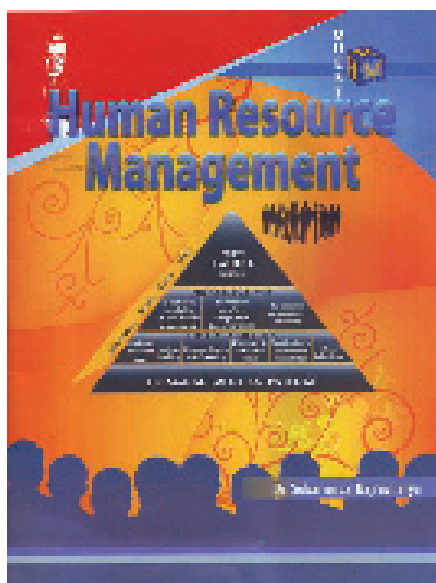


BOOK REVIEW

A Rich Account of HRM Materials

Arhan Sthapit



Human Resource Management; By Dr. Subarna L. Bajracharya; Published By: Quest Publication, Kirtipur; First Edition 2008; Pages: 372+10; Price: NRs. 335/-.

THERE is no denying that effective management of human resources is inextricably interlinked to organisational performance, which results from effective employee performance. This issue has emerged as a subject of extensive research and constructive discussion for two decades now (Purcell, 2009); it is often referred to as the “Black Box” of strategic approaches to HRM and even as the “holy grail” of HRM (Legge, 2005) in modern HRM literature.

The issue as to how modern organisations can gain sustainable competitive advantage through people is common and relevant, indeed (Singh and Sthapit, 2008). It lies in human resource management (HRM).

The HR's role in making organisation performance effective has been well recognised (Haily-Hope, et al, 2005). Therefore, human resource managers perennially have a more challenging role ahead, as people are considered as probably most valuable of all resources in the organisations (Sthapit, 2009). The HR managers are required to assume an active and pro-active role not only in service functions as recruiting and selecting human resources, but also in strategic planning and decision making; thereby closely integrating the HRM function with the organisation's Strategic Management (Sthapit, 2008). Using their human resources effectively to achieve the organisation's strategic goals, and cater to stakeholders' needs is a highly critical issue to the HR managers. Effective HRM is, therefore, immensely important for organisations to sustain and grow in today's competitive, rapidly changing business environment.

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In view of the enormous value of HRM in modern organisations, university management programmes as well as management practitioners have shown unprecedented interest in this branch of management. It has opened up new avenues for continued learning and academic and professional discussions in the area of HRM.

So many books have been brought to the book-stores in town, but one thing starkly missing in them, however, is the dearth of comprehensive subject-matters and resources of the contemporary HRM studies that could cater to the readers' need.

One of the publications that could cover such extensive topics has come from Dr. Subarna Lal Bajracharya, a well-known management Professor at Public Youth Campus, Tribhuvan University.

A management consultant himself, he has put up efforts to design the book with an adequate array of conceptual knowledge so as to enable users to tailor it to their specific needs. By doing so, he also made endeavours to take a departure from the general market tendency of 'overly text-like' books. It is something extremely important in contemporary books in the country. The chapter design and contents have gone beyond the finite framework of syllabus and text alone.

There are 12 chapters that have lumped together 360 pages of text and tables. The book offers insights into concepts and issues of HRM hovering around in the contemporary management literature. Its coverage ranges from the basic concept of HRM and HRM system to Job Analysis, Design and Human Resource Planning (HRP).

It goes further to encompass recruitment, selection, human resource development (HRD) and compensation. Chapters on 'Performance Planning, Potential Appraisal' and 'Assessment Centres' are not the regular stuff for most university syllabi as well as text books in Nepal. It is a bonus to the book users. The author's feat will lure those ardent learners who are interested in these 'new' areas. It could compensate the book's lacking of a chapter on Employee Motivation, an indispensable topic of HRM.

That apart, the issues of labour relations (LR) enshrined in the last chapter should bear more importance in the changed context of the world and Nepal alike. With the increased recognition of trade unions and labourers' rights across the world, the LR issue has assumed greater attention not only from workers and unionists but also from both the employers and government officials.

The book also enjoys a virtue of covering a wide area of HRM-related terms and topics. Understandably then is there a plethora of sub-components under each chapter. Had the book systematised them into major headings and distinct parts and sub-parts, readers could have felt more comfortable.

In the book, nonetheless, there is not much to write home about, in so far as Nepali context and examples on HRM to cater to the readers' need for such reading materials are concerned. It is natural for the book-users that they may pin on Dr Bajracharya high expectations of getting practical examples in the Nepalese workplaces, since he is a popular teacher and consultant having exposure in different walks of life. Hence, it is imperative that he will hopefully incorporate the Nepalese context in the next edition.

A significant strength of the book is the simplicity, which should earn Dr. Bajracharya accolades. It is also important that simplicity is maintained with all consistency in language and its structure. Had little more heed been paid to the language consistency, the author would secure more praises.

What could confuse readers is sporadic repetition of the same topics under different headings. Examples include 'HRD system and sub-systems' (repeating on page 218 and 220) and Changing Boundaries of HRD (pp 214 and 221). It might have resulted from human oversight.

There is much room to improve graphic designing and page-formatting to give a decent and reader-friendly look to the book. It is no more the time when publishers take their readers for granted.

In view of the worth and locus of contents, the price of the book may be justified. Kudos should go to Dr. Bajracharya for accommodating a wide range of topics and terminologies of HRM into a single publication.

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