



TECHNICAL APPROACHES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT; A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract:

This paper provides a theoretical overview of how organisations can manage their human resources using programmes, project models and technical approaches to translate their Human Resources (HR) strategic priorities to enable impact. Applying an inter-disciplinary overview of human resources management (HRM) it defines key concepts of HR strategy, HR programmes, HR project models and technical approaches anchored on organisational culture. The study proposes a framework to implement HR programmes and technical approaches with emphasis on the strategic imperatives required to build the capacity of HR professionals who deliver the technical approaches to enable senior leadership drive organisational impact. The study concludes that leadership accountability is required to ensure value for money HR technical approaches.

Keywords: human resources strategy, human resources programme, human resource project model, organisational culture, HR professionals

1. Introduction

Concepts and ideas mean nothing unless they are tested and put into practice in reality and nothing is more real than the daily issues affecting how the employer can best manage its human resources. No one knows how to address these situations better than the leaders and managers who arm staff with the best practices to make their work successful as well as the HR professionals who deploy critical skills to facilitate key outcomes on impact, performance and employee engagement. In over three decades of experience in the theory, research, consulting and practice of HR, the author has realized that it is one of the most important and yet trivialized and mis-understood discipline both in theory and practice.

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Generally, it is not surprising to encounter five categories of people as far as understanding of Human Resources Management (HRM) as a field of specialization is concerned.

Firstly, people who have demonstrated complete ignorance of the field because they think HRM is not technical and can be done by anybody, and all you need is common sense and therefore will not invest time and effort to recruit technical professionals. Common sense and wisdom are needed to deliver HR strategies; however, it is not the only requirements to partner and support senior leadership to deliver impact. HR has a body of knowledge with orthodoxies, theories, models, etc. It has an art and a science component and is a profession as well as a vocational area of study in management.

Secondly, people who spend their time postulating advanced theories that do not make sense or cannot be put into practice because of context considerations.

Thirdly, people who have shown positive appreciation of the importance of the subject and are quick to state their technical limitations and readiness and willingness to improve their knowledge of HRM.

Fourthly, people who appreciate the strategic importance of HRM and how it can add value to the work of the organization but are overly cautious of the risks involved in giving too much leverage to HR professionals, since there is a perception that it may create more risks in the balance of power as far as checks and balances are concerned.

Fifthly, people who have a very good background in HRM but are either unwilling to share their experiences or lack the confidence to do so. Interestingly, one can find a variety of examples in most organisations; the only difference is the degree of intensity of a particular type or mix.

2. Objective of Study

The main objective of this paper is to provide a framework to conceptualise and operationalise how HR strategy can be designed and enabled through HR programmes supported by HR project models and technical approaches an delivered by HR professionals with support from senior leadership. The discussion is drawn from practical experiences, literature review, intellectual work on some aspects of HRM, ideas from presentations made at various fora, materials from workshops, interactions at various communities of practice fora and a huge amount of ideas and encouragement from many colleagues in HR practice and academia.

3. Literature Review

3.1 What is Human Resources Management (HRM)?

De Simone and Harris (1990) defined human resources management as the effective utilization of employees to achieve goals and strategies or organizations. Nadler and Nadler (1989) indicate that some people use the term HRM to mean the entire field, and this is misleading since the entire field is HR, and HRM is only one component. McLagan

(1989) depicted the relationship between Human Resources Management (HRM), Human Resources Development (HRD) and Employee Relations (ER) as a human resources wheel. The wheel contains at its core human resource aspects that include productivity, quality, innovation, training and development, readiness to facilitate organizational change (organizational development OD), career development, job design, performance management and selection.

According to Sofo (1999:64), while McLagan's definition of HRD includes organizational development, Nadler and Nadler (1989) maintain that, in spite of the overlap, each has a distinctive aspect. Sofo's logic is that OD focuses on organizational learning, while HRD focuses on learning having emerged from education and adult learning. Gilley and Egglund (1989) define HRD as organized learning experiences provided by employers within a specified period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and personal growth.

Some of the technical areas of specialization in HRM include:

- Benefits (designing work life programs, employee assistance programs, healthcare legislation and compliance, leave and maternity benefits, retirement benefits, voluntary benefits, design & technology and outsourcing benefits)
- Compensation (designing and administering executive compensation, pay strategies, severance pay, job analysis and evaluation and grading, non-monetary rewards, pay equity, payroll management, enterprise compensation solutions, compensation planning & management, compensation measurement, reporting and analysis, incentive measurement and compensation trends)
- Workforce Acquisition (head hunting, poaching, assessment centers, establishing internal labour markets, internal resourcing techniques, etc)
- HR Outsourcing (consultancy for a broad range of HR services and support)
- HR Management Information Systems & Technology (design and use of appropriate information systems & technology and best practices)
- Industrial Relations (managing employee relations, application of labour laws, tax legislations, labour norms and practices)
- Training & Development (staff capacity building strategies and approaches)
- Leadership (developing executive leadership programs and methodology)
- Executive Coaching
- Organizational Development (change management techniques, strategies and systems)
- Performance Management (operationalising job performance, job redesign, job enrichment, task variance analysis)
- HR Metrics and Measurement (competencies, manager quality index, psychological measurement of work situations, counselling, etc.)

It is very obvious from the above brief summary that Human Resources Management as a technical functional role in Management is a very vast area that encompasses elements of HRM i.e. selection, induction, rewards and performance management, deals with the legal aspects of HRM i.e. determining substantive and procedural rules in employment contracts in line with industrial relations laws and

practices and HRD as defined by McLagan (1989) concerns issues related to the use of training and development, organizational development, and career development to improve individual, group and organizational effectiveness.

3.2 Human Resources Management as a Multidisciplinary Management & Social Science

As a management science, HR is multi-disciplinary and includes aspects of Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, Economics, Law, Philosophy & Ethics as well as Organizational Theory & behavior and managing change. This is because in the real place of work, the relationship between the Employer and employee is equally characterized by complex social- psychological, political, economic, legal, ethical or philosophical considerations.

Managing staff is a very difficult job, requiring a lot of knowledge and skill. People are variable, and their behaviors are sometimes predictable and unpredictable. In this regard, the managerial profession has looked outside the traditional business disciplines for guidance in developing strategies to manage and develop employees. It has increasingly become necessary to refer to the loosely bound collection of academic disciplines commonly referred to as the social sciences, concerned with human behavior in social settings, and in this case, the work environment (Rush, 1965).

3.3 Sociology of HR

Sociology studies the behavior of individuals in groups and brings out interesting reasons why people join groups and exhibit conformist (agreeing) or deviant (opposing) behavior, how socialization (process of internalizing society's rules on dos and don'ts) takes place, how groups are formed, why conflict occurs and how they can be resolved. Every organization is made up of teams and groups, either on a functional basis or a territorial basis. The Hawthorne Studies beginning in 1927, Kurt Lewin's work on group dynamics research, Rensis Likert's work on the four systems of organization etc all provide useful insights on how and why people behave in group settings. It is therefore necessary to have a background in sociology to understand group behavior and team dynamics within the organization. This helps to better assess the competing requests and priorities of staff capacity building needs.

3.4 Psychology of HR

HR also has an underlying psychological dimension. Psychology concerns the study of individual differences and behavior. It explains why, as a result of our nature (biological or genetic make-up) or nurture (the environment of our upbringing), individuals behave in the way they do. Psychology helps in defining how perceptions (the meanings a person attributes to his environment) are formed and how they can affect human interaction. One of the most influential behavioral psychologists BF Skinner (1953), built upon Thorndike's law of effect and came out with a theory which explains the causes of human behaviour based on stimuli that result in rewards and punishment and under what conditions. According to Paul Dinsmore (1990:225-244), the ancient Greeks argued about

whether behavior was determined by “inherent characteristics” or by “environmental influences”. For example, taking ideas from Lawrence Miller’s work on Behavior Management 1978, Dinsmore points out a philosophical difference between the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle. Plato believed that behavior resulted from how people were taught by their educators and social systems and therefore set out to establish the Republic, the ideal social system designed to optimize learning. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that human behavior was a result of the instinctive and unchanging inherent nature of man. Miller’s view is that modern theories of psychology have taken most of their ideas from the above epistemological framework that attempts to define internal versus external causation of human behavior. Douglas McGregor’s work on Theory X and Y, Ouchi’s Theory Z, Abraham Maslow’s work on the hierarchy of needs, and Frederick Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory all provide insights into the source of human motivation and behavior in work settings. In recent times, one of the most influential works done on understanding individual differences at the workplace is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which was developed by Katherine and Isabel Myers Briggs and influenced by the work of Carl Gustav Jung. The MBTI model asserts that human beings can be classified into different personality types determined by one’s predisposition towards introversion or extraversion, intuiting or sensing, thinking or feeling and judging or perceiving. (Myers-Briggs *et al.*, 1980, Kerisey and Bates, 1978).

Still within the human diversity school of thought, Harold Levitt argues that people are born with certain physical needs, and later social, egoistic and psychological needs are acquired or emerge. Leavitt (1972: 5-6). Vroom also pioneered the expectancy theory of individual motivation and said that individuals assess the probability of achieving certain goals by evaluating how their efforts can lead to performance and how performance can translate into an outcome, and the valence (value) the individual places on the outcome. In a critique of the limitations of expectancy theory, Landy *et al.* (1987) have argued that it only applies to certain individuals. According to Wanous *et al.* (1983: 32,66-85), the strength of this theory lies in predicting discrete choices, and it works best where individuals have a period of reflection on the optimal outcome.

According to Benkhoff (1996:737), in the normal work situation, employees rarely have sufficient time to do a comparative evaluation of outcomes and are not always conscious of their values and expectations, and often have shifting motives. Kenneth Blanchard, cited in Dinsmore (1990:234-235), has also developed the popular situational leadership theory of individual human behavior and classifies leadership behavior into four styles, namely telling, selling, participating and delegating. Each style represents a combination of task behavior (the extent to which a leader provides direction for people) and relationship behavior (the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication with people), and the choice of a particular style depends on the maturity level of the people being supervised.

3.5 Politics of HR

Aryodiguno (2023) has argued that power can be used to shape preferences and control the climate of opinion in various contexts and concludes that awareness of the different

forms of power and how they are exercised is important in understanding the dynamics of political systems. We also argue that politics is inherent in HR within organisations, and ideas from classical political science definitions of politics, which look at society from the angle of an opposition of perspectives in the quest for/and balance of power, are equally transferable to human resources management within organisations. Karl Marx, Engels, and such modern political theorists as Harold Lasswell and Robert Dahl saw politics within the state as simply a balancing of interests, a conflict of interests, a political process. The state has no public interest as such. It has only particularistic interests associated with a particular balance of powers. For Plato, Rousseau, and Locke, the state and society had an end; for Hegel, a destiny with a public interest beyond the particularistic concerns of its citizens. For Machiavelli, the state can be analyzed as a power structure, as a problem of power and order without regard to any ultimate ends of the state. Hobbes and Bentham combined the two approaches and saw the purpose of state power as regulating the conflict of diverse interests. Aryodiguno (2023). Related to HR, organisational politics manifests in various forms of power, influence, and competing interests in decision making concerning the allocation of resources on talent acquisition, compensation, performance management, learning and development, succession planning (Coleman, 2026). In a recent study, we argued that there are inherent organisational politics dynamics during a change management process to transform HR practices with effective HR strategies. This is indeed at the heart of organisational change to transform HR practices and culture.

Marxist Theory of Social Classes, the Group/Pluralistic Theory of Politics and other various analytical frameworks in political science have given useful insights into the processes involved in influencing the use of power and authority over individuals in a society. One of the most popular definitions was offered by Harold Lasswell, who described politics as who gets what, when and how. Another equally popular definition was given by David Easton, who said politics involves the authoritative allocation of values. Based on the above, we argue that the politics of human resources management within an organisation can be extended to also cover leadership decision rights over the allocation of resources and the resulting opposition of perspectives from employees or their representatives on procedural and substantive rules in HR.

We also argue that politics is about the study and manifestation of various forms of power, influence, and competing interests in decision-making concerning the allocation of resources. Politics in human resources management concerns all the processes that influence the determination and allocation of power. Politics involves the creation of coalitions (mobilization), having a loyal constituency, managing various interests and as and when the need arises, making compromises to facilitate the realization of one's interests and organisational resources. Tichy's (1983) Technical Political Cultural model helps to understand the political, technical and cultural dynamics within organizations and how bargaining takes place by interest groups. He describes the technical dynamics as those aspects of the organization which are knowledgeable, such as available technical tools and expertise. The political dynamics are the views of dominant groups, including bargaining by powerful organizational

groups. The cultural dynamics constitute the shared symbols and values which make up the organizational culture. He argues that the three strands must be managed together or realigned for organizational effectiveness (Faletta, 2005:17).

3.6 Economics of HR

Finally, the economics of HR refers to the “rate for the job”, which constitutes the first touch point of engagement between the employer and the employee, and this is characterized by transaction cost. Transaction costs are underpinned by labor market variables where the employer, as a result of demand-and-supply considerations, enters into a relationship with the employee who is ready to sell it for a price. In effect, it is an economic transaction between the buyer and seller and is subject to negotiating the best “deal”. Labor markets analysis offers insights into the conceptualization of the production, development and delivery of skilled labor with due consideration of macroeconomic indicators. An understanding of the principles of economic theory and practice provides a frame for organisational leadership in determining decisions that have economic implications for organisational performance.

3.7 The Legal Aspects of HR

The relationship between the employer and the employee within an organization, has a legal character. Murphy (2018). The relations between the employer and employee require each party to exercise rights and simultaneously fulfil duties and obligations. The relationship has to conform to basic principles of law as they pertain to the execution of rights, responsibilities, and mechanisms for resolving conflict. The legal aspects of HR are enabled by industrial relations systems, which define such relationship rules at the organizational level. The legal aspects of HR can manifest internally and externally through the interaction of government, employer (or their representative) and labour (or their representatives) to determine substantive rules (pay, training, training, development etc) and procedural rules (grievance, disciplinary and dispute resolution procedures). The legal aspects of HR via Industrial relations help to recognize and protect human rights at work. This is necessary to forestall unnecessary conflict and litigation over discrimination in access to staff capacity-building opportunities. At the barest minimum, it helps to ensure compliance in line with organisational justice. In sum, an organisation’s approach to managing its human resources must be compliant with the rule of law and anchored on an HR strategy.

3.8 What is HR Strategy

A HR strategy refers to a firm's deliberate use of human resources to help it gain or maintain an edge against its competitors in the marketplace (Armstrong, 2006; Arthur & Boyles, (2007). Sanz-Valle *et al.*, (1999), Bratton, (2007)). All HR strategies need to be aligned with organisational strategies and plans. Sheehan *et al.*, 2016; Guest, 2011). We also define an HR strategy as a theory of change backed by a pathway with a view to achieving certain objectives.

Gunnigle & Moore (1994), Kuipers and Giurge (2016), Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (1988) and Schuler and Jackson (1987) have investigated the relationship between human resources (HR) strategy and competitive strategy and its impact on performance. They focused mainly on reporting types of HRM strategies (Bird and Beechler, 1995; Huang, 2001) or describing the target behaviour or best practices according to each competitive strategy (Delery & Doty, 1996; Schuler & Jackson, 1987); in other words, they analyse strategic alignment in terms of the practices, tools or actions chosen in the delivery of HR strategy. An effective HR strategy also contributes to organisational performance, and studies have shown the impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. (Huselid, 1995; Lee *et al.*, 2010; Lepak & Snell, 2002; Smith & Reece, 1999; Wang & Shyu, 2008).

HR strategies have to be reduced into coherent HR programmes, project models, and technical approaches and delivered through a detailed implementation plan (DIP) to deliver value and enable organisational strategy. According to Brockbank & Ulrich (2005), the HR function creates value for investors, customers, line managers and employees through four key practices. Flow of people refers to how the organization manages its key asset – its people – including how people move in, through, up and out of the organization. Proper attention to people flows ensures the availability of the talent the organization needs to accomplish its strategy. With this role, HR facilitates the acquisition, nurturing, retention and disengagement of the knowledge, skills, and intellect that individuals bring into the organization until they are separated. This role also enables HR to ensure the acquisition and socialization of talent who will fit with the culture of the organization.

Flow of performance refers to what links people to work – the standards and measures, financial and non-financial rewards and feedback that reflect stakeholder interests. Proper attention to this flow promotes accountability for performance by defining, documenting and rewarding it and penalizing its absence. With this role, HR facilitates the measurement of how individual employees contribute towards the realization of the strategic intent of the organization for impact, influence, income and organizational sustainability. Managing the flow of performance enables the process of demonstrating, measuring and documenting the application of knowledge to ensure organizational effectiveness. The outcome of this process ensures that HR is able to facilitate the measurement of the application of knowledge that reinforces the culture of the organization.

Flow of information refers to what keeps people aware of the organization and its collective knowledge resources. Proper attention to information flow ensures people know what is happening and why, and can apply themselves to what needs to be done to create value (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2005). To be successful, organizations must manage the flow of information from outside, to inside and across horizontal and vertical boundaries. HR facilitates choices around establishing a communication strategy that allows for the management of knowledge and information generated within organizations. HR leadership in this role requires helping organizational leadership to

establish a clear vision for communication, the purpose of communication and how it aligns with the company's overall culture and philosophy. This role enables HR to ensure integration and alignment, as HR practices have a communication, information, and knowledge component when people are selected, rewarded, promoted, or separated. The information and knowledge that HR generates from the measurement of these HR processes and outcomes help to reinforce the right organizational culture. Gathering, processing and documenting best practice or project models that demonstrate operational excellence, as well as individual and team performance that result in improved business performance, facilitates knowledge management that contributes to reinforcing the right organizational culture for organizational effectiveness (Coleman, 2018).

According to Brockbank & Ulrich (2005), HR can build substantive value by facilitating joint interaction with customers through research and development efforts and shared learning and development programs. HR can also provide leadership to help identify and create organizational capabilities through the gathering, processing and documentation of knowledge that directly support brand promise to drive competitive advantage. HR also facilitates the hierarchical movement of knowledge processes, outputs, and outcomes through the flow of information. HR can add substantive value by leveraging business opportunities across units and by creating systems and practices that facilitate the horizontal flow of knowledge through the selection of talent for cross-functional project teams, acting roles, job enrichment, documenting and packaging best project models, business processes and outcomes for replication to reinforce alignment to organizational culture and strategic aspirations (Coleman, 2018).

The literature review above confirms that an organisation's HRM approach is very strategic to realizing its vision and mission. We also assert that an organisation's HRM approach requires an HR strategy which must be reduced into specific HR programmes and project models with supporting technical approaches to drive impact. HR strategy must be anchored on the organisation's culture. The next section examines the link between culture, HR strategy, HR programmes and technical approaches.

3.9 Culture, Strategy, Programmes & Technical Approaches

Cultural types refer to the specific kind of culture present within an organization (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Schein, 2001). Cameron & Ettington (1988) examined the relationship between organizational effectiveness and cultural types, congruence and strength in 334 colleges and universities. They concluded that cultural type is a stronger determinant of organizational effectiveness than cultural strength and congruence. Calori and Samin's (1991) study of 5 French companies identified a particular cultural type as more likely to produce organizational growth. Such a cultural type is characterized by values such as trust, responsibility, openness to the environment, entrepreneurship, quality and consistency.

Quinn *et al.* (1991) studied 86 public utility firms and concluded that organizations tend to possess a combination of cultural types, driven by several dominant types, one dominant type or no specific types. The strength of the culture of an organization is

determined by the number of points awarded to a specific culture type. The higher the score, the stronger or more dominant is that particular culture (Cameroon & Quinn, 1999). Several studies have suggested that cultural strength is a significant determinant of organizational effectiveness. In a study of 13 health care organizations, Nystrom (1993) examined the impact of culture on organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance. That study concluded that organizational members in strong cultures are more committed and satisfied and perform better. Employees of weak cultures were found to be less committed and more likely to quit their jobs. Kotter and Heskett (1992) compared high-performing companies with low-performing ones and concluded that the main distinguishing factors are cultural type, strength and congruence. Denison (1984) research indicated that companies that place value on employee participation in organizational processes, such as decision making, generate returns on investment that are double the returns of companies without such values. Yeung *et al.* (1991) examined the relationship between organizational culture and HR practices in 91 Fortune 500 companies. They concluded that both cultural type and cultural strength are significantly associated with organizational performance.

An organisation's culture is often cited as a reason for its success. Schein (1972, 1983). Organisational values and behaviors play a key role for employees and leaders to visibly demonstrate the culture of the organisation. Values and behaviors from an organisation's culture provide the cornerstone principles which become a red thread for the way organisational members engage with each other, driving a sense of pride, identity, belonging, culminating in rational and behavioural commitment across the organisation. Values and behaviors provide a framework against which to measure individual and collective performance and guide how the organisation hires talented employees. Values and behaviors rooted in the organisation's culture also guide external engagement with partners and key stakeholders, and they provide a reference point for teams when they're planning projects and work. An HR strategy, HR programme and technical approach must be anchored on the organisation's culture. Every organisation's greatest asset is its people. It's the skills, expertise, and diverse views and perspectives of talented employees that make the organisation's impact possible. Many organisations have always believed that by treating people well, trusting them, and empowering them, they would ensure a rewarding and fulfilling place to work, enabling colleagues to give their best and ensuring that they stand the greatest chance of keeping the organisation impactful and mission-focused. There are many examples of this approach delivering results. An organisation's Human Resources (HR) strategy provides a pathway to pursue approaches to organisational development that put its people's needs and abilities first and help drive collaboration across teams to deliver quality programmes that meet the expectations of donors, partners, employees and regulatory players.

A major foundation for any coherent HR strategy is the values of the organisation, which must be at the heart of the contract of trust between employees and the organisation. A values and behaviors-based HR strategy provides an aspirational vision to live up to as the organisation carries out its work together: a way of undertaking the delivery with partners and with staff as colleagues. An organisation's internal culture

does not emerge by accident; it always requires considerable nurturing. This effort relies on contributions from everyone, whether it's a major part of their job description or a voluntary role. Organisational culture is developed and reinforced in the day-to-day work of everyone in the organisation, as they operate by standards that reinforce culture. Throughout the development of many organisations, there is a reliance on strong personal bonds to deepen and strengthen culture. As the organisation scales, it becomes harder to rely only on personal bonds to make the organisation function, and this requires the need to think more systematically about how it develops its HR strategy, which will enable it to implement HR programmes supported by project models with detailed implementation plans (DIP) to enable staff and organisational wellbeing outcomes.

3.10 HR Programmes

An HR programme is derived from an HR strategy. An HR programme is a coherent nexus of thematic pillars that form the components of an HR strategy. An HR programme is a thematic pillar of key results areas, outputs, outcomes and key performance indicators that is executed by a project model or a technical approach supported by a detailed implementation plan. Many organisations have different technical approaches to developing HR programmes. Irrespective of the approaches used, there are broad workstreams that must be integrated in HR programmes. An HR programme must be based on the organisation's values. An HR programme may typically have key components that align with Brockbank & Ulrich's four flows model.

3.11 A Talent Management Eco-system

This thematic programme will normally focus on improvements to how the organisation hire, onboard, develops, and retains a diverse and inclusive talent management eco-system and organisational community to drive impact and mission-focused. At the heart of a talent management eco-system is a values and behaviour-driven competency framework that roots values and behavioural norms at its core, putting the organisation's "*culture and sweet sauce*" at the heart of how it will support organisational talent to have impact, nurture and develop. A values and behaviors competency framework becomes the "marking scheme" for leadership decisions on talent acquisition, performance management, separation, promotion pathways, learning and development and compensation management.

3.12 Organisational Justice

This thematic programme will normally focus on strengthening efforts to ensure competitive, equitable and legally compliant remuneration practices across the organisation. At the heart of organisational justice is data and insights-driven feedback received from diagnostic-oriented "listening tours" organised by the HR department, annual employee engagement surveys, as examples of tools to understand staff and organisational effectiveness and wellbeing needs and inform HR strategy delivery. This provides a disciplined focus on initiatives to protect and enhance staff care and wellbeing.

This thematic programme also provides a framework for employer and employee rights issues, and for grievance and disciplinary matters.

3.13 Accountability and Transparency for Impact

This thematic programme will normally focus on developing shared criteria to guide the development of employees, with emphasis on coaching, mentoring, learning and knowledge transfer, as well as succession planning. A key enabler is to have a framework to measure the line of sight between the contribution of each employee and the delivery of the organization's strategy and development programmes.

3.14 Leaders for the Future

This thematic programme focuses on initiatives to identify and build leaders for the future. A values and behaviours competency framework is the tool to define what effective values- and behaviours-oriented leaders look like, and it becomes the basis for designing a leadership assessment and development programme for high-potential/high-performing staff that is in line with the organisation's values and culture. This must be reinforced by an intentional leadership orientation programme for newly appointed leaders, and to provide them with opportunities to access internal and external coaching and support.

3.15 Agility

This thematic programme responds to a fast-changing, increasingly unpredictable world where flexibility and agility are a sine qua non for impact and effectiveness. As an organisation grows, there is a danger that it loses the ability to be agile, yet this is central to the organisation's raison de etre and its successes, especially in the age of rapidly evolving technology-driven political economy across the world. Agility refers to a set of coherent actions to build a high-calibre, professionally-oriented HR function that is a trusted partner of the organisation and can deliver the HR Strategy. Agility requires the effective use of data and analytics and human resources information systems to provide valuable information to leaders, enabling them to make decisions across all human resources management processes. Agility means HR policies are continually assessed to ensure they are enabling and strengthening the organisation. Where they are not helping, they must be revised or discarded.

3.16 HR Programmes and Organisation's Social Contract

HR programmes are thematic strands of work which are woven together to constitute a social contract at the heart of the organisation. HR programmes help the organisation to deliver excellence in human resources management in line with its values and behaviour-driven organisational culture to ensure equity and organisational justice. These thematic pillars collectively provide clarity about the rights that the organisation's people can expect, as well as developing a clear understanding of the shared accountabilities and responsibilities which enable the organisation to deliver impact.

3.17 Transitioning from HR Strategy, HR Programmes to Technical Approaches

In many organisations, there is an inherent concern about a gap between organisational strategy, HR strategy and HR programming. It is important to examine how organisational business/strategic priorities translate into HR programmes. Based on over three decades of work in the theory, research, consulting and practice in HR, we argue that a critical missing link between HR Strategy and HR programming is a set of technical approaches clearly defined and then applied flexibly during HR programme design/redesign initiatives.

Every organisation must have an HR strategy to enable a broader organisational strategy. This must be part of its business plan to execute a strategy, which is normally its Multi-Year Plan and Budget. There has to be a technical approach to support the HR programmes for each of the components of an HR strategy. A technical approach in HR programming will include one or more HR project models that define how the organisation will approach a specific HR strategic priority. As well as identifying the project model/s for each of the strategic priorities, a technical approach will also outline other operational elements such as the level of collaborative partnerships across the organisational internal and externally, learning networks within the organisation, and the role of HR technical staff support, required to operationalize the technical approach in the specific HR programmes.

3.18 Advantages of a Technical Approach to Deliver HR Programmes

Developing a consistent HR technical approach enables an organisation to apply its technical expertise efficiently, and to bring in additional expertise in a limited, high-impact way - rather than doing this sporadically on specific thematic areas in HR.

Clearly defining a common approach with well-defined core elements saves time and effort for HR technical staff and Line Managers responsible for reviewing HR programme/project designs.

Having a common approach with a few core indicators for monitoring and evaluation makes it more feasible to track and report on progress toward organisational and employee wellbeing outcomes, enabling real-time learning and agility as well as supporting annual organisation-wide strategy reporting moments.

Having a common approach to HR strategy execution, HR programming, and HR technical approaches, including collaborative partnership engagement with key internal and external stakeholders, can enable more effective partnering and advocacy that is vertically and horizontally linked at all levels across the organisation.

3.19 Risks

An HR technical approach could be applied as a cookie-cutter across many HR strategy delivery programs, without appropriate consideration of context, leading to inappropriate designs and ineffective projects.

If not used flexibly and respectfully as part of dialogue with key stakeholders, the approach could be imposed, undermining senior leadership and line managers'

ownership, which is necessary to leverage appropriate resources and sustain HR transformative initiatives over time.

Applying a common approach inflexibly at the HR programme level can stifle innovation.

3.20 Key Guiding Principles & Standards

3.20.1 Where Does the Approach Fit in the Organisation's Strategy/planning Process and When Should It Be Developed?

Technical approaches are too detailed to be part of the HR strategy itself. They are an important part to execute overall HR strategy and HR programmes through Multi-Year Business Plans and Budgets, through detailed Implementation plans, and will inform many other components of the plans – including technical HR staffing plans; plans for knowledge management, staff learning and development; and plans for baselines, monitoring, evaluation, and indicator selection. A technical approach does not need to be developed every three years as part of a new strategy cycle. It should be developed to be applicable for five or more years. If an organisation does not have approaches developed for all its strategic priorities, it needs to develop these approaches as part of its Multi-Year Business Plan. But if an HR technical approach has already been developed, it can simply be reviewed and refined periodically based on learning, then substantially revised or replaced when necessary. The technical approach must be informed by the organisation's culture, values and behaviors standards to guide execution and measurement.

3.20.2 How Should the Approach Be Developed and Reviewed?

A key requirement is to have a template to guide the development of an HR programme, supporting project models and the detailed implementation plan. This template is guidance for organisations to consider and adapt, depending on their culture and context. Development of each HR programme would begin with solid root cause diagnostic analysis, followed by careful consideration of organisational/labour market/ regulatory requirements, what other stakeholders in the eco-system (e.g. government, other NGOs, etc.) are doing and how the organisation can position itself to become an employer of choice to deliver its strategic priorities. An organisation must consider global as well as other evidence-based good practice approaches in its labour market.

To develop each approach, senior leadership and purposely selected line managers would typically work together with internal HR technical specialists. They may also draw in expertise from outside, including relevant communities of practice spaces. To enable integration and maximize impact, the organisation will also consider how each project model and technical approach can complement and reinforce other project models and technical approaches. For example, how the global south talent acquisition components of talent management technical approach fits with the compensation technical approach, which is intended to deliver an outcome of high levels of staff engagement, low staff turnover, high rational and emotional commitment scores. Another example is how a values and behaviors competencies framework informs

measurement of employee performance and also guides decisions to select high-potential staff for “*leaders of the future*” talent management initiatives. HR project models and technical approaches must be reviewed by the organisation's Senior Leadership.

3.21 Knowledge Management & HR Project Models & Technical Approaches

It will be very important for an organisation to support and enable proactive learning about what is working and not working in the application of each HR project model and technical approach. This learning should be used to refine the technical approaches as needed, and also to identify and make organizational changes needed to support effective application of the approaches (e.g. technical staffing, policies and work processes/mapping, and practices, etc). Focus and prioritization are essential in the development of HR technical approaches, including the selection of HR project models. For example, there should be one or two HR project models recommended only in contributing to a specific organisational or employee well-being or effectiveness outcome. With these HR project models and defined technical approaches, there is a risk that innovation is quashed or diminished. It needs to be clear that there is room for innovation and that it is not regulated, but that when innovating an HR technical approach, the rationale and desired outcome need to be articulated first and linked to the overall theory of change underpinning the organisation's employment value proposition.

3.22 Key Components for HR Project Model & Technical Approach

This section outlines the basic elements to include in each HR Project model and technical approach, with flexibility to refine and adapt to suit the organisation's culture.

3.22.1 Why?

- Organisational Strategic Priority(ies) that this approach addresses
- Key findings of diagnostic root cause analysis
- Relevant aspects of endogenous and exogenous factors that inform this approach

3.22.2 What?

- HR project models and local good practices incorporated (Clarify what should be core/consistent across all contexts where this approach is applied, and what is flexible)
- Linkages/interdependencies with other technical approaches in the organisation outside HR, e.g., Finance, Fundraising, Quality Assurance, etc
- There is also a need to have a section that addresses how to apply the technical approach during the emergency response/disaster/crises management and preparedness.

3.22.3 Who and How?

- Key partners and partnerships at multi-layered levels, e.g., board, senior leadership, line managers and staff, community management committees, regulatory players, etc

- Monitoring & Evaluation of technical approach eg qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation of key results areas, outputs, indicators, outcomes and relevant measures of effect.
- HR project logframe, including standardized indicators and other suggested indicators

3.22.4 Where - Especially for Global Organisations

- Geographic areas where this approach is most needed/appropriate
- Variations of the approach based on different contexts in the country (*e.g. fragile vs. stable, and applying a continuum to also define low or high end fragile or stable contexts, etc.*)

3.22.5 What additional support will be provided by the Organisation to apply the technical approach?

- Learning networks - this will refer to communities of practice and other spaces of HR technical professionals, which will provide a space for critical feedback and revisions, as well as opportunities for testing and replication and eventually scale it up for impact.
- Knowledge management mechanisms - *quote from article on knowledge management and org culture*

3.23 An Example of a Technical Approach (TA)

- 1) Evidence of Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) & workload & well-being analysis
- 2) DIP defines concept, context, content, process, and outcomes for delivering
- 3) The initial road map of starting the TA – listening tours, working group looking at HR strategy, partner engagement visits, field visits and plenary to discuss and agree on outcomes and finalise direction. The road map defined –pre-event, orientation, rapid assessment(partner interviews & field visits), activity prioritization, planning (DIP, HR, finance, and capacity building work streams reports/aspects
- 4) PowerPoint presentation looks at diagnostic root cause, issues, the process that was applied to identify issues, the landscape and data
- 5) Data on the flow of people, performance, work and information
- 6) Advocacy to secure senior leadership political support by amplifying the nexus between the organisation's values, the theory of change underpinning the overall HR strategy and HR programmes, HR project models, technical approaches and standards.
- 7) Selected HR programmes for implementation, costed and agreed, prioritised interventions, i.e., direct programme and operational costs, etc
- 8) Organisational model that defines roles, accountabilities, and responsibilities for technical support & mentoring

- 9) Capture it with a document called operational approach, which documents the process and outcomes.
- 10) Technology-driven documentation in relevant, safe, and secure locations, including learning management platforms, knowledge management hub or human resources information systems (HRIS)
- 11) Governance - inclusion of high-level updates of the delivery of HR strategy through key highlights of key HR programmes, project models and technical approaches and evidence of impact and results. This must be part of the reports to the HR Committee of the Board of the organisation.

3.24 The Role of HR Professionals in Delivering Technical Approaches

The transition from HR strategy to HR programmes, HR project models and technical approaches requires a structured and intentional mechanism to build the capacity of the organisation's HR professionals. HR is a profession and a craft, and while there are key HR orthodoxies that are not negotiable, it is also a fact that there is no one-size-fits-all solution from an organisation's internal labour market structure. What is, however, clear is that implementing HR technical approaches provides a huge amount of learning and experience across the organisation. A key requirement is to implement capacity-building systems and tools that will help HR professionals to improve how they share and disseminate these experiences to empower and train themselves and other colleagues within the organisation. These may range from courses for HR professionals and managers to workshops to teach and socialise strategy and execution skills, which integrate the HR technical approach to the organisation's wider business strategy, theory of change, and specific development projects in the field. Many organisations fail to invest in building the capacity of HR professionals, as the focus is rather on HR professionals to facilitate the capacity building of line managers and staff. The effective implementation of a technical approach will require deepening the training offer for HR professionals, since on-the-job training is a key way of providing employee satisfaction and helping HR professionals to understand the investment that the organisation is making in them.

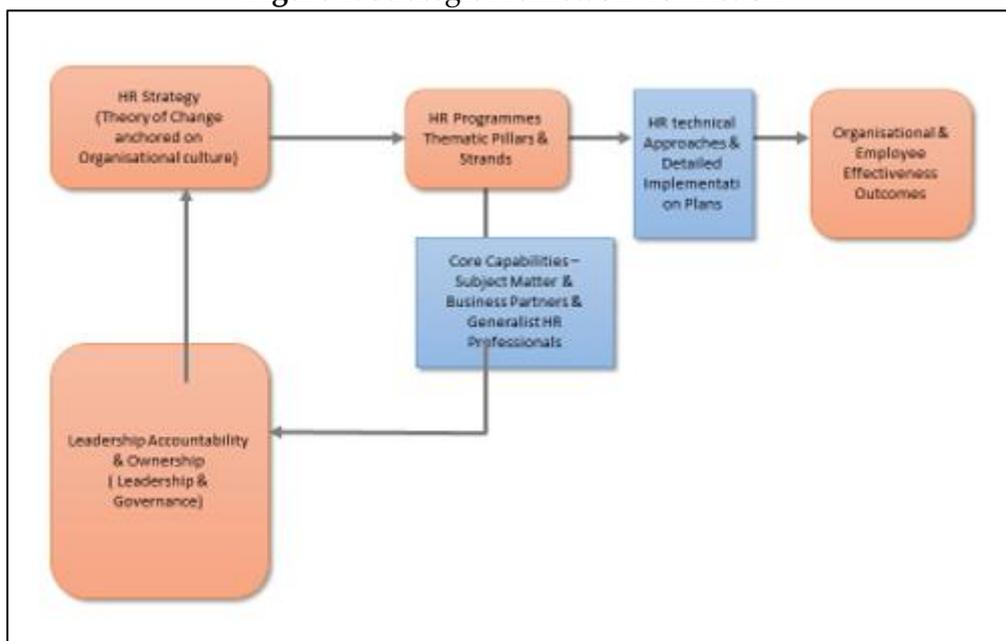
One of the key HR programmes is talent acquisition. A technical approach for talent acquisition is very critical for any organisation to remain on top of its labour market to deliver impact. The tools and tactics required in 2026 are different from those in 2016. HR professionals in talent acquisition in the organisation will need to consider a set of methodologies to deliver talent acquisition outcomes, since organisations in 2026 need to recruit a workforce that can handle the challenges of today. At the same time, in this fast-changing world Leadership needs to know what kinds of talent and profiles the organisation will need over the next 1-3 years which aligns with its broader business strategy cycle, and which recruitment geographies and labour markets it can compete in to deliver impact. A technical approach in talent acquisition will need to have key factors. Firstly, there is a need to be more proactive about developing a talent pipeline. Secondly, when the organisation needs to recruit, it can find the right people in the right places at speed. Thirdly, potentially suitable candidates still at university or in relevant sectors or

organisations already hear about the organisation before an actual vacancy that could suit them, and identify the organisation as an attractive future employer where their and the organisation's values, ideas, and ambitions align. Fourthly, this requires more active and effective positioning of the organisation in certain spaces, including strategic alliances and collaboration with universities and vocational institutes that are designing education programmes for the future workforce that will be prepared to tackle the strategic priorities of the organisation.

3.25 A Framework for Action

An organisation's HR strategy must be framed by a clear theory of change anchored on its culture and enabled by senior leadership. Organisational HR strategies which are very high-level statements of expectations and outcomes are then broken down to specific HR programmes which is a coherent nexus of thematic pillars of key results areas, outputs, outcomes, activities that is delivered through a clear project model and detailed implementation plan. This framework helps an organisation to reduce strategic statements of intents and aspirations into concrete outputs and outcomes with clear success indicators that leads to organisational and employee effectiveness outcomes.

Figure 1: Strategic Framework for Action



4. Conclusion

This paper provided a theoretical discussion of how organisations can manage their human resources using human resources programmes, human resources strategy, human resources project models and technical approaches to put an organisation's HR strategic priorities into action to support organisational strategic priorities and development programmes. Applying an inter-disciplinary overview of human resources management (HRM) it defined key concepts on HR strategy, HR programmes, HR project

models and technical approaches anchored on organisational culture. The study has proposed a framework for action with key standards to guide the implementation of HR programmes, project models and technical approaches with an emphasis on the strategic imperative to build the capacity of HR professionals to deliver the technical approaches. It affirms that leadership accountability is key to ensuring value for money in all initiatives to translate an HR strategy into actionable programmes, models and technical approaches and detailed implementation plans.

Limitations

This discussion is a theoretical examination of how HR programmes, HR project models and technical approaches supported by detailed implementation plans enable the delivery of an organisation's HR strategy. It contributes to general knowledge on HR strategy and introduces new concepts of HR programmes, HR project models and technical approaches. It specifically emphasises the various variables that are important to implement HR programmes, including leadership accountability. A future area of research will focus on applying the framework in selected organisations to assess its utility.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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