

## A Comparative Review of Books on Human Resource Management

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Within a short span of one semester in the year 2013, three books on HR have hit the B School market with a bang. This review has been undertaken by a psychologist who has done work in the arena of and teaches Organizational Behaviour at the postgraduate level. Of the three books that were selected two of them have been authored and one has been edited. All the business organizations today recognize the need for sound human resource management. Recruiting, retaining and managing skilled employees is one of the most significant task for any organization, as the success of any organization depends on its human resources. Still there exists a gap between comprehending the value of human resources management, and the capability to successfully manage diverse HR issues. For entrepreneurs, HR managers and others dealing with human resources who face this gap, the two dual authored books namely *Human Resource Management in Modern India* by Sorab Sadri & Jayashree Sadri and *Human Resource Management* by S.P.S. Bedi & R.K. Ghai are an admirable resource for the postgraduate student and the teacher. I shall examine the two dual authored books first and then go on to evaluating the dual edited book *Perspectives in Human Resource Management* by Satish Bendigiri and Sacheen Mulay

*Human Resource Management in Modern India (Concepts and Cases)* authored by Sorab Sadri & Jayashree Sadri is a textbook to be used in B- schools specifically aimed at those students who are specializing in Human Resource Management at postgraduate level. The authors have taken twenty-two subthemes and briefly treated each of them. Each subtheme is woven into an argument that treats People Management in Indian Organizations at the beginning of the present century.

The book is divided into two separate parts. The first part of the book tackles the theory & concepts of Human Resource Management. The book discusses issues like environmental scanning, organizational structure & design, industrial relations, HR planning, training & development which are essential for the students of Human Resource Management. The beauty of the book lies in the fact that all these frequently discussed topics of HRM have been addressed in it in the most contemporary and modern form keeping in view of the changing organizational scenario. The authors very aptly talk of value addition that valuable human resources can render to the organizations. The concepts of value creation and addition have now penetrated from consumer markets to organizations also. The significance of value and ethics in organizations has also been highlighted. A recent organizational development intervention strategy that has been propounded is the Sadri- Jayashree 5-D approach. Another useful aspect of this book is the various internal and external dangers that are faced by an HR specialist and a guide to effective intervention strategies.

It vividly discusses the contemporary concepts of HR management viz. the Non-Gandhian Trusteeship Approach (2010), competency mapping, modern performance management systems, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), & Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO), and manpower retention strategies in a high tech environment. Along with the commonly used performance appraisal techniques, the book carries latest techniques like People Capability Maturity Model (PCMM), & the Udai Pareek & T.V. Rao Model of HR Training. The authors describe some latest techniques like e-Learning initiatives in Training & Development programs undertaken by the organizations. In the later part of the book another contemporary concept of Human Resource Information Systems has been introduced which can be effectively utilized in varied areas of HRM like Human Resource Planning, Human Resource Development & other critical facets of HRM. Corporate culture has been pertinently discussed by incorporating the core values of Major Indian and foreign corporate houses, Wipro, Merck, Nordstorm, Sony, Walt Disney Tata, Hindustan Unilever, Cadbury (India), to name a few. Such references to the leading corporate of the world give students a deep insight into the significance of values and culture building in the organizations. The intervention of HR in the management of change has also been appropriately included by the authors. It highlights about what an HR expert ought to know about the WTO and how it will impact the industrial sector. What has been argued is that in the Indian scenario, organizational change must be positivist in that it must be from the top downwards. The second last chapter of the book addresses the issue of manpower retention strategies in a high-tech environment with a premise that the knowledge workers are a highly prized commodity that have to be recruited, retrained, and retained at a fairly high cost. The chapter on organizational excellence and business sustainability concludes the book. This long and concluding chapter takes the reader through a kaleidoscope of what the future unfolds and thereby acts as a guide to future HR interventions.

The second part of the book posits case studies stratified by function and awn from real- life examples and mostly from Eastern India. The intention is to allow the reader to link theory within practice and assist a better understanding of this subject. The book and the cases present the content in a simple and lucid manner. Overall, a nice study book in the vital field of the HR Management. Overall, the book unlike Sadri's other works that cater to an intellectually accomplished audience, this book has a student-friendly flavour which will be of great help to the students who can utilize the knowledge gained from this book throughout their professional life. This book is an excellent resource that is designed to help employers hire and manage their employees. In sum, this textbook is a seminal work, which must adorn the bookshelf of every HR professional across the country.

*Human Resource Management – Text & Cases* authored by SPS Bedi & RK Ghai is a book that happens to be the second edition which has incorporated the feedback from faculty members, students and practicing managers. It has been made more contemporary with most of the chapters having been thoroughly revised. The key attributes of the book include tested case studies, examples for

the key issues of HRM, exploring the emerging issues in HRM such as Strategic HRM, competency mapping, talent management etc. The book contains a total of twenty seven chapters and forty one case studies. This makes it a highly comprehensive book on HRM. The last part of the book contains an explanatory note on case study which is extremely beneficial for the students of HRM. This book is also a combination of traditional and emerging issues in HRM. The initial chapters like introduction to HRM, HR Planning, Recruitment and Selection, Induction, wage and salary administration, job analysis and job evaluation, promotion & transfers etc. are the traditional areas of study in HRM. The beauty of the book lies in the fact that the authors have integrated contemporary with the traditional in almost all the chapters. In the introductory chapter strategic HRM and strategic & non- strategic theories of HRM have also been discussed. Emerging concepts like benchmark recruiting has been incorporated in recruitment and selection part. Induction or orientation has been discussed in a very practical manner which can also serve as a guide to people joining various organizations. It includes a complete HR- focus handbook for induction program, which can be of great help to new recruits along with the HR students. An emerging element of organizational life- Socialization has been vividly contained in the book. The authors have rightly justified this inclusion by stating that the process of socialization helps to ensure that rebellious and norm defying types are either changed or expelled. The chapter on wages and salaries discusses the conventional topics like types of compensation, theories of remuneration, components of remuneration etc. However, in recent years, many experts in the field have begun calling for major changes to the existing rewards systems. Therefore, latest approaches to compensation viz. skill-based pay, broad banding, variable pay and team rewards are also contained in detail. Strategies for compensation initiatives in the Indian scenario have been shared that are based on a study carried by Synergy Consultants on "Best Compensation Management Strategies" which appeared in HT Careers in March 2002. The book also mentions about Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and its linkages with liberalization and globalization. Social security and labor welfare has been discussed keeping in view the social security legislations in India. Human Resource Development (HRD) encompasses the macro and micro level HRD. OCTAPACE Approach has been contained as a recent development in the sphere of HRD climate which refers to creating functional ethos. Training and development is explained by considering training & development activities being followed at Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL).

Another contemporary topic that the authors talk about in the book is career planning and succession planning. The authors argue that the concept is as relevant to transient, unskilled labourers as it is to Engineers or Physicians. Aligning personal development with organizational strategy, using Balanced Scorecard system, competency mapping, training and development & mentoring & coaching have been mentioned as planks of effective career management. Potential appraisal has also been discussed along with performance appraisal in one of the chapters of the book. Potential appraisal carries a lot of importance in today's world since it aids in identifying the hidden talents, capabilities and

potential talent within individuals. These can in turn be harnessed and exploited to ensure optimum utilization of the strategic qualities to the benefit of the individual as well as the organization. Competency mapping is another current issue covered by the book.

The most interesting inclusion in the book is a chapter on communication which is of utmost importance in any organization but often ignored topic in HRM books. Learning Organization and Corporate and Transformational Leadership are other contemporary issues discussed in the book. The learning organization is seen as a response to an increasingly unpredictable & dynamic business environment. Corporate and Transformational Leadership has been conversed in the book with a description of the mantras of India's most dynamic corporate leader Dhirubhai Ambani.

Other contemporary topics discussed in the book are Human Resource Audit, HR Accounting, HR Information System, Motivation, Z Theory of Management, Team Building, Quality of work life, Ethics at work, Talent Management and Industrial Relations.

#### **An Evaluation of the Two Books**

There are exceptional cases where we can find a text book on Human Resource Management so closely linked strategic theory with everyday HR practices. The book by Sadri & Sadri is one such piece of work. One needs to look everywhere to locate another HR expert as accomplished and well regarded as Sorab Sadri. This textbook presents a comprehensive and practical discussion of people management concepts and techniques, all set in a contemporary context of Indian practice and experience. It is written lucidly although not in a very simple conversational manner. The book by Bedi & Ghai meets a need for an all-inclusive textbook on human resource management, which can be used as a one-stop solution by HR students in a B School

The former book can prove to be a valuable resource for both HR students and HR practitioners. The book adopts a cross-cultural approach albeit by default and has relevance to a country that has passed through the stages of colonialism, neo-colonialism and is ensconced within semi-peripheral capitalism within a period of about a three-quarter century. Whereas, the latter is suggested as a must read for all those getting started or wishing to get a broad overview of the areas of HR they have not yet explored. The book rigorously follows the positive social science approach. The book by Sadri & Sadri revolves around HRM as a whole, as a strategic whole, which acts as an initiator, medium, and sustenance provider for corporate culture and managerial growth.

Whereas Bedi & Ghai's work is simple to read, it hovers around the personal growth of the human resources which can ultimately be transferred to the organization as a whole. The theoretical analysis is a substantially grounded theory with empirical research drawn from a wide range of organizational settings. The Sadri & Sadri book helps to fundamentally, understand the subject while the book by Bedi & Ghai will only help the students to clear their

examinations. Hence it must adorn the bookshelf of every student in an average level B School.

Hence, I maintain that both the books are eminently comprehensible and full of information, which will provide front line practitioners, under-graduate and post-graduate students and academics with knowledge that will enable in successfully handling the human resources in organizational settings.

#### **An Evaluation of the Edited Book**

In many ways, the book edited by Bendigiri and Mulay is a mixed bag. It is a very poorly edited and equally poorly printed book that has done grave injustice to the contributors. In fact, there is an absolute lack of application of mind both in editing and publishing. However, the contents are excellent and highlight a profound understanding of the subject on the part of the contributors. There are seven excellently written papers in the first part of the book under the caption *Issues* and twenty-one equally well-written papers in the second part captioned *Challenges*. These papers are aimed both individually and collectively at the teacher of management rather than the student of management and show the direction in which research ought to be conducted.

Therefore, it would only be proper to state that Assistant Professor and Associate Professor level faculty in B Schools will benefit greatly from the papers that have been collated in this edited book. Needless to add, these papers would assist students doing their Doctoral Work and wanting to publish papers on their own.

One message however comes through very clearly in all three publications: HR is not an easy or soft option. It is best handled either by either behavioural scientists or by social scientists. This point was raised and dealt with brilliantly in *Geometry of HR* (2002) and it should not be lost on us academicians. It is certainly too risky to allow ex-government officials to handle this subject since the argument that "since they have handled people management they can teach it too" is flawed. HRM consists of HR Administration, HR Planning, HR Training & Development, HR Information Systems and Industrial Relations. These ex-government officials and ex-servicemen can at best handle HR Administration in the field and even attempt it in the classroom. It is safest to leave the subject only in the hands of those scholars who have specialised, conducted research and published in the field of people management.

From the perspective of gleaning knowledge all three books present the reader with enough food for thought.