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Introduction

Making critical sense of human resource management in a globalized world

Jawad Syed and Robin Kramar

Welcome to the first edition of *Human Resource Management in a Global Context: A Critical Approach*. The book has been written with the aim of developing our understanding and practice of human resource management (HRM) in an increasingly globalized world of work. The book uses a critical lens to develop an approach to HRM that is not only business-focused but also context-sensitive and socially responsible – we will explain our rationale for this below.

The emergence of HRM in the 1980s was accompanied by a sustained theoretical assault on its pretensions, highlighting the gap between the rhetoric of HRM and the reality, which was focused on impersonal economic rationalism. The reconstruction of the employment relationship as a singularly individual market exchange did not go uncontested in management education. However, whereas the proponents of HRM once felt the need to engage and respond to critique, the field now seems to have narrowed as the major concerns relate merely to strategic 'fit' and identifying mechanisms to facilitate 'high-commitment' and 'high-performance' organizations.

We consider the overemphasis of HRM on strategic performance to be problematic in view of the considerable gap between the policy and practice of strategic HRM. Vaughan (1994) argues that although organizational mission statements usually hold that employees are their most important asset, organizational reality is characterized by impersonal economic rationalism. Wilmott (1993) asserts that the rhetoric of HRM tends to turn employees into 'willing slaves' who negate their own interests, assuming the organization will take care of them. Seen from this angle, HRM's unitary rhetoric may compromise the individual and collective needs of employees and may instill an HRM culture

Human Resource Management In A Global Context A Critical Approach

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