

From the Editor

Human resource management has achieved a state of development that is often described as strategic, international human resource management. Development in this field is the result of a growing importance of human capital as a strategic factor in the competitiveness of contemporary organizations as well as the internationalization of the economy, including the growing mobility of people on labor markets. The strategic and international dimensions of HRM are visible in both theoretical works and in projects implemented in practice. These questions are also the subject of the current issue of *Human Resource Management*, which is devoted to navigating the currents of this scientific discipline and such areas of practical implementation as international comparative HRM and HRM in international corporations. The published articles bring input into the discussion underway on the convergence and divergence of this field of management, though they do not refer to this matter directly.

This issue is launched with an article by J. Poór that comprehensively presents evolution in the HR function in Hungary after the year 1990. Changes are discussed in the broader context of the privatization and restructuring processes of enterprises, which resulted in changes in the realm of HRM organization and tools. The article is something of a summary of studies on topical literature on the HR function as a competitive factor in the business organization. The author describes several years of observations of changes in this area of management and develops conclusions on the state of HRM in Hungary in the first decade of the new century.

The next article written by T. Kaarelson and Ruth Alas focus on human resources management practices in Estonian private sector enterprises. The authors show some changes in that area against the backdrop of economic decentralisation and privatisation as well as restructuring and changes on the labour market. They conclude that the role of HRM has increased noticeably in the last 3 years after Estonia has jointed the European Union.

The question of change in the area of the HR function is also presented in the successive article by A. Poczowski and B. Buchelt. The authors discuss current problems and challenges in HRM in Polish companies against a background of their restructuring processes after the year 1990. Empirical research conducted by the authors in 2006 as well as

the results of studies carried out within the framework of the Human Resource Management Leader Competition organized by the Institute of Labor and Social Studies of Warsaw served as the basis of analyses of HRM strategy, the role of HR departments, and other matters. The findings of the studies confirmed the premise that the importance of human resource management is growing in Poland. The authors maintain that, in the future, the place and importance of the HR function will be dependent on skill in utilizing modern technology in the process of acquiring and applying the knowledge necessary to generate added value for stakeholders.

One of the matters that is a subject of discussion in the community of HRM specialists is the changing role of the HR department. This question is the subject of the next article, written by J. Brandl, M. Fink, and S. Kraus. They present a model of the HR department based on empirical research. They explain the operations and assessment of HR departments from the point of view of Austrian upper management. The model describes detailed conditions for delegating responsibility to the staff of HR departments and identifies relevant criteria used by managers for their evaluation. It also welds together the functional and institutional approach to HRM and strives to explain the reasons behind criticism of HR departments on the part of managers. The article fits into the stream of publications on the roles and competencies of HR departments in contemporary organizations.

In as much as the first article looks at changes in human resource management from the perspective of Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland, and Austria), the subject matter considered by the successive paper is changes observed over recent years in Japan. The author, A. Szczerbak, starts with the traditional Japanese HRM model and proceeds to present new tendencies such as the backing away from lifelong employment and the subdivision of the labor market into core and peripheral segments. She also characterizes the group of “freeters,” freelancers, present on the labor market, and looks into the matter of an aging society, changes in labor law, and questions of equal opportunity on the labor market. The article also delves into such HR questions as the de-recruitment of workers, remuneration, and worker assessment. The article forms a part of the discussion on the impact of globalization on changes in the HR function.

Continuing the Far Eastern thread in human resource management is an interview by A. Marek with Mutong Ma, a Chinese expert in the field of organizational culture. Found in the Leaders’ Forum section, the interview provides interesting information on changes in the culture of Chinese companies caused by the processes of economic and social transformation taking place in that country. It raises questions on cultural variety and points to typical cultural differences between Chinese businesses and joint ventures, state-owned and private companies, and presents an approach to managing cultural changes in companies.

The Communique section presents an article by M. Bratnicki, M. Majowska, and J. Strużyna on relations between entrepreneurial strategies and remuneration in the company. Questions on the strategic bonding of HRM, including remuneration with a company's competitive strategies, is among key matters in the process of improving practice and developing theory. The authors also formulate the premise that the efficiency of remuneration policy is dependent on the fit between strategy, organization, and the environment. This paper is concerned with the strategic human resource management stream.

In signaling the content of the individual articles found in this issue of *Human Resource Management*, I wholeheartedly recommend their reading in the hope that they will serve as inspiration in undertaking scientific discussion and conducting further research into this dynamically developing area of international and strategic HRM.

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