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Book Review

Refining Human Capital Insight: An Elegant Exposition of Enriching Essentials: A Book Review

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ABSTRACT

This book review pertaining to “Advanced HRM” offers a panoramic view relating to intricacies of managing people, the most “precious” resource in any organization. The author, having produced a masterpiece “Human Resource Management”, has extended the depth and breadth of its coverage in adding much value, inclusive of concepts, frameworks, applications, cases, tools as well as reflections. In the logically sequenced twelve chapters, the author offers valuable knowledge enriched with objectives and a series of real life examples. Visual depictions such as frameworks, process flow charts, models and figures have enriched the clarity of thoughts associated with an increased appeal for reading. From a critical perspective, providing useful web links for further reading, additional tools, or latest statistics can be a further improvement. Also, reference to the contribution towards HRM by regional and local resource personnel could have been meaningfully incorporated into the discussion. Overall, the author invites the reader for an impactful interaction of reflecting and relating the richly covered content towards the betterment of individuals and institutions alike.

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Introduction

The Advanced Human Resource Management (AHRM) can be considered as a sequel to “Human Resource Management: Personnel” written by the veteran author in 2009. It also complements “Sustainable Human Resource Management” also by the same author. “I believe that HRM will play a key role in determining the success and progress of organizations, employees, society and the nature” states the author in the preface.

The book consists of twelve chapters, and each chapter is enriched with objectives, summary, useful frameworks, author-developed instruments & tools, practically adaptable schemes, real-life examples, review questions, cases, critical incidents, and skill builders. One noteworthy feature is the logical sequence the author has maintained in guiding the reader from a holistic strategic perspective to the detailed operational aspects of HRM. Visual depictions such as frameworks, process flow charts, models and figures have enriched the clarity of thoughts associated with an increased appeal for reading.

Summary of Content

Among the numerous ways of describing HRM, what Dessler (2003) offers appears to be the simplest. “HRM is all about policies, practices and processes of performing the people aspect of a management position.” It highlights the significance where every manager has a people management role to play. In moving much beyond, the author presents a range of definitions of HRM and subsequently presents his contribution as the “inclusive definition of HRM.” It is as follows:

“Basically, HRM is the adoption of certain functions and activities for utilizing employees efficiently and effectively in an organization to achieve its goals which include satisfying the key stakeholders to the possible extent and contributing positively to the natural environment. It involves formulation, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of strategies, policies, procedures, rules, practices, and systems of managing employee strategically, participatory, and sustainably.” (Opatha, 2025: 8)

The author, in line with the title of “Advanced HRM,” presents HRM models, frameworks and structures with needed depth and breadth. As he clearly mentioned in his Preface, “the objective of this book is to provide a systematic and rational understanding of advanced HRM based a model called Generic Model of HRM developed by me.” As he further illustrates, such an approach paves

way for both conceptual and application-oriented understanding to the reader. His attempt to reduce the complexity associated in dealing with the management of the most complex creatures, with examples, cases and activities is commendable. In describing the fundamentals of Human Resource, the author has skillfully presented three dimensions, namely *unique resource*, *strategic driver*, and *capital*.

Firstly, HR is presented as a *unique resource* that is animate, active, and alive, having the ability to think, feel and act. Here the emphasis on the uniqueness, where the only resource that can have command control over the other resources is fittingly argued.

Secondly, the author presents HR as a *capital*, in line with the now popular concept of Human Capital Management (HCM). According to him, human capital is defined as “the right knowledge, skills and attitude possessed by an organization’s employees through education, training, and experience which enable them to perform current & future jobs, and other useful works.” (Opatha, 2025: 3)

Thirdly, the author presents HR as a *strategic driver*. As he observes, “right employees become a source of competitive advantage which is a status achieved or an ability [possessed by an organization by creating a superior marketplace /position relative to its competitors enabling the organization to earn the highest or a better profit or return on investment.” The above three dimensions resonates well with the Sri Lankan definition of HRM developed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM), Sri Lanka in 2014. “A *strategic and integrated approach in acquisition, development and engagement of talent, using relevant tools, with proper policies, practices and processes in creating a conducive climate towards achieving organizational excellence and societal wellbeing*”(Dharmasiri et al, 2014). In expanding further, the author takes us through an intellectual journey from macro to micro aspects of HRM with due emphasis on external as well as internal environmental aspects. Strategic HRM, employee planning, staffing, human resource development (HRD), rewards management, employee & labour relations, international HRM are some of the chapters that add refreshingly resourceful value to the reader. Having extracted some salient point from HRM authors with due acknowledgement, the “Opatha factor” of localizing as well as contextualizing the key concepts with practical applications can be very much visible.

The versatility of covering the deeper aspects of HRM in a

lucid manner and the practicality of relating it to organizations in a splendid manner can be a key noteworthy feature of the entire text. Cases included in each chapter and the associated questions will surely prompt the keen reader to reflect and relate towards knowledge application. Selection of such cases and other learning instruments had been done with much precision and high appropriateness, highlighting the vast expertise of the author.

Critical Analysis

In the preface, the author has included an interesting statement: *"I must mention that I did not have a team of developing this textbook employed by a publishing company. Unlike foreign textbooks (especially American) there was no team of developing this book. In addition to writing this book the hard work of word processing, designing, editing the language, editing the writing, and proofreading had to be done by myself."*

In observing the above statement, two aspects prominently emerge. On the one hand, the sheer brilliance of a veteran author, who has already published so many books with multiple talents in clear conceptualizing and clever communicating by way of narratives and illustrations is evident. On the other hand, an opportunity to have a collaborative approach with one or more authors/assistants where a more globally appealing treatise could have been possible. HR Transformation by Ulrich et al (2009) is one such case in point. However, as the author's intention is to have more local focus, with the suggestion to develop a course based on this textbook for the students who have already covered a course on fundamentals of HRM, his approach has valid justification.

In terms of the contents, a high degree of quality, relevance and appeal can be seen. With the inclusion of real-life examples, review questions and related cases etc., each chapter has comprehensive coverage of specific aspects related to HRM. The way the author has compiled several comprehensive cases with high contextual significance is indeed commendable. A logical sequence in the presentation of key concepts with concrete applications in a convincing manner can be seen in all chapters.

One worthwhile enhancement of the book could be to provide useful web links for further reading, additional tools, or latest statistics. As the emerging generations are more tech-savvy and digitally diligent, such connections

will be an encouraging way of appealing the young reader to engross in learning HRM, not only from this book, but also from numerous web-based sources available.

Further, reference to the contribution towards HRM by regional and local resource personnel could have been meaningfully incorporated into the discussion. Pioneering work on HRM in Indian context done by veterans such as Rao (1982) and Pareek (1997) could have been meaningfully incorporated. Seven G framework of HRM (Dharmasiri, 2015) could be another example. An attempt of such nature could have enriched the context relevance to Sri Lankan readership with more conviction.

Conclusion

The coveted book titled, "Advanced Human Resource Management" by Opatha (2024) is a comprehensive and compelling volume that offers much value for readers in enriching their HRM competencies and engaging them towards concrete application of the concepts. It invites the reader for an impactful interaction of reflecting and relating the richly covered content towards the betterment of individuals and institutions alike. I sincerely thank the author for the job well done.

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