PM to HRM – Rebranding or A New Label?

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Abstract: *This paper examines what is new in the concept of HRM in comparison to PM in organisations. It took an in-depth look at the transition from Personnel Management to Human resource management, showing that HRM is not different from PM but just an improvement to the traditional PM practices. Understanding the issues that led to HRM developments will make it easier to dispel any contention that they are two different ideologies. The paper went further to look at the evolution of PM as well as HRM, and evaluates current Human resource management practices within some organisations. This paper presented an empirical study using in-depth research and review of current literature to identify the current state of knowledge and to outline some of the opposing positions that are being expressed by the various schools of thought.*
Keywords: *Human Resource management and Personnel Management.*

I. Introduction

Over the years numerous debates have arisen with regards to the concept of personnel management and human resource management. Many have argued that human resource management (HRM) is completely distinct from personnel management (PM). The two terms however, are basically concerned with managing people in the work place. The first school of thought argue that HRM involves certain principles and practices with the aim of recruiting and managing people in order to achieve high performance in the work environment. While the second school of thought argues that the new concept of HRM is merely a rebranding of good PM practices (Bratton and Gold 2012). According to Armstrong (1987) the issue is not one of lexis but of insight and practical application.

This work seeks to undertake an in-depth evaluation of this issue, starting from history of PM which has its roots in the UK in the nineteenth century due to the Factory Acts of the 1940's. Early capitalists like Rowntree and Cadbury practised this by assigning "welfare officers" to observe and better manage the lives of workers (Henderson 2011:6). This was instigated by political, economic, social, technological and legal changes in the society. The "Keynesian economic doctrine" practiced within the period of 1950 – 1974 after World War II fostered this development. Within this period, the UK government sought to promote industrial peace and improve employment conditions by implementing employment laws to protect the rights of employees; thus the advent of trade unions. These legal regulations prompted employers to set up structures to handle employee grievances (Bratton and Gold 2012:5). As a result of this, PM came into play. However after the economic recession of 1945 there was a need to make adjustments to PM practices. HRM as a terminology originated in the manufacturing industry in the USA during the period of 1980 - 1990. This was as a result of globalization and a realization of the demerits associated with PM especially with the Japanese mass production manufacturing process (Gallie et al. 1998 cited in Henderson 2011). With this new process, sophisticated recruitment practices were implemented and this affected the way people were managed (Henderson 2011).

PM is defined as '' part of management involved with people at work and with their relationships within an organisation. PM seeks to attain efficiency and fairness. It intends to bring together and develop an effective organisation workforce, enabling each employee to make contributions towards the success of the organisation. It provides reasonable terms and conditions of employment, and satisfying work environment for those employed'' (IPM 1963 cited in Cole 2002:4). Bratton and Gold (2012:7) on the other hand, gave the definition of HRM thus: "Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities and commitment is critical to achieving sustainable competitive advantage or superior public services. This is accomplished through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programmes and practices, embedded in an organizational and social context."

II. Literature Review

As a result of the evolutionary nature of HRM, many arguments have arisen on the subject matter as to whether there has been change in the concept, philosophy and principle of personnel management. The fact remains that even though the framework within which employees are managed is rapidly changing, the basic foundations and principles such as performance appraisals and skill analysis which have been in operation with personnel management before the mid 1980's still remain the same. There is indeed no new idea, just a change in terminology, and giving something a new name makes no difference when the content is same. These new ideas have influenced the practice but they have not changed the practice (Armstrong 2000).

The contentions are based on whether HRM is a new term and offers new policies and practices or it is just a change or retitling of the traditional PM policies and practices (Hall and Torrington 1998; Armstrong 2000 cited in Caldwell 2002:3). Agreeably, Kamoche (1991) cited in Savaneviciene and Stankevicinte (2013:2) wondered if HRM will offer anything new or it is just an oratory. Additionally, Legge (1995); Keenoy (1990) asked if HRM is different or a continuation of PM. Conversely, other commentators have questioned if HRM offers different approaches. For instance, Guest (1987); Legge (1989); Storey (1993) cited in Savaneviciene and Stankevicinte (2013:3) all claim that HRM offers ideas that are different from PM. These arguments have highly increased the tensions, as the scholars have failed to agree on whether HRM and PM is the same or different. A significant change in PM was argued by (Storey 2007 cited in Prowse 2010) to the effect that HRM has progressed from trade union collective discussions and now focuses on a reward system based on the performance of the employee as an individual. This helps to foster individual commitment to the organisation. Rudman (n.d) argues that when employees are trained and appreciated through reward systems they are keen to use what they have learnt to give the organization a competitive advantage in the market. If employees are convinced that their employer has their best interest at heart, it affects their performance.

Perhaps one of the major reason why HRM seems to be in conflict with PM is that HRM claims to function within a more strategic framework, while PM is hard-headed and pragmatic (Keenoy 1991). Undoubtedly HRM has made a noteworthy impact to organisational strategy and performance. Therefore, rather than get involved in a futile debate, consultants and academia should take advantage of how this new model of HRM can be beneficial to personnel management. Keenoy (1991:6) argues that both PM and HRM focuses on maximizing the potential of Human Resources. He raises the questions that if these two concepts (HRM and PM) have the same focus, how can we then say they are in conflict. He puts it clearly thus; "…there are no necessary conflicts between HRM and personnel management. This puzzle disappears once it is realised that they are complementary rather than mutually exclusive forms of practice". This view was also echoed by Armstrong (1987:31) who says HRM "…could indeed be no more and no less than another name for personnel management, but, as usually perceived at least it has the virtue of emphasising the need to treat people as a key resource…"

Sharma (2009) stated'' that HRM is a relatively a new label for the variety of ideas and practices used in managing people, which is defined in a number of conflicting ways. However, Legge (2005:44) indicated that, it is imperative to compare normative model of PM with the normative model of HRM, in order to have fair judgement of each of the concept. On the basis of this, Jucius (1975) cited in Legge (2005), defined the normative model of PM as "the field of management which has to do with planning, organising, directing and controlling the functions of procuring, developing, maintaining and utilising a labour force such that: (i) objectives for which the company is established are attained economically and effectively; (ii) Objectives of all level of personnel are served to the highest possible degree; (iii) Objectives of society are duly considered and served''. On the other hand, the Harvard model of HRM offered by Beer et al (1984) comprised of Situational factors, Stakeholder interests, HRM Policy Choices, HRM outcomes, long term consequences and a feedback loop. This model unites employees' characteristics, management philosophy, labour market regulation, societal value and suggests a meshing of product market and societal logics as noted by Evan and Lorange (1989) cited in Bratton and Gold (2012).

Comparing the two models suggests clear similarities, as emphasis is laid on people and their inputs in achieving organisational goals. This is reinforced by the assertion of Zheng and Almond (2009) in Yaun (2013) that, '' the common ground for the above definitions is the fact that they see the people and not the other resources in organisation as most valued asset and thus treat the contribution of individual employee as key to organisational success''. The normative model of PM is hinged on the need for effective achievement of organisational objective, personnel objectives at all levels and societal objectives. This can be tied directly to the result of HR outcome of Harvard model of HRM which ends in long term consequences in terms of individual wellbeing, organisational effectiveness, and societal well- being. This is again reinforced in the works of Bratton & Gold (2012:20) who posited that ,'' at the level of individual employee, the long term HR outcome is the psychological rewards that workers get in return for their input. At the organisational level, increased effectiveness allows for its survival. And that the society's goals (employment and growth) are attained as a result of harnessing the full potentials of employees work ''. Likewise, it is important to note that organisations

do not exist in isolation of its environment. This fact brings us to another glaring similarity between the normative PM model and Harvard HRM model. The link is between the consideration of Society's objectives by the former, and the depiction of stakeholders' interest and situational factors by the latter.

Looking at it from a simple arithmetic point of view: the components of the stakeholders' Interest + the component of situational factor = Society. The society is a representation of the macroeconomic environment which is made up of PESTLE (Political, Economic, Socio-cultural, Technological, Ecological and Legal) factors (Krulis-Randa 1990). It could be against this backdrop that Lowry (1990) cited in Armstrong (2000: 578) stated that, ''it is the context within which people are managed that is changing and personnel management has had to re-position itself in the ever-changing environment of global competition, new technology, and new methods of working and organising work''. The repositioning was necessary to give the personnel manager an edge in innovation and sustainable growth. The limitations of PM became obvious and led to the change in the framework within which people were managed. It was needful to support and encourage the harmonization of the goals of the organisation and that of the employees while regulating the influence of trade unions. This gave rise to a new approach towards managing human resources and birthed the concept of HRM (Bratton and Gold 2012). However this does not mean they are two entirely different practices. According to Armstrong (2012) it just means that personnel managers had to be more proactive and strategic in their management practices. PM has simply grown and made improvements by paying attention to the deficiency in its practices. The concept of HRM was prompted by the realisation that to be successful in a highly competitive business environment anchoring on professionalism was essential, and PM had to be positioned to be more strategic in its activities and dealings with employees (Armstrong, 2000). Thus HRM was brandished by many as a brand new idea which takes a strategic positioning in people management. However Lowry (1990 cited in Armstrong 2000:578) clearly stated that "Personnel work has always included strategic matters and the present emphasis on strategic issues merely represents another change in the environment to which the personnel manager adapts by strengthening the competence required for the new situation. Human resource management is just a continuing process of personnel management – it is not different"

The view that personnel managers became involved in strategic implementation of personnel management practices after the advent of HRM is a mockery of the realities. Agreeably the word strategy was not used as much then as it in the present time but personnel managers could not have delivered effective services unless they understood the business environment. To suggest that they were unaware of the need to be strategic in their activities is an insult to the abilities of the personnel managers who were doing this successfully until the polished new concept of HRM was invented (Armstrong, 2000). In view of the foregoing, and in trying to place a nexus of the now and the period when information technology systems were less sophisticated, industries still experienced fierce competition. If they were not strategic in their activities, how come companies like Coca cola, Cadbury, to mention but a few survived prior to the arrival on stage of the HRM paradigm? This just goes to show that HRM and its intended deliverables remains a rhetoric. The contention between the two schools of thought seems unnecessary and the argument of HRM being a brand new concept has been over emphasized. Marchington (2008) strongly argues on the necessity to reassess the origins of HRM in personnel management. The key words in this argument which are Human Resource management and Personnel management basically have the same meaning and apply the same principles. What has happened over the years is a development in the process. This development was necessary to meet the generational shift. Armstrong (2000:576) observed that although the name changed to HRM, HR directors and managers are presently carrying out their duties just as personnel directors and managers used to do them before the change.

The competitive nature of the business environment practically forced organisation to become more strategic in their activities to enhance their competitive advantage. This was because the traditional model of PM focuses on proffering short term solutions to problems while contemporary HRM is more strategic making long term plans to achieve the overall goals of the organisation. The advent of HRM resulted as a solution to take care of the deficiency in PM which was hierarchical. As contemporary work situations evolved it was necessary for PM to take a more flexible approach. According to Armstrong (2000) personnel managers just continued doing what they have always done, but tried to do it more efficiently. Furthermore, we can also establish a link or similarity that both PM and HRM advocates for Best fit approach which says that a set of principle can be applicable by considering the context and content in which the firm operates as against Best practice school of thought which is of the view that techniques can apply across board regardless of the context. Henderson (2011:12) noted that, ''there may or may not be eternal, universally applicable management techniques but experience (sometimes supported by theory) shows that, given similar structures and contexts, successful organisations tend to employ the same methods or policies''. Also Kramar and Syed (2012:13) remarked that, ''although it is no longer possible to divide the world economy into separate, distinct national economies isolated from foreign markets and influence, it would be wrong to ignore the fact that employment relationships in almost all countries remain largely shaped by national systems of employment legislation and the cultural context in which they are operating.'' This again, reinforces the argument that there is no clear cut distinction

between HRM and PM stated by, Currie (2006:24) who commented that the differences between PM and HRM are simply in theory and not all organisations follow or practice the policies in full.

III.   Discussion And Analysis

A critical examination of the PM and HRM models on the literature review cements the ground that there is really no significant difference between the two concepts. Obviously both models hooked on the need to be sensitive and fully connected to the external macro environment as to foster organisational survival. PEST forces can enhance the growth of a company as well as drive it into extinction. For example, in 2013 the Malawi government was affected by financial problems following the pull out of aid by the international donors due to mismanagement of funds by public officers, hence, making it hard for government officials to carry out the day to day operations. This largely affected the services in the Health sector, as a result of this, the ministry of health lacked funds to train doctors and fill the vacant positions available in the hospitals. Therefore, HRM strategies could be there in theory but not fully practiced due to reasons beyond organizational control. The role of the HR professional goes beyond implementing strategy within the organisation. They are expected to play an ethical role within the organisation. The welfare role of HR managers expects them to instil ethical values within the organisation (Bratton and Gold 2012). However in practical work situations, HRM is still bureaucratic and ethics are not being practiced and this clearly resembles the traditional model of PM. Although there has been developments in the way employees are managed, a lot still needs to be done. In practice what we still have is a merger between PM and HRM.

In theory, HRM claims to protect the welfare of employees however in practice, it aims at maximizing productivity, and in the process it ends up neglecting the welfare of the employees thus becoming "slave driving". This paints a picture of PM practices. A clear example of this situation is seen in developing countries like China where employees still work for long hours and are paid the lowest possible wages. China Labor Watch is an organisation that monitors and reports on working conditions in China. They have produced a number of reports outlining labour abuses and highlight a number of western companies who outsource manufacturing to China. For example, Apple Computers' production relationship with Foxconn is reported and conditions at Foxconn's factories vilified as among the worst. Other companies are also present in the reports, including Samsung, Adidas, Nike, Wal-Mart and Disney (China Labor Watch 2015). All of these organisations would claim to have sophisticated HRM policies however in reality these practices are similar to that of PM. Although HRM claims to treat employees as assets, in practice it depersonalizes the employees and categorizes them as capabilities, skills and competencies which ought to be controlled and managed (De gama et al. 2012). According to Cushen and Thompson (2012) organisations are focused on their set goals, they only advertise policies like High Performance Work Practices to attract employees who possess the skills and competencies they require to achieve their organisational goals.

Strategic HRM practices may have thrived in some organisations especially in developed nations. However some environmental and socio cultural factors impedes the implementation of these practices especially in developing countries in Africa and Asia, making them fall back to PM (Aycan 2001). A careful look at multinational companies will show that there is an enormous difference between HRM Policies and HRM practices (Tayeb 1998). HRM practices ought to be consistent across different organisational context and cultures (Teagarden and Glinow 1997). As stated by Schneider (1998) although multinational companies have a set of corporate policies, when it comes to the implementation, this poses a challenge and the practices have to be altered to suit the cultural framework of their subsidiaries in developing nations. In other words many organisations have adopted fancy HRM policies, but when it comes to implementation it is the traditional model of PM practices that is being used.

Furthermore, HRM claims that there is high level of flexibility among the workforce within the organisation (Guest 1989b cited in Armstrong 1992:19). However, in most cases this is just on paper not in practice. For example, in situations where decisions are made by the top management, everybody within the organisation complies, while compliance is difficult when the decisions come from lower cadre employees. Superiors are usually not willing to take instructions from subordinates, even the junior staff themselves lack the confidence to convince their bosses even though they have a good idea that if implemented will add value to the organisation. In addition, Storey cited in Pinnington and Edwards (2000:15-16) commented that HRM is ''another word for PM, a new breeze in old ideas and ways of working by changing the terminology''. To prove this statement, he undertook a research which involved fifteen British organisations from different industries and concluded that Managers do not fully practice the HRM policies available in an organisation and that the policies are unclear to the business strategies emphasising the fact that, PM is indeed the same as HRM. The HR policies are there and being underutilised which is the same as clinging to PM approach.

Beer and Spector (1985:3) proposed that personnel and labour relations functions available in the organisation could be included under the four HRM policy areas namely; employee influence, the flow of human resource, reward system and work systems. On the basis of these Beer and Spector (1985) proposed that

PM functional activities should be incorporated in HRM policies, meaning that HRM is just a continuation of PM. Marchington and Wilkinson (2002) stated that if an organisation has several policies to be undertaken and are in conflict to each other, the HRM policies are usually given the least priority. Additionally, Marchington and Wilkinson (1997) cited in Fleming (2000:12) commented that due to work overload by line managers they tend not put much emphasis in HRM activities. Therefore, HRM in most cases is just theory and not practical, organisations tend to carry along with the old personnel management practices. Furthermore, empirical evidence has shown that there is no universalistic application of the Guest HRM individualism at work places. For instance, Noe et al (2012) has it that, individualist cultures as is obtained in the US, UK, and the Netherlands seeks to look after their own interest and those of their immediate families, whilst the case of the collectivist culture, as can be found in Colombia, Pakistan, Taiwan, tends to look after the interest of the extended community, and is expected to protect the people when they are in trouble (this can imply that support is also garnered from the community in event of loss of job). This is seen clearly, within the government of Malawi, the ministry of health rewarded best performer in the accounts department. This tilts towards HRM individualistic practice and it left other employees unhappy. While Lilongwe University of agriculture another public sector still within the government of Malawi uses PM collectivism to reward all employees in the accounts department and this boosted employee morale towards work. This again brings to bear, the fact that the contingent contextual atmosphere is the key determinant of whether a PM or HRM sets of value should apply, and thus places both ideology as the same.

Taking a look at tthe Case Study of HRM in Brunei's public sector, as covered in the works of Kramar and Syed (2012) it is evident that ''HRM in Brunei revolves around the Malay Islamic Monarchy belief, which denotes the degree to which HRM practices are used in the country. Human capital is highly valued in the job market with incentives given to improve it. However, the monarchical leadership style of Brunei inhibits freedom of speech, freedom of associations and collective bargaining. Thus a hierarchical relationship is said to be evident in the government sector''. Relating this to organisational structure obviously presents a bureaucratic/mechanistic and centralised approach of PM as against organic and devolved mode as is seen on Guest's stereotype of PM and HRM. This case exposes the fact that, there is actually no demarcation between the two, but rather displays a case of interchanging one for another.

One of the major advocates of HRM Storey (2007) holds that the need for fostering commitment rather than compliance from employees led to better structuring and devolved management systems with emphasis on the importance of line managers. According to Legge (1989) this new HRM practice took a customer care positioning towards employees. Storey and Sisson (1993) claims that the manager is no longer seen as a police man but rather as a nurturer. Price (2004) also noted that when staff are managed effectively it positively affects the interest of the organisation on the long run. However Keenoy (1990 cited in Marchington 2008) has argued that HRM is just a welfare disguise used to conceal the main intentions of employers to get staff to comply with corporate policies. The claim of HRM lays emphasis on achieving higher performance by having committed workforce who will work hard for the organisation to attain competitive advantage (Guest 1987). However, the level of commitment is based on human perceptions and attitudes. Commitment can be attained in theory but in practice there is need for close supervision for certain tasks to get done in an organisation (Lloyd and Rawlinson 1989 cited in Haston (n.d:9). According to Cushen and Thompson (2012) some HRM policies which seeks to foster commitment are not what they seem. Employees can still have high performance whilst being uncommitted.

An analysis was done using the case study of Avatar group, a multinational company particularly focusing on one of its subsidiary "Avatar Ireland". Data was collated using an ethnographic survey. Avatar has exceeded its performance goals and it is rated amongst one of the largest financially successful organisation. It is also ranked high in the list of "greatest places to work". This organisation claims to have good HR policies to achieve a committed workforce. Their HR policies were ranked amongst the top five percent in the Irish sector. Despite all of these, employees showed disappointment with the fact that organisational decisions are focused towards the interest of shareholders at the detriment of employees. They felt undervalued and under paid even though the organisation has been successful financially. These employees were expected to take on added tasks and duties without additional wages on the basis that they would gain experience in the business. The survey showed eighty five percent of the employees claiming to be committed to their work and not to the organisation yet the organisation has exceeded its performance goals. They claim that it is the satisfaction and self-worth gained from completing a job that motivates them. This case study outlines a breach of the psychological contract and also a clear case of PM practices focusing on compliance rather than commitment, where the employees are "insecure, angry and high performing at the same time". Although this organisation had the best HRM policies the welfare of its employees were neglected (Cushen and Thompson, 2012). Although there has been developments in the way employees are managed, a lot still needs to be done. In practice what we still have is a merger between PM and HRM practices.

IV. Recommendation And Conclusion

After careful analysis it can be deduced that there is no substance to the contention that Human resource management differs from Personnel management. Every argument will be dispelled once it is understood that they are complementary rather than being two distinct practices (Miller 1989 cited in Keenoy 1990). It is evident that there was a need for change in organisational culture of businesses. This prompted the shift from PM to HRM. However HRM professionals should not just stop here they should have a good plan to manage and keep up with the constant change process. The change has brought tremendous benefits such as flexibility and sophisticated recruitment processes, but the new theory of HRM cannot take all the credit for this. PM even though many would say it is archaic, has laid the basic foundation upon which HRM is built. Just as no building can stand firmly without a proper foundation, the concept of HRM would not have been able to gain the recognition it has now if it had not built on the foundation of personnel management.

Right from the outset that is, the point of taking an overview of the history of the two contending concepts, through literature review and analysis one can say there is really no clear cut difference both their nature and supposed deliverables. How each works are interwoven round and about the PEST factors. This however connects us to the main reason why HRM currently seem to have gained better prominence over PM in both academics and in practice, with no real change as concluded by Blyton and Turnbull (1994:298) in Legge (2005) that, '' Nothing changes yet everything is different: as we twist around the spiral of capitalist economic development we experience progression and return, never a return to exactly the same point but always to a place that is familiar.'' The fact remains that, Time who does not attached emotion to anything, but who has great passion for the future has carved out HRM and caused the PM techniques to be merged with the HRM approaches. Otherwise why do we have cases of HRM replacing PM function in organisations worldwide? If the duo are so very different why are we not having the two functions existing side by side in organisations, even as we have Finance, Procurement, Logistics, Inventory and Warehousing? HRM is only prescribing approaches or methods organisations can adopt in its employee management in the face of the ever evolving global economy as occasioned by forward looking time. HRM is a transformed PM undoubtedly and emphatically occasioned by time. Legge (2005:) noted, ''technology has shrunk the world into a global village, and not only can we talk to the other side of the world as though in the same room but within time constraints, we can observe its inhabitants live''.

Due to globalization it seems impossible that the transition from PM to HRM will remain as it is now. The likelihood of consultants innovating another seemingly new way of managing people is quite high. This is because businesses will constantly strive for new and better ways to have competitive advantage. Huczynski (1993:454 citing Forest 1984:54) describes these management fads thus; "The progress of the 'behavioural sciences' is inexorable and accelerated. You are unlikely to keep up. Should you threaten to catch up, we will define what we gave you as passé and give you something new. Should we run out of new stuff, which is not very likely, we will change the name of something we have already promoted to you as 'the answer', and which we have displaced with some 'new answer', and then give it to you again." The beleaguered ambiguity around the arguments that is being posited by the proponents of HRM will no doubt evolve in the coming decades, and shift ground to begin to view people's management as ''Intellectual Resources Management'' as the wave of globalization continues to threatening organisations, with the need for sustainable competitive advantage.

This improved concept of HRM has added value to the organisation. However, for it to maintain its cutting edge, it is needful for HRM to get back to its origins in PM which has a broader and deeper scope on the subject of people management (Marchington, 2008). Undoubtedly HRM is the same as PM. It has just been retitled or rebranded. It is operating in new bottles while containing same contents it used to hold. Currie (2006) made this clear when he stated that PM departments changed to HRM department without necessarily changing the workers, and the workers assumed the role of HR specialists or HR advisers irrespective of whether the organisation has implemented the HRM practices. Hence, there is no tangible argument to say that HRM is a new approach apart from being a continuation of PM. Agreeably; Price (2011:44) stated that HRM is the same as PM and that 'HRM is a modernised form of personnel, repackaged to improve the status of personnel managers.

HRM should not be viewed as an entirely new concept, or a threat to personnel management, rather personnel managers ought to take advantage of the improvement made by HRM on personnel practices which make it more purposeful and relevant thus enhancing the overall performance of the organisation (Armstrong 1987). This whole argument was summed up by Armstrong (2000:587) when he said "in its essentials the game has remained the same, but the way it is being played has altered. Whether or not the name has changed is immaterial". In other words HRM is merely the new phase of PM. Every argument will be dispelled once it is understood that they are complementary rather than being two distinct practices (Miller 1989 cited in Keenoy 1990).

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