

Human resources management in higher education: A review

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Abstract: This comprehensive review study explores the multifaceted realm of Human Resource Management (HRM) within the context of higher education. As institutions of higher learning face evolving challenges and opportunities, the role of HRM has grown in significance. This abstract provides a succinct overview of the key elements, challenges, and emerging trends shaping HRM in higher education in higher education encompasses various facets, including recruitment, retention, faculty tenure and promotion, diversity and inclusion, compliance with labor laws, faculty development, and employee well-being. Balancing the needs of diverse stakeholders, from tenured faculty to support staff, presents a unique challenge for HR professionals in this sector. Moreover, the integration of technology, data-driven decision-making, and sustainability initiatives are transforming the landscape of HRM in higher education. This review also highlights the challenges facing HRM, such as budget constraints, complex regulatory environments, and the ongoing pursuit of academic freedom and shared governance. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and prompted a reassessment of work policies in higher education.

1. Introduction

Management refers to the systematic approach of handling and overseeing various aspects of resources and materials. The practise of management is a universally applicable endeavour that is essential for individuals and organisations alike in their pursuit of objectives. Given the limited availability of resources, it is crucial to employ efficient management strategies. Resources can encompass both tangible and intangible elements, including physical materials as well as human capital. Effective resource management is crucial in higher education institutions. These institutes provide specialised education to cultivate highly competent professionals for diverse sectors of the economy, scientific research, and cultural endeavours. As entities focused on knowledge, higher education institutions must enhance their information and knowledge management practises to effectively address the internal and external contexts in which they function. They serve as a means of enhancing the social and cultural fabric of a nation, while also contributing to economic growth and development. The efficacy of an educational institution is commonly attributed to the calibre of its personnel and the recognition of human resource management as the core of educational administration.

Human resource management as we understand it today has come a long way from its early beginnings. The HR function had humble beginnings in the form of personnel departments around 1900 when companies began to hire someone to manage the welfare of the employees. (Dulebohn et.al, 1995) The first HR department was established in 1920. (Jamrog &Overholt, 2004). Strategic issues in HR did not become a topic of discussion for practitioners and academicians until the mid-1990s. (Patrick & Hartmann,2001) Today HR departments are considered strategic partners in organization growth. According to Yeung and Brockbank (1994) this change was the result of increasing competition resulting in a pressure to reduce cost and meet the ever-growing expectations of customers coupled with growth in information technology as well as globalization. This transformation was also the result of the realization that the performance of an organization basically depended on whether its employees were treated well (Ehrlich, 1997). Today organizations have realized that Human Resource Management ensures that human talent is used effectively and efficiently to accomplish organizational goals.

2. Need of the study

Recent studies have indicated that a substantial allocation of resources towards human resource management does not yield any discernible influence on the overall performance of institutions. According to a survey conducted on behalf of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Human Resources Management directors in universities claim to have successfully implemented integrated human resources strategies. However, the survey findings indicate that there is no observable relationship between the activities of Human Resources Management and the overall performance of universities as measured by standard performance indicators. Nevertheless, the directors of Human Resources Management, in their response to the survey, acknowledged a lack of certainty regarding the effective communication of the strategies they had implemented to the academicians who serve as line managers responsible for executing their policies and practises.

3. Research objective

1. To identify different HRM practices adopted by higher education sector.
2. To study the changes in HRM practices post Covid-19

4. Research methodology

The study is based on secondary data various literature were examined to inform the theories and evolution of HRM. To define, construct, and formulate the problem and for identification of HRM practices in higher education various sources were used, including the records of the sampled organizations, books, magazines, relevant articles that appeared in journals and newspapers from time to time, study reports, etc.

5. Literature review

The basic aim of Human Resources Management is to optimise the return on investment derived from the human capital of an organisation while simultaneously minimising financial risk. Human Resource Management (HRM) also strives to optimise individual performance by establishing a work environment that fosters employee development and contentment. Human Resources Management is widely recognised as an essential factor in enhancing the level of dedication exhibited by employees, which subsequently leads to the advancement of the organisation as a whole. Empirical research has demonstrated that various organisational variables, such as the level of commitment exhibited by leaders towards the implementation process, the engagement of external consultants, the institutional reputation, and the bureaucratic and political decision-making processes, exert significant influences on the successful implementation of quality management practises within educational institutions.(Csizmadia, T., Enders, J., & Wester Heijden, D. F., 2008) In their study, Shahzad, Bashir, and Ramay (2008) conducted research to examine the influence of human resources management practises on the perceived performance of university teachers in Pakistan. The findings of the study revealed a positive association between compensation and promotion practises and the perceived performance of employees. However, the study did not find a significant correlation between performance evaluation practises and perceived employee performance. The findings of the research conducted by Green et al. (2006) indicate that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and organisational success. Additionally, research has revealed that Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has a direct and positive impact on individual performance, organisational commitment, and work satisfaction. Human resource management encompasses a multitude of functions within the corporate realm. However, when implemented in the context of the education sector, namely inside universities and affiliated institutions, these tasks undergo modifications to align with the unique demands of this sector. The next section provides a comprehensive analysis of some key functions that are important.

- Recruitment and Placement-These two critical roles within human resource management aim to guarantee that the organisation maintains a sufficient pool of human resources across all hierarchical levels and positions, ensuring timely and appropriate placement. Recruitment and placement, in the context of personnel management, are essential processes that necessitate careful consideration of personnel forecasts. It is imperative to develop strategies for the recruitment of a competent and enough teaching and non-teaching personnel, taking into consideration the present requirements and potential expansion initiatives, if applicable. When predicting the internal demand for teaching, it is necessary to take into account the enrolment of students

in various courses. It is imperative to define timelines for recruitment. Presently, this phenomenon is not observed in any capacity. Frequently, positions remain unfilled for extended periods, particularly within state-funded universities characterised by high levels of bureaucracy. Alternatively, these positions may be filled on a temporary basis without a formalised process, year after year. This phenomenon occurs due to the requirement of multiple permissions from numerous governmental entities during the recruitment process, which is characterised by its protracted duration and inflexible nature. According to Lee (2005), to enhance one's competitive advantage in the teacher recruiting process, it is crucial to streamline the selection process by minimising bureaucratic procedures. In a dynamic and rapidly evolving context, it is imperative to adapt this approach; failure to do so may result in the private sector swiftly attracting the most exceptional people, leaving state-funded institutions with individuals of lesser calibre. Consequently, this situation would significantly compromise the overall quality.

• **Training and Development**-The importance of these human resource functions is in their ability to facilitate the growth and development of people, both in terms of their job performance and their overall progression through the organisation, subsequent to their recruitment and placement. This is advantageous for organisations as well, since employees may serve as valuable partners in any firm when they are fully grown and have reached their maximum potential. Moreover, this equips individuals with the necessary skills and capabilities to effectively handle extra duties within their present and prospective roles. This function holds significant importance for educational institutions, as providing training to faculty members will provide a dual impact. Not only will they acquire enhanced skills and knowledge through training, but they will also be able to deliver instruction more effectively, so benefiting students as well. At present, the sole kind of training provided to teaching faculty subsequent to their appointment consists of mandatory orientation sessions and refresher courses, which staff members are expected to fulfil. It is imperative to enhance and optimise these programmes in order to ensure their practicality and relevance, so enabling faculty members to derive maximum benefit from them. The acquisition of soft skills training is necessary due to the interpersonal nature of educational institutions and the increasing importance of interpersonal competencies in a competitive environment.

• **Performance Appraisal**-The performance appraisal function serves as a means of evaluating the levels of job performance exhibited by employees (Kleiman, 2000). An optimal and efficient performance appraisal system plays a crucial role in guiding employee conduct towards the organisational objectives, while simultaneously facilitating the monitoring of goal attainment. Educational institutions should transcend the obligatory appraisal systems mandated by regulatory agencies and develop their own internal mechanisms to discern high-performing individuals. This is important because to the diverse objectives of individual institutions and the distinct student populations they serve. Consequently, the standardised parameters prescribed by regulatory authorities frequently fail to produce the desired outcomes sought by organisations.

• **Compensation and Benefits**-The process of ascertaining the compensation schemes. Considering the compensation philosophy of the management is an essential aspect of human resource management. When analysing the compensation package, it is essential to take into account two key factors: the underlying management philosophy that guides the package and the prevailing market conditions. In order to maintain internal equity and market competitiveness, it is imperative that any pay package undergo periodic evaluation, particularly in the current dynamic environment. This particular aspect of the system has a notable delay in its response time and demonstrates a tendency to be responsive rather than anticipatory. Due to a decrease in state support and a simultaneous rise in costs, institutions are facing challenges in maintaining sustainability. In cases where an institution receives both private and government funding, the disparities in remuneration packages contribute to internal unfairness, hence undermining the overall organisational well-being. It is imperative for institutions to develop their own novel incentive programmes in order to effectively inspire personnel to perform at their highest level, hence enabling the institution to establish and maintain a competitive advantage.

• **Employee Relations**-This is the fundamental aspect of the human resource function within any organisation. It is imperative to foster employee voice mechanisms in order to enhance the relationship between employees and management. This aspect has greater significance when managing the intellectual labour force present within educational institutions. Regrettably, there exists a deficiency in this domain at present. The existence of this emptiness can be attributed to the significant proliferation of institutions and the consequential high degree of centralization, leading to a prevailing sense of alienation. In contemporary times, employees

inside expansive academic institutions frequently exhibit a diminished sense of identification with their respective organisations. It is imperative to undertake endeavours aimed at effecting change and enhancing employee relations in order to cultivate a competitive advantage.

6. Impact of covid-19 on HRM practices in higher education

Amidst the global pandemic, the Human Resource Management (HRM) department assumes a crucial responsibility in upholding a satisfactory level of performance within the faculty members. The incorporation of emerging technology that facilitate human resource management (HRM) functions, along with the adoption of novel HRM practises, has bolstered the efficacy of day-to-day HRM operations. Nevertheless, researchers in the domains of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organisational Behaviour have emphasised the ongoing challenges faced by higher education institutions in relation to the performance of their faculty members (Karabchuk, Shomotova, & Chmel, 2020). Specifically, it has been highlighted that the performance of faculty members has a direct influence on the academic achievements of students (Sultan et al., 2021). There are four primary practises within the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) that encompass all aspects of resource management. The initial function of HRM is the process of recruitment and selection, wherein candidates are evaluated based on specific criteria established by academic institutions. From the pool of candidates, the most suitable applicant is selected, taking into account various administrative and legal considerations. The second practise of Human Resource Management (HRM) involves training and development initiatives. Universities play a crucial role in providing necessary training to both academic and non-academic staff members. This training aims to enhance their abilities in alignment with the strategic objectives of the academic institution (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). The third function of Human Resource Management (HRM) that is implemented at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) pertains to the rewards and compensation offered to the employees. Based on prior research in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM), rewards and compensation typically manifest in various forms, including but not limited to monetary remuneration, moral incentives, and recognition for exceptional achievement (Liou, Oliveira, & Pimentel, 2021). In order to optimise the efficacy of incentive and compensation systems, academic institutions establish a connection between rewards and the last stage of human resource management (HRM), known as performance appraisal. This entails providing faculty members with awards based on their exceptional performance during the academic year. According to Farhan, Salamzadeh, and Richardson (2021), the proper implementation of these practises has a good impact on performance.

7. Discussion

Human resource management (HRM) in higher education is a critical aspect of running educational institutions efficiently and effectively. This review will provide an overview of the key elements, challenges, and trends in HRM within the context of higher education.

1. Role of HRM in Higher Education: HRM in higher education involves managing the workforce within colleges and universities. It includes the recruitment, training, development, and retention of faculty, staff, and administrators. The primary goal is to ensure that the institution has the right talent to achieve its educational and research objectives.
2. Recruitment and Retention: Recruiting and retaining top talent is a significant challenge in higher education. Competition for skilled faculty and staff is intense, and universities must offer competitive compensation packages, career development opportunities, and a supportive work environment to attract and retain the best candidates.
3. Faculty Tenure and Promotion: Many universities have a tenure system, which requires careful evaluation and promotion decisions. HRM plays a crucial role in managing the tenure and promotion process, ensuring fairness and transparency.
4. Diversity and Inclusion: Promoting diversity and inclusion is a growing priority in higher education HRM. Institutions aim to create diverse faculty and staff teams that reflect the student body's diversity. HR professionals are responsible for implementing diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives.

5. Compliance and Regulations: Higher education institutions must comply with various labor laws and regulations. HRM ensures that universities adhere to legal requirements related to labor, employment, and workplace safety.
6. Faculty Development: HRM also plays a role in faculty development. This includes offering training programs, mentorship opportunities, and support for research and teaching.
7. Employee Benefits and Well-being: Managing employee benefits and well-being programs is essential to ensure that faculty and staff remain satisfied and productive. This includes health and retirement benefits, work-life balance initiatives, and mental health support.
8. Technology Integration: The integration of technology, including HR information systems (HRIS) and learning management systems (LMS), has become crucial for HRM in higher education. These systems help streamline administrative processes and improve data management.

8. Challenges in HRM in Higher Education:

The challenges in Human Resource Management (HRM) within higher education institutions are multifaceted and require strategic solutions. The following are some key challenges faced in HRM in higher education:

Budget Constraints and Funding Uncertainties: Higher education institutions frequently grapple with budget limitations and financial uncertainties. These constraints can restrict HR resources, limiting the ability to attract and retain top talent, provide competitive compensation, and invest in professional development programs.

Balancing Tenured and Non-Tenured Faculty Needs: Maintaining a harmonious environment between tenured and non-tenured faculty can be complex. HR must address the diverse career aspirations and expectations of both groups while ensuring fairness and equitable treatment.

Academic Freedom and Shared Governance: The principles of academic freedom and shared governance are central to higher education. HR professionals must navigate these principles carefully when making decisions related to faculty hiring, promotion, and disciplinary actions, ensuring a delicate balance between institutional needs and individual rights.

Managing a Diverse Workforce: Higher education institutions are characterized by diverse workforces comprising individuals with varying cultural backgrounds, demographics, and needs. HR must create inclusive policies and practices that cater to this diversity, fostering a more equitable and supportive work environment.

Complex Labor Laws and Regulations: The higher education sector is subject to numerous labor laws and regulations, both at the federal and state levels. HR departments must remain well-versed in these laws to ensure compliance, which can be particularly challenging due to the unique nature of academic employment contracts.

Crisis Response: Unforeseen events, such as pandemics or natural disasters, can disrupt normal operations in higher education. HRM faces the daunting task of quickly adapting policies, ensuring the safety and well-being of employees, and maintaining continuity in education and research during these crises.

Addressing these challenges in HRM requires a strategic and proactive approach. Higher education institutions may benefit from fostering a culture of adaptability, embracing technology and data-driven decision-making, prioritizing diversity and inclusion, and engaging in effective communication with all stakeholders to find innovative solutions to these complex issues.

9. Trends in HRM in Higher Education:

Remote Work and Flexible Policies: The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work in higher education. Institutions are reevaluating their policies and considering long-term flexible work arrangements.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: HR departments are increasingly using data analytics to inform their decisions, from recruitment strategies to employee engagement efforts.

Sustainability Initiatives: Many universities are focusing on sustainability and incorporating it into their HRM practices, such as promoting eco-friendly commuting options and reducing carbon footprints.

Emphasis on Well-being: Institutions are placing a stronger emphasis on employee well-being, offering mental health services, wellness programs, and work-life balance initiatives.

Digital Transformation: The use of AI, automation, and chatbots for HR functions is on the rise, making processes more efficient and user-friendly for faculty and staff.

HRM in higher education is evolving to meet the changing needs and challenges of educational institutions. It plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining talent, promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensuring compliance with regulations. Embracing technology and adapting to new trends is essential for HRM in higher education to remain effective and responsive to the needs of both faculty and staff.

10. Conclusion

Given the significant role that Human Resource Management plays in the achievement of educational institutions, it is imperative that it is accorded the appropriate level of recognition and prominence. However, it should be noted that in state-funded universities and affiliated institutions in India, there is a lack of a distinct department specifically designated for carrying out this particular role. Prior to the initiation of privatisation, the lack of differentiation was inconsequential as there existed standardised policies across all establishments. The phenomenon of privatisation has resulted in a departure from uniformity, leading to significant disparities in policy and their subsequent execution. Many private universities have recognised the significance of Human Resource Management and have established dedicated departments to fulfil this function, rather than relying on academicians and administrators who may lack the necessary training and skills to effectively carry out this role. State-funded institutions should consider implementing a department dedicated to Human Resources in order to facilitate the employment of specialised personnel who can devote their full-time efforts to essential HR responsibilities. The establishment of a department solely focused on the management of human resources inside an educational institution has the potential to assume a strategic role and confer a competitive advantage. It is imperative that employees are provided with a centralised department to address and manage all matters pertaining to placement, training, promotion, compensation, and related concerns, rather than having to navigate many channels. At present post Covid-19, Human Resource Management (HRM) holds a crucial and pivotal position within an organisation, since it has the potential to boost the performance of staff members and improve overall productivity.

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