

Chapter 12

Human Resource Management in Post- Bureaucratic Organizations: New Challenges and Concerns

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ABSTRACT

The topic of human resource management is considered to be one of the most ancient in the domain of social sciences and different issues have been widely addressed by the time. However, society and markets evolution and the rise of new organizational forms invite new problems, as well as new perspectives on how to manage people at work. This chapter will deal with how the role of HRM has evolved in post-bureaucratic organizations and what can be done to sustain different people's motivation and engagement. Post-bureaucratic organizations may require a new human resource philosophy and the reconsideration of human resource management practices in order to guarantee employees' well-being, dignity together with organizational success.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of human resource management is considered to be one of the most ancient, not only in the domain of social sciences, but for human sciences in general. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the most fundamental questions and problems of human resource organization and management -for instance, the ones related to individual well-being and organizational behaviour, people motivational drivers, or justice- have been largely investigated, alongside questions regarding worker specialization and individual development. However, society evolution and the rise of new organizational forms invites new problems, as well as new perspectives on how to address said problems.

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As a result of economic fluctuations, technological innovation, and the emergence of new industries, there is a need to discuss different human resource management practices in order to guarantee employees' well-being, dignity and organizational success (Hodson & Roscigno, 2004) in these new organizational forms and market conditions. Some issues are, hence, completely new, while others have already been largely addressed by eminent scholars. Thus, a brief review of the human resource management literature will be proposed, concentrating on the primary changes and organizational phenomena that characterize postmodern economies and, by extension, post-bureaucratic organizations. Our purpose is to understand which issues have already been addressed by management literature and which ones need to be analysed under the lens of a novel approach. This review will then reveal those extant, mainly prescriptive, practices that require revision.

The chapter will deal with the phenomena typical to postmodern societies and knowledge economies that require new approaches and practices, taking particular aim at managerial implications. To this end, this chapter is focused eminently on profit organizations (both public and private). Our intent in doing so is to better capitalize on extant literature and provide a deeper understanding and more consistent view of HRM issues in postmodern society.

The evolution of HRM literature will be firstly analyzed in order to clarify the actual meaning of "human resource management" (e.g., Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005; Ross, 1981). Then, challenges faced by human resource managers with regard to common postmodernist organizational logics will be presented.

This chapter will also focus on changes arising from the emergence and prominence of knowledge economy (Powell & Snellman, 2004), and in tandem, the necessity of creating intra- and interorganizational cooperative relationships (Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995). This entails that markets, hierarchies, and hybrid intermediate forms (Adler, 2001) have an accrued importance that requires governance and compensation systems to account for the transformation of employees into suppliers, or more generally, into different corporate stakeholders.

Another important concern that will be presented involves individuals' diverse conceptions of time and altered attitudes toward work, especially as compared to attitudes toward private and leisure activities (e.g., Robbins, Judge, Millett & Boyle, 2013). Younger workers in particular are searching for a new work-life balance; this requires organizations to project processes and implement practices—for instance,

- Enabling remote working,
- Revising career paths, and
- Redesigning corporate welfare programs to be more effectively targeted.

At the same time, in order to preserve the social value of work for older people, it is important to invest in development practices that ensure "over 50" employability, thereby preserving the economic sustainability of the corporate and public financial system (Naegele & Walker, 2000, 2006; Walker & Maltby, 2012; Zaniboni, Truxillo & Fraccaroli, 2013).

Finally, this chapter will deal with the classical distinction between leadership and management. Is this distinction still relevant in post-bureaucratic organizations? Are some characteristics of leaders now ascribable to managers or vice versa? Moreover, can leaders truly create abundant organizations where people can create sense about their working activities (D. Ulrich, W. Ulrich & Goldsmith, 2010)?

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