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# 1 THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE INSTRUMENTAL DIMENSION

## *Learning objectives*

- Understand the historical roots and continuity of basic HR services in an organization.
- Recognize the necessity of formulating and negotiating HR procedures, rules and arrangements, and the role of socio-economic stakeholders.
- Comprehend the difference between HRM transactions and transformations.
- Understand the movement towards complex job design.
- Understand the importance of the five 'E's in setting up instrumental HRM.

The instrumental dimension is the most traditional and best-known approach of HRM. It represents more or less the fundamentals of the personnel function and fits perfectly with the initial preoccupation of managers during the first industrialization in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Efficiency, discipline and hard work at a low price were the foundation of an industrial society. The search for efficient work systems is an important preoccupation of the entrepreneur in achieving successful results in a competitive environment. Over and above this efficiency orientation, many initiatives focused on the issue of controlling people at work and the pursuit of obedience and total respect for the managers in an organization. This raised questions about procedures, discipline, regulations, payroll and other basic issues of delivering essential services to employees on the one hand and building up an efficient and productive workforce on the other.

## 1.1 THE HISTORY OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL TOWARDS INTERNAL SERVICE

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From the industrialized production at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, managers and scientists were actively engaged in the organization of the production process. The objective that the first management theories of Taylor (1911, 1939), Fayol (1916) and others had set forward was to find the ‘*one best way*’ to produce as efficiently as possible and to deploy employees as adequately as possible.

In this first approach, academics and managers focused on the efficiency question and revealed themselves as organizational technocrats. Taylor is preoccupied with the technical organization of the production process, while Fayol pays more attention to the administrative and managerial aspects of the organization. Weber as a sociologist is considered to be the father of the theory of bureaucracy, regarded as the ideal image and blueprint of the industrial organization.

To this end the most obvious metaphor of the nineteenth century was used: person and organization as a machine; a human being as a radar in an industrial and/or administrative machine (Morgan, 1993). Thinking in terms of machines means mechanical reasoning, where there are predictability and security by means of tight rules and procedures and the creation of automatisms in the functioning of people and organization.

Ritzer (2008) uses the machine metaphor and instrumentalism in his original bestseller when he draws a link with the contemporary mode of production and talks in an original way about the McDonaldisation of society. This way of thinking emphasizes the permanent presence of mechanical thinking in specific sectors of our society. In particular, the Tayloristic approach to service organizations like McDonald’s shows convincingly that this approach is never far away. This means that McDonald’s aims at complete controllability, the specialization of labour, uniformity, mass production and the use of routine as much as possible in the production of services.

Dustin (2007) has applied the concept of McDonaldisation to the context of social work. Health and elderly care management is analysed as an example of the managerial application of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control to health care and social work practice. These principles are being increasingly applied in non-profit and public sector organizations where the outcomes require more and more tangible outputs such as financial surplus, measurable output, performance indicators and tight service control and quality standards.



### REFLECTION

The increased rationalization (cf. Weber) of society is described by Ritzer as ‘McDonaldisation’. McDonaldisation is ‘the process by which the principles of the fast food

restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American Society as well as the rest of the world' (Ritzer, 2008). It is characterized by the following elements:

- **Efficiency:** the emphasis on the optimal employment of means, translated by Ritzer as the realization of a task as quickly as possible;
- **Calculability:** the tendency to express everything in quantitative terms;
- **Predictability:** by employing standardized and uniform systems, products and services, predictability will increase. Having a meal in McDonald's in New York, Ghent (Belgium) or Shanghai will in most cases not surprise because of the predictability of the offered products and services;
- **Control:** by using technology, control systems that run automatically and make total control possible are introduced.

Taylorism looks at the worker from the point of view of his/her physiological contribution and limitations. The problem of the human being in the production process is a technical problem of movement, time, effort, rest, and so on. Since the 1970s Taylorism has been translated into lean manufacturing or lean management systems where the focus on efficiency is based on optimizing the production system or service delivery. It originated from Toyotism, referring to the successful production concept of Japanese car industry based on increasing efficiency, decreasing waste, creating value for the customer and using scientific methods to decide for production or service improvement. These days, specialists refer to lean management systems to articulate the central concern of cost reduction by the elimination of waste.

Instrumental employment can be translated into procedures and rules, prescriptions and regulations, obligations and rights, and other formal means to regulate the effort of labour in a predictable way. In this model, management means managing employees based on technical insights and administrative control. The development of registration systems and labour efficiency measurements will encourage this process. Remarkably, the economists at the end of the nineteenth century developed and used the operational concept of labour productivity in their analyses of the production process, in contrast with the earlier period where this concept was barely noticed (Littler, 1982). The measurement of labour productivity is the starting point of a whole culture of measurement in the search for controllability and objectivity in HRM. Actual key success factors, performance indicators and scorecards can be traced back to these first steps in measuring HRM success.

Combined with these operational management techniques we notice in Taylorism a tendency towards the discipline of the employee by counteracting the natural tendency to avoid working, what Taylor described as 'natural soldiering' (Taylor, 1911). Hence the need for a well-defined role of labour control that is assigned to the employer and the foreman. Today we call the foreman 'supervisor', as the one responsible for supervision and control.

In the industrial phase, management meant the direct control and supervision of the employee by the employer, with emphasis on discipline and technical control systems (e.g. the time clock and swipe card).

Other initiatives were taken to control labour based on detailed studies of work processes and labour control. The scientific interest for Taylorism is expressed in time and labour studies that investigate the process of labour down to the smallest detail. *Operational research* finds its origin here and led to an elite of technical staff who used their expertise in drawing and programming the production or service process in organizations. These scientific studies were executed by engineers, which introduced a growing group of technocrats into organizations. The technicians were supposed to find the best solution for the organization of work which finally led to the development of specific staff functions, the so-called techno-structure of analysts that design organizational systems and processes (Mintzberg, 1983).

The actuality of the instrumental dimension is expressed in the importance of rules, laws, collective agreements, labour regulation and statutes for the organization and functioning of organizations. Linked to this, the administrative service implies, for example, that wages are paid on time, the work organization is set up by dividing the employees in shifts, and the holiday regulations are worked out and disciplinary systems are developed for white- and blue-collar workers to settle in the production process.

This dimension is based upon a socio-legal system of rights and obligations for employer and employee, in which the socio-economic consultation plays a prominent role. Due to this, administrative systems (rules, procedures, laws) are developed to create the necessary distinctness and legal certainty in an organization.

## 1.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN SETTING UP INSTRUMENTAL SYSTEMS

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In due course, with the urge for clear, reliable and legal regulations, a system was set up during the twentieth century to negotiate the labour conditions in industry and service organizations. These negotiations with social partners acquired great significance in Western countries in the further development of industrial relations between employer and employee. The social partners (trade unions, employer organizations, government) play an important role in revising regularly and bargaining about new rules and procedures. The dominance of social partners has led to a formal socio-economic negotiation system which sometimes led to forms of neo-corporatist defence of interests in our society. In these negotiation systems social partners determine, with or without face-to-face consultation with the government, the socio-economic policy in Western countries (Schmitter & Lehmbruch, 1979; Lehmbruch & Schmitter, 1982; Vanderstraeten, 1986). Neo-corporatism refers to a system of consultation and policy making in industrialized countries by which the government

and the social partners come to socio-economic agreements in a so-called tripartite consultative structure. The consequence of this course is that trade unions and employers' federations are actively involved in the establishment of socio-economic policy, although under the control of the government. This results in a mutual confusion of interest groups with the institutional government apparatus and the political decision making. The underlying features of the European economy are different from those of the USA and it is argued that these have led to a different approach to HRM being developed in Europe. Differences in features, such as more limited individualism, a greater role for the state, and different patterns of consultation and patterns of ownership, are linked to these different practices (Brewster et al., 2011). In Europe in the 1980s the so-called Rhineland model emphasized the institutional regulations between trade unions and employers that led to the satisfaction of the social partners. This resulted in a strong influence on the socio-economic framework in which HRM was constituted.

In governmental organizations in particular, the presence of trade unions and agreed rules, including staff regulations, can hinder the development of a groundbreaking HRM. However, these statutes or labour regulations can offer protection against political arbitrariness and abuse of power by the employer as the employee executes the job. Later on, we will see in the strategic dimension the contextual approach of HRM, where the focus moves to the institutional stakeholders (trade unions, employer organizations, governmental agencies) as a decisive factor in setting up HRM systems and practices within the organization.

## 1.3 THE CORE BUSINESS OF THE INSTRUMENTAL DIMENSION

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As mentioned above, the instrumental dimension lays emphasis on work systems, procedures, rules and other instruments that uphold and regulate the collaboration of people in an organization. On the one hand, these instruments can be found in the supporting services of HRM. On the other hand, these instruments are basically aimed at controlling people and their output, and support the fact that people can work in a legally accepted framework of employment regulations and rules. We will look at these different instruments of HRM in detail.

### 1.3.1 The administrative service: the necessity of paperwork

Which tasks belong to the administrative service? Every human resource manager will undoubtedly know which administrative formalities need to be present in an organization. It is the most obvious part of HRM, constituting the basis of necessary services towards employees. We are talking specifically

about recruitment formalities, the follow-up of personnel files, salary administration, holiday regulations, labour regulations, and so on. In most cases, it concerns supporting services that have to be legally present when people are hired in an organization. We situate them in a transactional service. Transactional services are personnel transactions that deal with all applications and concrete tasks that are connected with routine-based aspects of HRM. They concern administrative tasks, paperwork and giving advice and information about routine-based activities. It is important that these services rely on routine in order to be delivered automatically and repetitively.

We can easily establish a list of transactional services of a HRM department:

- *Presence administration*: time schedules, time clock administration, overtime registration, holiday administration, flextime systems (telework, part-time work systems);
- *Contract management*: writing of contracts, login procedures for new employees, breaking up of contracts, outplacement administration;
- *Administrative support of internal employment*: recruitment and selection procedures, appointment formalities, insurance formalities, individual administrative files;
- *Pay-related services*: payroll, tax administration, administration of variable payment systems (stock options, profit sharing, bonuses, performance-related pay);
- *Extra-legal pay systems*: meal vouchers, administering car park, mobile phone, laptop, work-related transport costs;
- *Social security administration*: child allowances, health and accident insurance, retirement administration, extra pension funds;
- *Administration of personnel development*: listing and registering personnel development (training, education activities, conferences), organization of training with external partners, keeping up performance monitoring and evaluations;
- *Developing HRM database and information system*: maintenance of electronic database (electronic personnel administration, communication) and intranet portal system.

Transactional services are directed at routine and information. Moreover, these services are necessary for every department and require less contact with the service provider. The administrative and ‘*record-keeping*’ character of these sorts of services makes automation possible.

In addition to the transactional services, we give an overview of the transformational services. Transformational services are less routine-based and more oriented at a project-based method. These services need more profound technical, juridical and managerial expertise and lead to more HRM added value. The services are:

- *Human capital planning (workforce planning) and recruitment*: strategic personnel planning, recruitment of candidates, screening of new employees, strategic socialization;

- *Strategic retention*: individual potential analysis, individual mobility and promotion, career planning, talent assessment;
- *Strategic compensation and benefits*: developing strategic payment programmes, profit sharing, employee and team rewarding systems;
- *Training and development*: management development, (e-)learning, personal development plans, competency management, employee performance management;
- *Organization development*: change management, organization cultural development, HRM business process reengineering, organizational learning and knowledge management;
- *Internal communication*: internal HRM public relations, electronic HRM communication (intranet, email), newsletter, internal communication plan;
- *HRM information system (HRMIS)*: relational HRM databases, data analysis, HRM metrics and decision making, big data;
- *Employee relationships and labour conditions*: employee job satisfaction surveys, psychological contract, work/family life balance, diversity management, employee support, complaints management;
- *Industrial relations*: employment contracts, negotiating and improving work conditions, complaints procedures, keeping social peace, collective sectorial and organizational level bargaining.

Thus, these transformational services are less administrative, not routine-based activities. They are related to change management designed to develop the employee and the organization. The transformational service is complex and requires HRM professionalism; the HRM department needs to apply a greater degree of expertise and problem-solving capacity.

Moreover, these services mostly require personal contact with internal clients. They cannot be delivered by a routine-based method but require some client-oriented creativity to explore and solve an HR problem. In contrast, the transactional service is less intense and rather simple, and therefore more easy to organize than transformational services.

Today higher demands are made of administrative transactions than they were 100 years ago. Because of the arrival of quality care and marketing in management thinking, the emphasis is laid upon the demands of the client. Services are not only provided to control aspects and systems of organizations, but are also developed in relation to the increasing demands of the internal client. Therefore, the administrative service of HRM is organized with a more customer-oriented approach. The treatment of the ‘*internal*’ client has to be customer-friendly. The basic principle of HRM is the employee’s expectation that the required service is based on his or her needs and wishes.

The critical employee makes high demands when it comes to paying his/her salary on time, keeping their personnel records correctly and the availability of information on administrative services. Naturally, the HRM department will be judged by the employers upon the quality of the service.



## FIRST EXAMPLE: ADMINISTRATIVE PAMPERING OF THE EMPLOYEE

Decades ago, education staff in Belgium accepted that the payment of their salary was not always on time. Some of the employees were only paid months after their commencement of work. Today this is almost unthinkable. Who would still accept waiting months for their salary? Within education, there now exists a resulting directive that an employee is paid his/her salary at the end of the month on condition that the file is delivered before the 20th of the month at the office of payment in the Department of Education.

## SECOND EXAMPLE: ADMINISTRATIVE PAMPERING, NOT A MATTER OF COURSE

Employees are paid their salary at the end of the month. During a course for students of HRM in Macedonia at a 2008 International Summer University, students were astonished that this was considered as self-evident. On the contrary: it is not evident in some countries that salaries are paid at the end of the month; depending on circumstances, in 2008 they could wait for days or weeks. The students also agreed on the fact that some governments were working to improve the payroll administration in government offices.

Administrative services require permanent attention from the HRM department. The quality of the department will be judged by the employees when these services do not prove worthwhile.

Research (Lepak et al., 2006) has shown that customers are reckoned to be among the stakeholders of the organization. According to these investigators, HRM plays an important role in achieving quality services through the development of an environment conducive to quality and the facilitation of services by the employees. Recent research shows, for example, the relationship between HRM capabilities and the quality of patient care in hospitals (Khatri et al., 2017). The improvement of creating a quality culture is one merit of the applied HRM. This does not only take into account the external client, but also for the internal client (managers, employees). The internal client is then served by a quality environment when it comes to administrative services.

We notice that the administrative services can lead to client dissatisfaction when they are insufficient or delivered with delay. Complaints and dissatisfaction make employees feel discontent. This does not automatically mean that employees will be satisfied and motivated when everything goes according to plan: in Part 2, Chapter 4 on the people dimension we will see that according to Herzberg (1968) this gives rise to the idea that high quality administrative services do not necessarily mean that employees are happy. Administrative services require a relatively high effort in order to achieve a correct and quick

service. However, although the costs are high, employees are not necessarily motivated by smooth transactional services. The administrative services can only lessen the complaints of the employees and encourage more compliance of the employee with the organization.

### 1.3.2 The organizational service: from simple to complex work organization

Alongside the administrative services, the organization requires an efficient and effective organization of its work. On the one hand this is manifested in a clear organization of work processes; on the other it is shown in a clear demarcation of activities and positions.

The organization of work processes has its origin in the analysis of work processes at the beginning of the twentieth century, using the scientific principles of efficiency.

The notion of '*work design*' refers to the rational planning and managing of the numerous work and service processes in an entire organization. During early industrialization this work was chiefly designed by engineers who were at the very heart of defining the work processes. Consequently, the work design has a very technical and engineering-related structure; the design of work processes is a technical problem, in which human aspects are largely missing. In the beginning it often dealt with manual work processes, thereby laying the emphasis automatically on the physiological aspects of labour. It was only afterwards that more complex work processes were designed that connected manual and intellectual labour.

The use of machines in scientific management promotes a very unilateral commitment of employees in an organization. This fundamental idea also formed the basis of the assembly line at a later stage in the industrialization of society. The horizontal division led to a sequence of tasks taking place in a logical and consistent way through the complete manufacturing process. Hence the necessity of efficient planning of work processes in the production or service delivery became an important concern of the manager.

The Tayloristic principles led to a strong hierarchical structure of work relationships. This hierarchy is confirmed in the work of Weber that elaborates on the administrative principles of the classic bureaucracy. In the bureaucratic logic, the organization is built up according to the system of super- and subordination. The order of the positions implicates a clear demarcation of power relationships within the organization. Communication occurs on the basis of the specific position in the hierarchy and is based on instructions, discipline and respect for the executive. The result is a rigid organization with clarity, predictability and obedience.

The role of management lays in the analysis of the work processes by means of scientific methods, in order to resist losing working time and movement. Scientists and managers look for the optimal mode of production, or, in Tayloristic vocabulary, 'the one best way to do the job'.

## IN MORE DETAIL

### *Some Tayloristic principles:*

- Divide the work of a person performing any job into simple elementary movements.
- Pick out all useless movements and discard them.
- Study, one after another, just how each of several skilled workers makes each elementary movement, and with the aid of a stopwatch select the quickest and best method.
- Describe, record and index each elementary movement, with its proper time, so that it can be quickly found.
- Study and record the percentage which must be added to the actual working time of a good worker to cover unavoidable delays, interruptions and minor accidents, etc.
- Study and record the percentage which must be added to cover the inexperience of a good worker in a new job, the first few times the worker does it.
- Study and record the percentage of time that must be allowed for rest, and the intervals at which the rest must be taken, in order to offset physical fatigue.

*Source:* Gabor (2000).

An interesting discussion on work design occurred in the 1970s and 1980s on the aspect of the deskilling or reskilling of the worker as a consequence of the Tayloristic organization of work processes and the development of an industrial society. According to some authors (Braverman, 1974; Cockburn, 1983; Thompson, 1983, 1989), the division of tasks leads to the constant ‘*deskilling*’ of the employee in the organization, as the work is split up as much as possible and entrusted to individual workers. As a result of this division, these workers only need to possess limited knowledge and skills in order to perform the components of the work process. This has the advantage that employees are easily employable and that the employee’s work can be delivered at the lowest price given that the task can be performed by unskilled workers (Braverman, 1974). Workers are easily replaceable and only need a minimum of skills. In addition to the ‘*deskilling*’, a ‘*degrading*’ of the work is also possible due to the fact that thinking and doing are separated and the employee is assigned less authority and autonomy in the workplace. The deskilling leads to reskilling of the new employees in the organization, such as executives and managers who take over the control and managerial work and therefore have to possess the necessary knowledge and skills.

Other authors assert the ‘*reskilling*’ and ‘*upgrading*’ thesis, putting forward the fact that jobs become more complex and need more skills to fulfil the exigencies of the task. They assert less, or even the end of, labour division (Kern & Schumann, 1984). Instead of a constant division of labour and consequently a deskilling, some tasks are put together which leads to the enrichment of job content. For example, Greenan and Walkowiak (2005) show that the use of

automated machines is positively correlated with work enrichment. In their report, enrichment is strongly linked with the introduction of ICT in the workplace and the continuous automation of work itself. One of the most important changes in work organization in the last two decades has been increasing flexibility in the assignment of tasks or deployment of personnel, combined with job enlargement, multitasking and/or teamworking.

The main dimensions of work organization that reflect such a development are (Huws, 2006):

- a shift from narrowly defined, routinized tasks to re-integration of tasks and multitasking;
- a shift from direct control to relative autonomy and devolution of management functions to workers;
- a shift from deskilling to multiskilling and upskilling;
- a shift in the unit of production from the individual to the group;
- a shift from (technical and bureaucratic) system integration to social integration through communicative action and cooperation in self-directed teams.

From this point of view, reskilling and complex work organization is the trend in post-industrial society. There is a trend towards polarization between a rise in broadly defined, multitasking, participative and autonomous forms of work on the one hand, and work with low levels of autonomy, cooperation and participation on the other hand (Huws, 2006).

The deskilling–reskilling debate forces the HRM department, and more broadly the organization, to cope with the more complex organization of work processes. Some work may be organized in the direction of bringing in routines and automated processes, while other processes need creativity, innovation, cooperation and other more complex capacities to fulfil the job exigencies.

Job design has already been worked out for many years. A classical and well-known model is the Jobs Characteristics Model that focuses on the motivating potential of task characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980).

In this model, the authors combine several elements into a comprehensive model that not only focuses on the characteristics on their own, but also on their presumed effects on individuals' mental states and on organizational performances.

Another well-known theory of work design can be found in the work of Karasek and his job demand-control model (Karasek, 1979, 1985). The model basically emphasizes the number of job demands on the one hand, and the capacity for personal control over the job on the other. Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that require a certain effort or cost, such as work pressure, work (over)load, complex work or role ambiguity.

Job control refers to the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are either related to skill or to the authority to make

decisions, such as personal growth and competencies, goal achievement or having a say in what happens in the job and the workplace. High control means that employees have a high degree of freedom to organize the work themselves, or to plan the work. These employees also have the necessary competencies to perform the job, and mostly get sufficient development to achieve results in their job.

Karasek built a model based on high or low degrees of demands and control. In this model, we can define four possible job situations:

- *Simple work*: related to passive jobs where we find a combination of low demands and low control. The traditional Tayloristic work design is mostly appropriate to this kind of work environment.
- *Relaxed work*: in the low-strain job, we find a situation where people have low demands but get a lot of control opportunities. We could find this combination in an over-investment job where people get a lot of training but the job still remains simple and not stressful.
- *Stressful work*: in this situation, employees are confronted with high work demands (high workload, stress, deadlines) but do not get sufficient control opportunities.
- *Challenging work*: or active work, where we have high demands combined with high control of the job.

Karasek's model makes clear that high work pressure does not automatically lead to work stress if combined with high control possibilities. There is probably a powerful combination of demand and control that can be implemented to adequately organize the work of employees.

There is empirical evidence showing that the combination of high job demands and low job control is an important predictor of psychological strain and illness (Karasek, 1979). Research (Bakker et al., 2003) shows that job demands are unique predictors of burn-out (i.e. exhaustion and cynicism) and indirectly of absence duration, whereas job resources are unique predictors of organizational commitment, and indirectly of absence spells. Many studies continue to examine how to best design jobs to enhance employees' wellbeing



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In a survey of the SERV (Flanders Social and Economic Council) in the Northern region of Belgium, the research revealed that 38% of jobs were low-strain jobs, 27% active jobs, 21% passive jobs and 13% were high-strain jobs. The survey also revealed that the motivation is the highest in low-strain jobs (94%) and active jobs (84%), compared with passive jobs (74%) and high-strain jobs (49%).

Finally, the survey also made clear that employees report higher levels of stress in high-strain jobs (61%) than in active jobs (45%). In this survey, we observe that higher control has a positive effect on the experience of stress in the workplace (SERV, 2005).

and work effectiveness. In general, job crafting is about employees taking initiatives to customize their own work to fit their needs, values, skills and abilities (Bakker et al., 2003).

Important in job design is to evaluate the job characteristics in an integrated way to design a motivating job. When routine jobs such as those in call centres lack the opportunity for including knowledge characteristics, job design can compensate by including task motivation, work characteristics and social work characteristics in the job design. Another example of the need to look at the job characteristics in an integrative way concerns the influence of music or noise. Whereas music can be a source of relaxation in simple jobs, noise has been found to be a source of job dissatisfaction, stress, high blood pressure and absenteeism in complex jobs (Fried et al., 2002).

Building on their meta-analysis, Humphrey et al. (2007) propose that work design characteristics influence work outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction through experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility and knowledge of results.

Our own research (Decramer et al., 2014; Vanderstraeten, 2015; Audenaert et al., 2016) revealed several factors affecting work outcomes. In Table 1.1, we

**Table 1.1** Aspects of work design

<b>Work design &amp; work systems</b>	<b>Mediators and/ or moderators</b>	<b>Work outcome</b>
Task variation	Empowerment	Job satisfaction
Task identity	Coaching	Labour productivity
Task significance	Perceptions of meaningfulness, significance and output	Absenteeism
Interdependence		Turnover
Feedback	Job complexity	Wellbeing
Horizontal alignment of different managerial systems		Turnover intention
Vertical alignment		Extra-role behaviour
System characteristics of employee performance management		Work safety
Two-way communication		Health
Leadership		Performance
Organizational support		
Job crafting		
Work conditions		
Reward systems		
Organizational justice		

sum up some aspects of work design and work systems, mediators and work outcome.

Taking together all these new developments in work design, HRM perspective should take into account several aspects of work:

- *The constant urge for ‘job enrichment’* as a motivational factor since the publication of Herzberg’s well-known article in 1968, and the fact that HRM constantly focuses on work enlargement, work autonomy, responsible autonomy, accountability and ‘*empowerment*’ of employees to develop more natural work processes. The people dimension pays attention to this sometimes neglected factor in work process analysis.
- *The continuous attention on fair and equal distribution of workload* over the total workforce, keeping in mind the equity theory and the constant balance of employees’ input and contribution on the one hand, and their perceived benefits from the organization on the other hand. The introduction of HRM in public organizations is sometimes followed by an extensive workload analysis to keep track of individual and team workload and make work more transparent and more equally distributed over the workforce.
- *The information society* that leads to the intelligent worker, making information processing more important than manual work.
- *The role of supportive leadership* in coping with work stress.
- *The organizational part of work*, making work more attractive, bringing variety to the work and more control opportunities for employees at the workplace (empowerment).
- *The organization of work processes, linked to the broader institutional environment of society.* Work process is a matter of social negotiations between employer organizations and trade unions. Severe Taylorism has always been under attack due to the resistance of workers and legal restrictions



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In 2015, Eurofund found an association between workplace wellbeing and establishment performance. Those establishments scoring highly on one index are likely to also score highly on the other. Wellbeing is slightly better in small companies than in larger companies, whereas the opposite pattern is found for establishment performance. In general, they also noticed an increase in labour productivity during recent years.

Managers in 13% of establishments report high levels of sickness absence; in 10% of establishments employee retention is a problem; and 17% of establishments are faced with poor employee motivation. Most managers reported a good or a very good work climate in their organizations.

From Eurofund (2015).

introduced by government. The result is the installation of a large legal framework for work organization in most industrialized countries, protecting the rights of the employees. Working hours, safety programmes, health issues, vacation regulations, workload and other regulations are constantly discussed and negotiated in bargaining entities or teams with representatives of employees and employers. Governmental and legal action creates the legal framework and is sometimes a renewer in terms of work organization. In the Lisbon Strategy of 2000, the European Council called for changes in work to improve employment and competitiveness through a better organization of work based on high skill, high trust and high quality (Gill & Krieger, 2000).

A new paradigm in work organization is the principle of ‘*social innovation*’. Research from the Netherlands (Volberda et al., 2011) proved that 25% of the success of innovation depends on technological investments and 75% on social innovation. Indeed, the power of innovation in Flanders, Belgium, is explained by 80% social innovation. Social innovation means the flexible organization of work, dynamic management and working smarter. Companies applying social innovation have an innovation capacity that exceeds the average by 41%. They significantly attract more new clients (+22%) and have more satisfied employees (+20%). These companies make higher profits (+26%) (Volberda et al., 2011). Flanders Synergy in Belgium is looking for newer and more creative forms of work design and organization. Social innovation is renewing the organization of work and work relations for improving results, productivity and labour quality. Basically, social innovation challenges human resource managers to make work more dynamic, productive and human by using new work design principles (or going back to old ideas of job enrichment, autonomous workgroups and so on). Social innovation, or what is sometimes called ‘*New ways of working*’, includes initiatives such as telework, flexible working hours and social networks, but also more autonomy, self-control, team management and so on.

Depending on their positions in organizations, the complexity of the realized work and the HRM policy, differentiation will occur within sectors, organizations and even within groups of employees concerning the ‘*skilled*’ nature of the tasks. This brings us to the conclusion that HRM has an important responsibility in designing work processes, taking into account aspects of job complexity, competencies and human approaches to work design combined with quality of work, legal obligations and lean management. HR managers probably have to work together with engineers, psychologists, quality specialists and other disciplines to work out an acceptable and motivating work process in organizations.

### 1.3.3 The juridical service: the legal framework of HRM

The administrative service guarantees the necessary service delivery of HRM for the employee within the organization. The organizational service creates

clarity by managing and controlling the work and the organization in an efficient way. The logic in which this service takes place is in addition to the organizational and individual efficiency determined by a strict legal framework.

The legal framework provides procedures and rules within the organization. This contributes most to formalizing the internal work processes and relationships between employees. It is realized by instructions, guidelines, function descriptions, employment contracts and other more formalized instruments of HRM. The advantage of formalizing work processes is that the employees can rely on formal procedures in case of conflict and the managers can elaborate a HRM approach within these formal procedures.

On the one hand this formal frame can contribute to conflict management within the organization. On the other hand it can lead to rigidities in the management of personnel and organization. Rules and procedures that are too formal can jeopardize the freedom of management and prompt employees to question management approaches when they are not realized within these rules and procedures.

These formal procedures and – especially – rules are often subject to discussion between management and employees or their representatives (trade unions). The broad legal frame of HRM is an object of constant worry to the trade unions in their struggle to guarantee the rights of the employees against the freedom of management. Dialogue will be necessary in order to reach agreement. As we will see later on, the structured dialogue between employees and their representatives on the one hand and management on the other hand is an area of work for HRM.

However, formalization does lead to transparency and gives employees the necessary security and predictability for their relationship with the organization and their managers.

## 1.4 THE 5 ‘E’S IN SETTING UP THE INSTRUMENTAL HRM

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A smart addition to the design and application of instrumental HRM systems and practices are the 5 ‘E’s of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, effortlessness and expression.

- *The E of economy* stresses that the use of HRM practices and systems have to fulfil the requirement of thrift. Because of budgetary reasons, it is clear that HRM may not exceed budgetary limits. Respecting the budget and searching for the most inexpensive solution is important. The human resource manager is increasingly looking for the most affordable yet high quality solutions. In line with New Public Management, we notice a tendency within government organizations to think in a market-oriented way and to find the cheapest

(yet highest quality) supplier of HRM services. The commercialization of HRM was one of the policy options during the term of office of President George W. Bush and is one of the objectives of contemporary HRM in the USA. This objective was explicitly included in the strategic HRM of the Office of Personnel Management of the US federal government in the period of 2004–2008. Likewise, in European countries the introduction of the market principle was an important part of the innovation process within the public sector. But private companies, too, are under pressure to limit their expenses and deliver HRM services at the lowest costs.

- *The E of efficiency* systems refers to the balance between a maximum output and a minimum input. Therefore, the precondition of good management is the economic use of resources in order to reach a particular goal. With this E, we introduce the well-known efficiency standard of Taylorism, and lean management which remains one of the cornerstones of managerial thinking in HRM. The setting up of HRM systems and practices should more or less pass the minimal standards of efficiency which can easily be measured and followed up in evaluation. Are HRM practices delivered at a minimal cost? How much time did we spend in applying HRM practices within the organization? These are two of the questions for evaluating HRM systems and practices.
- *The E of effectiveness* makes it clear that efficiency is insufficient to judge HRM. Next to efficiency, HRM also has to be effective or, in other words, has to be able to reach preconceived goals. In the context of performance management the emphasis is laid on the effectiveness of HRM in the organization in order to realize value to people and organization. From a strategic point of view, reaching goals is the central question for evaluating HRM systems and practices. Did we realize our strategic goals in the appropriate time frame? Did we realize the Key Performance Indicators of the HRM strategic plan? These kind of questions come at the forefront of evaluating HRM systems and practices.
- *The fourth element is the attempt to reach the E of effortless* systems, in spite of the complexity of HRM. This principle postulates that when it can be done effortlessly, it does not have to be complex. The power of HRM systems lays often in the simplicity and clarity of the system, and this simplicity accounts for the attractiveness of a certain HRM system or practice. With this E, we improve the transparency of HRM systems and practices and make them understandable for most employees and other stakeholders in and out of the organization. Do all employees understand the existing HRM systems and practices? How complex is the employee performance management system?
- *The E of expression* indicates the necessity to communicate extensively on the executed HRM. The law of action and reaction makes sure that every HRM activity in one way or another causes employee reaction. Employees always have an opinion, always investigate the impact of HRM on their own position, and react positively or negatively towards every initiative of the organization.

Hence the need to communicate extensively and regularly on the performed HRM, and to introduce all communication channels in order to make clear to the employees what the intentions are, how the systems work and where further information can be found. The main objective is to align the individual perceptions of employees with the intended HRM policy of the company. Every employee should reflect the intended HRM strategy and work more or less in line with the central and clearly defined goals of the organization. Is there a communication plan for communicating HRM policies, systems and practices? Where do we find clear information about the HRM systems and practices? Do all our employees read the HRM systems and practices?

These five ‘E’s can form the basis for evaluating the instrumental aspects of HRM. These ‘E’s reflect the ambition of every human resource manager to align vertically and horizontally the ambition of the organization in a clear and unambiguous way.

## SUMMARY

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Chapter 1 was devoted to a short history of instrumental approaches in HRM with a focus on Tayloristic and lean principles of efficiency and discipline. We demonstrated the role of socio-economic stakeholders in HRM, especially the employers and trade unions in setting up HRM regulations. We offered an overview of the core business of instrumental HRM, including the difference between HRM transactions and transformations. Furthermore, we concentrated on the development of job design from narrow, task-oriented design towards broad multitasking, complex job design. An important role of the HR manager is to deliver administrative services, control and the juridical service of HRM. Finally, we finished with an overview of five leading principles in setting up instrumental HRM (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, effortlessness and expression).

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