibility in dealing with staff issues and allow greater responsiveness and efficiency.

# Trends: Professional HRM

- The new models of HRM embraced a **Professional HRM** model that presupposed "*strategic integration*" or "**strategic fit**" of HR policies and practices both at the macro and micro levels.

- **Vertical integration** was the strategic linkage between the organization's overall strategy and the HR strategy at the macro level,

- **Horizontal integration occurred at the micro-level . It was** linkage between different key practice areas or components of HRM in such a way that they are implemented in a coherent, mutually supportive manner that reinforced or complemented each other;

- strategic orientation is the heart and soul of HRM that is why it is dubbed 'Strategic Human Resource Management' (**SHRM**).

# Illustration: Components of Strategic HR system

# Challenges/ lessons learnt

# 1. Poor implementation of reforms

- Many reform initiatives proposed in the developing world tend to be more on rhetoric than results (Palidano, 1999)
- Similarly, the growth of HRM from an administrative to a transformative status has been in many cases more in name than in practice

# 2. Lack of Clarity and alignment

- There is still need for clarity of roles and alignment of HR practices to goals and objectives especially in the Public service

- HR must stop viewing itself as solely responsible for people management matters - ***All authority of HRM roles should be vested in line managers.***

- HRM managers should stop continuing to do operational level tasks at the strategic level.

# 3. Rigidity of practice

- Strategic Human Resource Management  principles allow a more flexible and responsive approach to questions of recruitment, selection, retention, training and development of public sector employees to deliver competitive advantage. BUT: The Legal and Institutional Framework in the Public Sector  has robbed HRM of flexibility required to respond to changes.

➢Employment in the public sector is still based on the notion of a **'career service'** with security of tenure and lifelong employment and was framed through the operation of an internal labour market;

➢ *Salaries are traditionally determined centrally*

➢*the civil service has always paid attention to equal opportunities, diversity HR and issues of 'demonstrable' fairness in HR practices*

**This makes it very difficult for best practice HRM to operate**

# 4. Practitioner competences and skills

- Some argue that HR still has to prove itself as a strategic power- It has still to learn to speak the language of business and justify its inclusion on the high table.

- They have to raise the  **functional  profile of HR** through **marketing** it internally and building trust, credibility and strong relationships with line managers.

-  Need  to continuously pay attention to their own development

- They must demonstrate knowledge of service delivery to provide a credible reason for the line managers to approach them on business matters.

- Continuing Professional development is a must for every HR practitioner

# 5. Need to provide  knowledge leadership

- Two integral elements of Leadership- 'Knowing ' and 'doing'.

-  Knowing is about who one is- Its about 'being'

- HR leaders must be more concerned with 'being'- how to develop quality character, mindsets, values, principles and courage.

- Must Develop employees into leaders  who take responsibility.

- **one-size-fits-all approach-** won't work  but  must seek for and use strategies that  encourage employees to have a thoughtful, evidence-based, independent approach to gaining the skills required to be an effective leader.

# 6. Need to enhance Professionalism

- HRM as a professional discipline requires that practitioners enhance and sustain their professionalism

- The HR professional's context should reflect itself in the multiplicity of roles they play within the organization including :

- -being an expert on people at work;

- an alignment engineer; a keeper of organizational values;

- a trusted confidant;

- an adviser on change management and

- a strategy expert.

➢ Over focus on **academics** and **classroom based training** is important BUT should be to supplement **Work based learning** through experiences and interactions at work

# 7. Need to keep adjusting, be adaptive to change.

- Today's workforce is more diverse than ever before

-generationally,

-aspirationally,

- educationally and

- culturally as well as in the more obvious and visible aspects of diversity.

- Work itself is changing beyond recognition and we are therefore working in increasingly diverse ways.

- Understanding, respecting and valuing these dimensions of diversity is vital to not only get the best from the entire workforce but to also encourage innovation and different perspectives (CIPD, 2015)

# 8. The challenge of Technology

- One lesson learnt in this period of COVID-19 is that HRM has a key role to play in ensuring business continuity. As Work shifted from offices to homes/anywhere, it required adequate tooling and IT.

- During COVID 19 Government services that had been automated maintained operations while others stopped;

- There is need for an increased role of Technology in Performance Management and communication, staff engagement and training , learning and development

- BUT, How well was the civil service prepared ? How well has it built its virtual work culture??

- HR should concern itself with application of the internet and web-based systems and increasing mobile technologies to change the nature of interactions within the organization from a pure face to face relationship to one increasingly mediated by such technologies

# Conclusion

➢ The future of HR depends on its ability to acquire, assimilate, transform and exploit new knowledge in other areas to allow it to connect with the dynamic strategic drivers

➢ Areas of emerging concern and challenge to HRM in the public sector are :

✓ advances being made possible by highly sophisticated information technology including human resource information systems,

✓ the importance of understanding the implications of demographic trends such as the ageing population,

✓ the need for additional attention to leadership and leadership development and  greater emphasis on workforce capability and systems of knowledge management

# Thank you