
Editorial

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1 Introduction

History has informed us that the eminence and supremacy of a nation is customarily associated with the quality and attributes of its citizenry. The most successful companies and the most successful countries will be those that manage human capital in the most effective and efficient fashion. At the organisational level, human resources are the backbone of an organisation, and therefore, human capital management is crucial to the success of an organisation. As competitiveness in the marketplace demands competitive human capital, management strategies must equip their workers for changing tasks that accompany changing technology and globalisation. In today's climate, market and technology are so volatile that any failure to adapt to change and be innovative will result in a company being driven out of business.

Nowadays managers must create supportive work environments that can influence, but not force, behaviours and outcomes of employees. Human capital management policies and practices can be strategically designed to promote desirable employee outcomes. A skilled, innovative and satisfied pool of workers provides the winning edge and competitive advantage for the company. Therefore, due attention must be given to the interest and well-being of the employees and reward them for their contributions. Employees in return should give their best efforts to an organisation if they feel that they are a vitally important part of the organisation. In essence, companies should put them in a position that allows them to make a meaningful contribution to the team. It is important to capture the heart of the employees through compelling visions, celebration and injecting fun into the workplace in order to attain corporate excellence. Employees who hold attitudes, value and expectations that are closely aligned with the corporate vision are likely to be more satisfied and committed to the organisation.

With this in mind, this scholarly collection of empirical studies is both timely and relevant. Six papers were selected for this special issue. This collection, as hoped, will contribute to the growing literature of human capital management in Asia. Human capital in Asia is diverse and dynamic with different cultural contexts, economies, labour markets and operating environments. India, for example, is in the transition from being one of the least globalised economies to one of the most dynamic. However, corruption, sloppy standards, lack of appropriate staff and bureaucracy are the barriers. As for Malaysia, an emerging tiger, awareness of the significance and value of human capital as competitive advantage has yet to be appreciated. The present authors cover a range of

human capital management topics that include employee competencies, employee behavioural outcomes, organisational learning, mergers and acquisitions, culture shock and reverse culture shock, and human resource function roles. In the remainder of this editorial, a comprehensive overview of the studies that make up this special issue will be outlined.

2 An overview of the contributions

This special issue on human capital management in Asia opens with a comprehensive study, namely, 'Development of measures of the software developer competencies in Indian information technology industry' by Shukla. The author examines software developer competencies (SDC) – the quality concern, problem resolution, team work, customer service and future orientation. The study adds strategic human competency in the framework to develop and empirically validate a software developer competencies instrument in the Indian information technology industry. Shukla argues that a well-defined, operationalised and validated software developer competencies instrument helps organisations to monitor their human capital and create value through them. SDC scale based feedback mechanism ensures that employees have the right competencies to do their work and spend their energies on the right activities. It is further argued that this research is the first initiative to make a workable instrument set for measuring the key software developer competencies of IT professionals operating in a team environment. Shukla's research provides insights on the adoption of the SDC instrument in promoting a more competent workforce. The findings indicate that recognising SDC as a measure of employee success is crucial for organisational sustainability since it is relatively inimitable in the software industry. Shukla's research concludes that sharing SDC with the workforce, making individual assessments using SDC, and finding the individual SDC rankings relative to the industry average of SDC is a starting point for a competency-driven human resource management programme.

Staying with India, Vij and Sharma's paper, 'The effect of human capital management practices on employee positive behavioural outcomes', argues that enhancing employee positive behavioural outcomes (EPBO) is essential and the way employees are managed is central. In this study, the authors focus on analysing the impact of human capital management practices on employee job satisfaction and commitment. Human capital management practices in this study comprise of leadership practice, employee engagement, knowledge accessibility, and learning capability whilst EPBO indicators are job satisfaction and employee commitment. Authors argue that the strategic success and competitive advantage of an organisation is very much dependent on leveraging on employee skills and competencies. Based on a comprehensive literature review, eight propositions were developed for the study. This study proposes that leadership practices, employee engagement, knowledge accessibility, and learning capability relate positively to employee job satisfaction and employee commitment. The authors affirm that effective leadership and employee job satisfaction are fundamental for organisational success, while positive employee engagement correlates to specific positive business outcomes by workgroup and job type.

Continuing with India, Barpanda and Mukhopadhyay's study of 'Human capital and organisational learning: a study of Indian microfinance institutions' analyses human management practices and its relevance in the organisational learning process in the

Indian microfinance institutions (MFIs) context. Barpanda and Mukhopadhyay highlight the lack of research in human capital management practices in Indian MFIs, in particular, case-based research that establishes the importance of organisational learning. Barpanda and Mukhopadhyay state that stricter government legislation on MFIs regulations and practices have intensified the significance of managing human capital within this industry. This study attempts to draw on various human capital constructs to explore how human capital shapes the learning processes in MFIs. The study on six organisations doing microfinance activities, two each from Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC), societies, and cooperatives was accomplished in three stages. Barpanda and Mukhopadhyay's findings suggest that the role of human capital management practices in organisation learning is still at the rudimentary stage. Societies and cooperatives form of MFIs seem to give minimum priority to some of the human capital management practices. Cooperatives much focus on individual level learning while society-based MFIs emphasise on team-based learning. NBFCs generally promote organisation-based learning and believe in the role of human capital in shaping organisational learning process. The NBFCs are more inclined towards storing their information into the organisation memory. Hence, the findings of Barpanda and Mukhopadhyay's study have important implications for business and management in the MFIs context.

Remaining focused in India, there is Tatuskar's study entitled 'Managing human capital during mergers and acquisitions: the Indian perspective'. This study argues that a significant number of merger and acquisition (M&A) failures is related to mistreated human capital issues and activities. Tatuskar attributes the success or failure of M&A to the eminence given to the companies' human capital before and during M&A. Asserting that people are chief assets of any business organisation, this study attempts to understand the role of human capital in enhancing the success of M&A in Indian organisations. Tatuskar's study examines the potential of appropriate management of human capital during the pre mergers and post integration phase to increase successful M&A deals. Tatuskar examines in depth six main areas believed to have significant impacts on M&A deals. This covers due diligence on human capital issues, importance of human capital issues on the feasibility of a deal, intensity of human capital involvement in the deal, stages of human capital involvement in the deal, principal causes of failure in M&A deals, and the management of human capital issues for M&A success. Tatuskar's study provides insights that reward strategy and culture is an important issue that could affect the feasibility of a deal. There is convincing evidence to suggest that human capital issues were well taken care of during deals and that M&A deals are not nearly as prone to failure as is commonly supposed. Tatuskar's study affirms that most of the deals were a financial success due to the involvement of human capital at the initial negotiation stage of the deals. Further, it reveals that a deeper HR involvement in the M&A process enhances the chances of M&A success. Tatuskar's research concludes that the top five principal causes of M&A failure are all deeply rooted in human capital management issues.

The next paper from Sreeleakha on 'Managing culture shock and reverse culture shock of Indian citizenship employees' focuses on culture shock management. This examines the ability to manage culture shock and reverse culture shock of employees travelling on international assignments and returning to India. Sreeleakha argues that adaptability of individuals to different cultures and countries is a growing challenge, and therefore, this study aims to provide insights about acculturation issues faced in the home country as well as in the host country. Sreeleakha's findings reveal that unlike other

studies, culture shock is more severe than reverse culture shock for Indian expatriates and repatriates. In essence, factors such as age, educational qualification, income, overall experience and some international experience facilitated an employee to mingle with people of the foreign branch. However, income, overall industry experience and previous international experience are the dominant attributes for an employee to manage culture shock and reverse culture shock. The findings of Sreeleakha's study have important implications for human capital management. An understanding of how employees differ demographically provides insights for managers in designing and implementing effective international assignments strategies. It is imperative for HR managers to be sensitive to different demographic factors to mitigate culture shock and reverse culture shock.

The last contribution, Poorkaveh and Hooi's work on 'The relationship of human resource function's roles on high-involvement work practices and quality initiatives in Malaysian manufacturing companies' examines the effect of different human resource function roles on high involvement work practices and quality initiatives in the manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Poorkaveh and Hooi's interest is in understanding how the different HR function roles, namely, steering, driving and facilitating affect high involvement work practices (teamwork, skill development, communication, performance evaluation, reward and recognition, and empowerment) and quality initiatives in the manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Empirical data from 81 human resource and quality managers who completed the online survey questionnaire indicates that there is indeed a significant difference in the mean of high involvement work practices and quality initiatives scores for HR function roles. Poorkaveh and Hooi's findings indicate that HR steering role reports slightly higher levels of influence on high involvement work practices and quality initiatives than HR driving role. They further conclude that the HR function driving role is most significant on communication while HR function steering role has the strongest effect on empowerment.

3 Conclusion

In summary, the six contributions in this special issue are in a bi-national setting with five pieces from India and one from Malaysia. The studies cover a wide range of themes. Research in India tends to focus on the information technology industry. However, the global economy and cooperative work arrangements across national boundaries mean that designing human capital management studies that traverse Asian countries is necessary. In today's dynamic and interconnected environment, cross-cultural human capital management research offers valuable insights on managing a diverse group of human capital. Though scholarly challenging, future studies on human capital management in Asia should consider designing research that captures contextual and cultural differences.