European Management Practices Compared, by Paul Gooderham*

Mike Geppert, Dirk Matten, Karen Williams: **Challenges for European Management in a Global Context: Experiences from Britain and Germany**

Palgrave, Basingstoke 2002, 320 pp., $ 75,00, € 64,50

This volume provides an umbrella beneath which European scholars who have conducted, largely case-based research over an extended period of time into the organizational challenges faced by MNCs in Europe can synthesize their findings in relation to two core notions contained in Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) evolutionary framework. The first of these is structural, that is that MNCs are evolving into "transnationals" that are characterized by high levels of global integration and local adaptation.

The second notion concerns the primary control mechanism required by such a structure. Bartlett and Ghoshal argue that in order to achieve global integration and synergies from their localized operations, MNCs are and will increasingly use socio-integrative control mechanisms that engender "a common understanding of, identification with, and commitment to the corporation's objectives, priorities and values" (Bartlett/Ghoshal 1987: 78) so that the relative importance of other control mechanisms such as output control is decreasing.

The first of these concerns is addressed in essays by among others the editors themselves, Anne Tempel, Tony Royle and Gert Schmidt. Arguably the major difference between the approach of these scholars and that of Bartlett and Ghoshal is that while the latter tend to view local adaptation in MNCs from the locus of the firm and its strategic intentions, the former emphasize the imposition of local adaptation by nationally derived institutional conditions. In particular the volume focuses on Germany and Britain because their business systems have traditionally been represented as polar opposites in the European context. While German firms are institutionally highly embedded, British firms are much less so. Geppert, Matten and Williams find that German subsidiaries of MNCs through negotiations with HQ are able to adapt and skew HQ strategy in ways that reflect core features of the German business system, not least the high level of local manufacturing skills. UK subsidiaries are similarly influenced by the British business system, including weak institutional barriers to redundancies and the well-developed Anglo-Saxon service culture, in their interaction with HQ global strategy. The result is different patterns of work system design in British and German subsidiaries. Likewise Tempel observes that subsidiaries of British MNCs in the highly regulated German setting have responded to the more constraining environment by adopting host country practices, including industry-level collective agreements and works councils. One immediate source of institutional pressure is the determination of German subsidiary HRM managers to utilize German labor law and therefore to resist country-of-origin practices such as performance-related pay.

* Prof Paul Gooderham, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, NHH, Helleveien 30, NO-5045 Bergen, Norway, phone: +47 55 959 696, fax:+47 55 959 780, email paul.gooderham@nhh.no.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

However, the volume also contains dissenting voices that argue that local adaptation is becoming less institutionally driven. Royle documents how McDonald's has consistently and largely successfully struggled against unionization across Europe very often in the face of hostile press coverage and has developed its managers in a common corporate mold. In other words he rejects any simplistic notion of institutional determinism. Schmidt examines new management orientations in Germany and their impact on the German model of regulation and consensus culture. He observes that change is being generated by foreign MNCs such as IBM whose strategy he refers to as a strategy of aggressive remodelling and by McDonald's which is trying to avoid the German institutional framework altogether. He concludes that: "US-based (and UK) companies appear to be attacking national institutional frameworks in Germany, and in Europe as a whole, at both ends of the spectrum – in the low-skill, service-based sectors as well as in the high-skill, knowledge-based sector" (p. 298). This is having an impact on domestic senior German managers who are becoming increasingly internationalized in their experience and attitudes, and therefore more likely to recommend innovations derived from their international contacts. However, despite concluding that there is a trend towards new Anglo-Saxon management frameworks that serve to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of operating in different local, national and regional environments, Schmidt also argues in the mode of Bartlett and Ghoshal that MNCs will seek to adapt to localities "since the local is becoming a global resource" (p. 291).

The second part of the Bartlett and Ghoshal framework, that is the increased use of socio-integrative control mechanisms by MNCs receives short shrift from those scholars concerned with this issue. These are principally Michael Mayer and Richard Whittington, Becker-Ritterspach, Lange and Lohr and Anne-Wil Harzing, Arndt Sorge and Jan Paauwe. Mayer and Whittington document the rise of the multi-divisional (M-form) organization not only by British MNCs, but also by German and French MNCs. That is an organizational structure, which while delegating operational control to subsidiaries, is characterized by an HQ which monitors profits and allocates resources according to consistent financial criteria. Socio-integrative mechanisms are not of any obvious significance. Likewise, Becker-Ritterspach, Lange and Lohr fail to find any obvious use of these control mechanisms by European MNCs. Finally, Harzing, Sorge and Paauwe compare the use of various control mechanisms across British, German, US and Japanese MNCs. Again the finding is that none make any extensive use of socio-integrative control mechanisms.

The overall strength of this volume is the attention it devotes to the impact of institutional structures within national environments and the manner in which these act to constrain firm-level strategy. However, despite the institutional constraints faced by MNCs in many European settings, the overall conclusion is that MNCs do have varying degrees of latitude to generate strategically driven local adaptations. Indeed this latitude appears to be broadening suggesting that, despite national idiosyncrasies, the conditions for the convergence of management practices are increasingly in place within Europe. Thus, in all the first part of the evolutionary thesis of Bartlett and Ghoshal, i.e. that MNCs are increasingly developing the capability both to "think globally and act local", is largely borne out by this volume. Additionally, the volume

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

suggests that MNCs, particularly US MNCs, are playing a significant part as drivers of institutional change. Finally, it is interesting to note that those contributions that address the second part of the Bartlett and Ghoshal framework, i.e. the increased use of socio-integrative control mechanisms to bind MNCs together, find no support for it. Indeed Becker-Ritterspach, Lange and Lohr conclude that "it is doubtful…whether socio-integrative mechanisms can be readily created by deliberate management initiatives (p. 92). The control mechanism traditionally associated with the M-form, i.e. output control, holds sway.

It is somewhat regrettable that the editors have not seen fit to provide this volume with an epilogue, which resolves, or at least specifies, some of the tensions between the contributors not least in regard to the institutional latitude available to MNCs within Europe. Another issue that many of the contributors ought to confront is that of sampling frameworks. With the exception of Royle's study of McDonald's, there is a pronounced bias towards manufacturing firms. However, even with these reservations this volume deserves to be studied not only by scholars of international business, but also by European labor market policymakers who are increasingly concerned with the durability of their respective national models of conducting business in the wake of globalization.

References

Bartlett, C./Ghoshal, S. (1987): Managing across borders: New strategic requirements. In: Sloan Management Review, 28: 7-17.

Bartlett, C./Ghoshal, S. (1989): Managing Across Borders: The Transnational Solution. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2nd edition.

International Human Resource Management: A Review of Three Texts, by Siri Terjesen*

Anne-Wil Harzing, Joris Van Ruysseveldt (eds.):
International Human Resource Management
Sage, 2nd edition, 2004, 499 pp., $ 150,-, € 128,50

Peter J. Dowling, Denise E. Welch (eds.): **International Human Resource Management: Managing People in a Multinational Context**
Thomson, 4th edition, 2004, 333 pp., $ 58,95, € 50,50

Chris Brewster, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, Michael Morley (eds.): **Human Resource Management in Europe: Evidence of Convergence?**
Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2004, 486 pp., $ 80,-, € 68,50

This special issue is dedicated to exploring the convergence and divergence of national systems of industrial relations (IR) and human resource management (HRM). Faced with increasingly competitive environments, multinational firms may adapt certain

* Siri Terjesen, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University, Cranfield, Bedford, MK43 0AL England, email: siriterjesen@yahoo.com.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

management practices which are then transmitted across countries. Parts One and Two of this special issue have explored the convergence-divergence debate in international human resource management (IHRM) research.

We now turn our attention to three texts published in 2004 which attempt to synthesise and integrate IHRM research for researcher, student and practitioner audiences. The two entitled *International Human Resource Management* are theory-based review texts situating IHRM in the greater context of international management. The first *IHRM* is the long-awaited second edition edited by Anne-Wil Harzing and Joris Van Ruysseveldt; the other a fourth edition textbook now authored by Peter Dowling and Denise Welch. *HRM in Europe: Evidence of Convergence?* is edited by Chris Brewster, Wolfgang Mayrhofer and Michael Morley and reports twenty-three European countries' research findings from the Cranet survey. We now review the three texts separately, paying special attention to contributions to comparative IHRM and the convergence versus divergence debate.

International Human Resource Management,
edited by Anne-Wil Harzing and Joris Van Ruysseveldt

IHRM is an ambitious research-based text with the explicit goal of providing a comprehensive, integrated and international perspective on cross border HRM. The editors have extensively revised and expanded the first edition (1995) into 18 chapters written by 24 eminent scholars from around the world. With international breadth of authors and research, the result is considerably less 'Dutch' than the first edition.

The book is divided into four parts. Part one provides an overview of the context, strategy, structure and processes of internationalisation. The second part examines HRM from a comparative perspective. Part three focuses on issues in the management of expatriate and international staff. Finally, part four takes a comparative and international perspective on industrial relations. As this special issue is dedicated to comparative IHRM, we focus on the relevant parts (2 & 4) and respective chapters (5-9 & 15-18) in this tome.

Part two is completely revised from the first edition and examines HRM from a comparative structure beginning with chapter 5's 'societal analysis' framework integrating the dominant institutional and culturist approaches to explain HRM differences. Chapter 6 provides an overview of multiple means to quantifying cultural differences across borders. There is an uneasy transition from this review of positivist research and into the predominantly qualitative approach to HRM processes in Europe put forward in chapter 7. In chapter 8, "HRM in East Asia," the authors compare and contrast HRM practices in the capitalist markets economies of Japan and Taiwan with those in the socialist market economies of China and Vietnam. Finally, chapter 9 covers HRM practice in developing countries in terms of perceptions, current understanding, and emerging approaches.

Part four takes a comparative and international perspective on IR, attempting to integrate understanding of these areas into the greater body of IHRM and international management research. Chapter 15 asks 'Why do companies transfer practices?' and explores approaches and drivers of the transfer of HRM processes in MNCs. The next chapter focuses on different dimensions of capitalism. The potential for 'Euro-

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

peanisation' of IR and the role and relevance of European IR bodies are reviewed in chapters 17 and 18.

The authors have taken great care to incorporate latest findings into this research-based text, making it an excellent resource of research newcomers, such as PhDs, and a solid reference for old hands in the field. In fact, this reviewer has already recommended key chapters to PhD students in the early stage of their theses. There is an absence of tables of latest statistics, but this will surely slow the aging of the text. Chapter pedagogy is limited to discussion questions at the conclusion of each chapter and short but engaging case vignettes embedded in the text of the chapters. Instructors using this text for a course may wish to identify a separate set of cases.

The major strength of this book is its exhaustive and readable review of standard theoretical perspectives which are supplemented with the latest research findings. A weakness is that some chapters are stronger than others in terms of concept development and updated research references. Assembling this volume was likely a meticulous and iterative process for both the editors and contributors, but the effort makes this second edition a worthwhile read and reference.

International Human Resource Management: Managing People in a Multinational Context, by Peter J. Dowling and Denise E. Welch

This fourth edition of a popular *IHRM* teaching text focuses on HRM practices in multinational firms and continues without Randall Schuler. Eleven chapters, all written by the two authors, are organised in three main parts with a short fourth part comprised of cases and exercises. Throughout the text, there is a balance of concise interesting cases from multinational firms operating in home and host countries around the world.

Part one's three chapters provide an overview of the multinational context of IHRM. Part two focuses on the management and support of the lifecycle of international careers, particularly expatriate assignments, including recruitment, selection, training, development, compensation and re-entry. Part three reviews international HR issues, trends and future challenges. Finally, part four contains a very short and diverse set of six cases and four exercises.

Again, we focus on the text's discussion of convergence and divergence of IHRM practices. Dowling and Welch's text is shorter than the Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt tome, and provides considerable less treatment of this special debate. Indeed the book is focused on HRM as experienced in the MNC rather than comparative accounts of HRM or analyses of human behaviour in international contexts. Relevant content is contained in part three (chapters 8-11). Chapter 8 looks at the host-country context of HRM from a number of perspectives including culture. The implications of EU integration of IR are briefly addressed in chapter 9. The debate between ethical relativism and global values is covered in chapter 11.

In addition to the clear and concise presentation of main topics, a major strength of this text is its broad pedagogy including usual summary and discussion questions at the conclusion of each chapter, short cases and exercises in part four, useful websites in the Appendix and extensive instructor and student references on the web. Again, an instructor may consider supplementing the scant part four with external case material

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

provided on the book's website or a separate book of cases. The weakness of this text is that its abbreviated nature, other special topics receive less attention. For example, Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt commissioned an entire chapter to women's issues in IHRM (by Hilary Harris) where Dowling and Welch devote just two pages. There are exceptions: for example, the latter text devotes four pages to one of the author's special research topics, language standardisation and HR implications.

In summary, the book is an excellent primer for teaching IHRM to undergraduate and graduate students.

Human Resource Management in Europe: Evidence of Convergence?
Edited by Chris Brewster, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, and Michael Morley

What are HRM practices in Europe? Are they converging around a US or a European model, or retaining divergence in terms of national distinctiveness? As the subtitle, 'Evidence of Convergence?' suggests, this edited volume addresses these questions. This edited work reports research from the Cranet-E study, a longitudinal survey of HRM practices in 23 European countries. There are five key elements of the survey: (1) role of HRM functions and HRM strategies, (2) training and development, (3) performance measures and rewards, (4) employee communications, work councils and unions and (5) organisation of work. The thirteen chapters and first appendix are authored by 45 scholars who are mostly native to and currently based in Europe. They bring respective world-views and perspectives to this directly comparative and evidence-based body of research.

The book is divided in three parts. Part one (chapter 1) reviews the major theoretical frameworks and conceptual arguments in the convergence and divergence debate in IHRM. Part two (chapters 2 - 10) contains comparative findings from the Cranet-E study of HRM policies and practices in 23 individual countries grouped into nine multi-country chapters. Part three (chapter 11) summarises the research findings.

Chapter 1 is the strongest aspect of the book, providing a broad overview of the origins of HRM and their implications before introducing the main arguments in the HRM convergence versus divergence debate which neatly summarized on pages 18-20:

> "Convergence theory suggests that antecedents specific to the organisation explain the existence of HR policies, while country specific differences are less significant (Sparrow et al., 1994; Weber et al., 2000; Tregaskis et al., 2001). Thus, while differences in management systems have arisen as a result of the geographical isolation of businesses, the consequent development of differing beliefs and value orientations of national cultures are being superseded by the logic of technology and markets which requires the adoption of specific and therefore, universally applicable policies, approaches and management techniques (Kidger, 1991). . . Proponents of the divergence thesis argue, in direct contrast, that personnel management systems, far from being economically or technologically derived, reflect national institutional contexts which do not respond readily to the imperatives of technology or the market. According to this institutionalist perspective, organisational choice is limited by institutional pressures, including the state, regulatory structures, interests groups, public opinion and norms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Scott, 1983; Oliver, 1991). . . national, and in some cases regional, institutional contexts are slow to change, partly because they derive from deep-seated beliefs and value systems and partly because significant re-distributions of power are involved. More importantly, they

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

> argue that change is path-dependent. In other words, even when change does occur it can be understood only in relation to the specific social context in which it occurs (Maurice et al., 1986; Poole, 1986)."

Three unique convergence-divergence hypotheses are then examined. In the first instance, market forces are said to propel convergence in Europe to a US model. A second perspective is that institutional pan-European forces are actually leading to a European model which is unique to the US. A final model proposes that the irreconcilable differences among European countries may serve to retain divergence or at least to thwart convergence. This chapter does an excellent job of framing the major issues for readers but could be expanded to position the special topics into the IHRM and international business literatures.

The heart of the book is part two, the nine comparative chapters which each contain, for a set of countries, an overview of these countries' institutions and then a summary of the Cranet results. It is not clear how the comparative chapters' country groups were selected, though geographic proximity and cultural similarity seem to play a role. For example, chapter 2 summarises the UK and Ireland's 'Traditions and Transitions in HRM' while chapter 8 is devoted to 'Denmark and Norway: Siblings or Cousins?'

Each chapter begins with a length introduction that reads, and is also laid out, like an atlas with statistics on land size, population, density, capital and major cities, official languages and religions followed by paragraphs on topography, legal, institutional and political environments and so forth. The charts, mostly from Eurostat and OECD generally end with the year 2000 and will quickly date the book. At times, this overview seems particularly tedious and overly front heavy. For example, the UK and Ireland chapter is split equally between an overview of the institutional environment (16 pages) and a discussion of HRM, with emphasis on survey results (16 pages). Some paragraphs, particularly on topography and climate, appear particularly superfluous for developing an understanding of comparative HRM. For example, the second paragraph in the Ireland section details the country's mountains, peat bogs and small islands.

The remainder of each chapter is devoted to the real heart of the book: a discussion of comparative HRM in the countries. Each chapter retains a distinct national and regional flavour. Whilst some of the material covered is fresh and unpublished elsewhere, other chapters do not include any truly original or new contributions. Readers who are already familiar with certain contributors' research will not find anything that they did not already know about their arguments and insights. Other researchers may have questions about the true meaning of the data, for example that reported on changes in line management responsibility in various countries. See, for example, Table 2.36 on page 47 of the UK and Ireland chapter. This particular table indicates that in the UK, line management involvement with pay and benefits has generally increased more than in Ireland. But did Ireland have more line management involvement with pay and benefits to begin with?

These nine comparative chapters also feel as if they were too quickly assembled. For example, the comparative chapters include country map graphics which seems to have been plucked randomly from the Internet and which do not always print well on

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

the pages. See, for example, the Spain map which shows sunshine forecasts around the country for September 28. This hasty assembly detracts heavily from the book. The chapters also include haphazardly selected scenic pictures from the countries profiled. Again, these images detract from the text and do not lend anything to the chapters or to the book overall. This space could have been better invested in deeper content development, comparative analysis for another country, or overall reduction to well under 500 pages.

The concluding chapter 11: 'Convergence, Stasis, or Divergence?' begins by addressing key concerns with analyzing the results and then speculates on directional convergence in the development of HR practices in Europe. Strong evidence is shown for European HRM convergence in terms of the decrease in HR department size and increases in both training and development and communication to employees around company strategy and financial performance. More frequent use of performance related measurement and compensation is also reported. Considerable evidence is reported for convergence in the use of flexible working practices whilst the summary of weak evidence includes unsubstantiated hypotheses around convergence in the level of policy decisions in HR and in the decentralisation of responsibility.

The Cranet survey methodology appendix may prove valuable for researchers designing surveys whilst the appendix on research team experiences could be interesting for management scientists engaged in longitudinal, multi-country research in other disciplines such as Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's study of entrepreneurial activity in thirty-nine countries.

Brewster, Mayrhofer, and Morley's text is certainly the most comprehensive of its kind in examining European HRM practices. However, the individual country and region descriptive chapters comprise the bulk of the book (some 388 pages) and there is relatively little analysis and summary (a total of just 58 pages in the bookend introduction and conclusion chapters).

The editors' expressed focus for this text is first students and instructors and then researchers and practitioners. It would be difficult to imagine designing a course around this book. Rather, the first and last chapters and a handful of the comparative texts could make for an interesting seminar. This reviewer can imagine students from Europe or keen to work in Europe quickly flipping to the chapter covering their native country or the country in which they would like to work. The pedagogy is inconsistent across chapters, sometimes 'learning questions,' sometimes 'teaching questions,' and left out entirely in other chapters. This could result in frustration on the part of both instructors and students. Meanwhile, for an academic, this text, like the Cranet research it is based upon, may raise more questions than it answers.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

In Search of a Scandinavian HRM? By Per Darmer*

Otto Granberg: **PAOU – Personaladministration och Organisationsutveckling**

Personnel Administration and Organisation Development. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, 2003, 635 pp., € 53,-

Odd Nordhaug: **LRM: Ledelse av menneskelige ressurser**

Management of Human Resources. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2003, 335 pp., € 50,-

The review of these two leading Scandinavian HRM textbooks is presented in the following way. First, each book is reviewed separately. Of course, comparison is not absent in these separate and overall reviews of the two textbooks but it is done primarily for illustrative purposes. Secondly, a comparative review of the two books in relation to selected areas is outlined. Finally, a general critique of both HRM textbooks is presented.

Personaladministration och organisationsutveckling

The Swedish book serves the combined function of being a textbook for students as well as a handbook for personnel and line managers. Due to this the book describes the development within the areas that the book is concerned with.

PA (personnel administration) and HRM are used as synonyms in Granberg's book, He contends that there is no significant difference between the two concepts and their substance (HRM is primarily used in corporations with English as the corporate language, whereas PA is primarily used in corporations in using Swedish as the corporate language). In this respect Granberg is obviously in opposition to John Storey (and many others), who regards this distinction as very significant. Storey maintains that HRM is a new paradigm substituting the old traditional PA in both research and practice (Nordhaug has much the same view as Storey). On this background, it seems a bit odd that Granberg devotes the first chapter of his book to discuss a distinction which he considers to be obsolete.

Granberg finds that the differences between the days of PA and the present time of HRM can be traced back to the environment, to the shift from focussing on internal effectiveness to the external environment (p. 13). According to Granberg, HRM and PA are identical areas encompassing everything that concerns the employees of the company (p. 18).

This raises an intriguing question: Is HRM determined solely by the organisation's environment? If so, a macro perspective on HRM should prevail, leaving little room for single corporations to make a difference and decide their own HRM system and practices. At the same time Granberg emphasises that corporations are different and, therefore, they have to have find different solutions to changes in their environments. Hence the HRM executed by the single company becomes unique. In

* Per Darmer, Copenhagen Business School, Department of Organization and Industrial Sociology, Solbjerg Plads 3, DK – 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark, phone: ++45 38 152950, e-mail: pd.ioa@cbs.dk.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

that sense Granberg embraces both the convergence theories that firms develop similarities due to the common development of their environment and the divergence (cultural) theories that predicts increasing dissimilarities.

Granberg places HRM in a wider perspective, that of the Swedish society and the European Union, while he simultaneously underscores that corporations and their way of practicing HRM differ within the country. Meaning there is no best Swedish HRM. By explicitly relating HRM to the Swedish society, Granberg includes topics that are not commonly seen in mainstream HRM textbooks.

The strengths of Granberg's textbook are:

- It is a comprehensive handbook for employees and managers
- It places HRM in the Swedish institutional context in a very stringent and convincing way throughout the book.
- It covers a wide range of subjects in a consistent manner that provides the reader with a good understanding of HRM in Swedish organisations

The OD focus in Granberg's book is not as coherent as the HRM parts. Granberg puts much emphasis on corporate culture which makes it relevant to raise the question whether the book has a corporate culture approach rather than an OD approach. Although the title indicates an OD approach, the substance of the book leans much more towards culture. Only the last chapter (ch.19) deals explicitly with the OD approach.

LMR: Ledelse av menneskelige ressurser

Granberg talks about competence as a fancy and recent word for something that has always been known and does not demonstrate any enthusiasm in relation to the concepts of competence and competence development. In contrast that is the very core focus of Nordhaug's textbook. The author has worked with competence and competence development for two decades.

Granberg sees HR planning and competence development as being concerned with identifying the personnel needs of the corporation and subsequently planning how those needs can be met. This is a much more narrow and instrumental way of looking at competences and competence development than the view applied by Nordhaug who emphasises the importance of competencies for organisational success and survival.

Nordhaug makes it quite clear that the book is about goal-oriented HRM (that is also a part of the sub-title of the book). This is obvious in his definition of HRM as "...the overall effort of the organization to plan, recruit, develop, reward, and utilise human resources for productive purposes" (p. 6, my translation). It is important to keep this definition in mind when looking at the purpose of the textbook which is "to introduce the reader to HRM in theory and practice". In his textbook, Nordhaug provides both a good understanding of theories within HRM and HRM practices. The numerous cases and practical examples in the book are collected exclusively within his own country.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

The strengths of Nordhaug's textbook are:

- The examples and cases from concrete organisations give insights to special contexts that are not the most commonly seen in HRM textbooks and demonstrate the wide range of HRM systems and practices in Norwegian companies.
- The clear focus on competencies and competence development as a central feature in HRM is very consistently followed up throughout the book while at the same time the author succeeds in showing the reader the wide spectrum of the HRM field. The competence focus on HRM can be particularly clearly observed in the way Nordhaug views strategic HRM, i.e. as a way to intertwine strategy and competencies in the organization. Strategy and competencies held by employees and teams hence are considered to be two inseparable parts of HRM.
- The book reminds us that HRM is an important determinant of oganisational success or failure. From a critical perspective it could be maintained that if this holds water, then it is not the human resources in general but the management resources in particular that constitute the most essential resources in the organisation. After all, it is the way in which management manage human resources that makes the difference and not the human resources per se.
- The discussion of future HRM challenges and issues (chapter 11) is both interesting and informative to the reader.
- The book presents HRM in a holistic way by continuously relating the different aspects of HRM to one another in a convincing way.

A comparative view

The textbook authored by Nordhaug is structured in a manner that is very similar to most of the mainstream textbooks in the field. It includes pedagogical elements such as 'learning goals', exercises and study questions within each chapter. Granberg is, however, more preoccupied with presenting and discussing HRM in a specifically Swedish context. One thus gets the impression that the context is even more important than HRM.

Both books are typical textbook in the sense that selected theories are presented and that the chapters are equipped with cases and other practical illustrations that serve to exemplify the theories. In most chapters the authors manage to cover a lot of ground, regularly based on a very systematic and rigid model. However, at the same time both authors emphasise that every corporation has to work in their own way to manage within their particular situation, hence reducing the models to perspectives or organising frameworks.

It is worth noting that none of the two textbooks other than quite briefly cover the problem of downsizing. This is disappointing given the fact that downsizing and outcourcing are integrated and critical parts of HRM, just like recruitment and personnel development, and formn challenge for a vast number of companies. Nordhaug does not deal with downsizing at all in his book. Granberg devotes a short chapter to the topic but this is more about legal regulations concerning dismissals and what governmental committees have stated on this topic.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

Scandinavian HRM?

Do the two HRM textbooks from Sweden and Norway represent a Scandinavian type of HRM textbook? My answer is both yes and no, which add into: Not really.

Yes, in the sense that they differentiate themselves from general anglo-saxon HRM textbooks by having a Scandinavian angle in respect to the cases presented and in regard to their approach. The emphasis on personnel policy and democracy and equality in the workplace in both books is very congruent with the findings that Scandinavian countries in Hofstedian terms are low on power distance and rather feminine. Particularly in Granberg's book focus is set on the Scandinavian model of industrial relations, as he relates HRM to the Swedish society on a general basis throughout the book. The approaches also differ in the sense that they do not follow the traditional HRM textbook concept as strictly as most HRM textbooks seem to do.

No, since the two authors are very different. The Nordhaug book is composed in a way that is very similar to mainstream textbooks. On the other hand, he offers a unique approach in his explicit and continuous focus on competencies as a core aspects of HRM. Granberg has written a thorough textbook that covers a wide spectrum of issues leaving few stones unturned. The composition of the book deviates clearly from mainstream textbooks. The impression that Granberg wants to include mostly everything in his very comprehensive text is an advantage in a handbook context and a disadvantage in a curricular context.

One might say that their particular approaches form a common denominator for the two books. However, noe of the approaches are commonly Scandinavian approaches as such. It thus seems more relevant to conclude that both books reflect the specific interests and competencies of their respective authors.

A critical view

In the preface Granberg quotes from the preface in a former edition of his book to remind the reader "...not to believe everything he writes, do not take anything for granted. No quick fix can be found. Be critical, question everything, and discuss" (p.10, my translation). One may at this point advice Granberg, as well as Nordhaug, to take this prescribed medicine since none of the two textbooks include the critical theories of HRM.

The two textbooks highlight that things are changing, and that HRM has to adapt to these changes. We are living in new, turbulent and different times, and we have to adjust our HRM models to these new times. If times really are so new and ever-changing, there might have been reason reflect upon whether we need to rethink and reformulate HRM completely. Reflections about this are missing in these books and so are the more critical HRM voices that sound about new ways of conceptualising HRM. Among these we find Legge's critical theory perspective on HRM, Townley's critique of HRM from a Foucault-inspired perspective, and Steyaert's critique of HRM from a philosophical perspective. Therefore, it can be contended that neither Granberg nor Nordhaug make the step from all the challenges facing HRM to the question whether a complete rethinking of the field is now needed.

https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2005-1-138 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY