HRM

by Research Prospect

Challenges of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Research Focus: Project based public organisations in trade and industry sectors of UK

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Abstract

The proposed research will be based on an exploratory and interpretivist paradigm to develop an understanding of the challenges faced in strategic human resource management (SHRM), with particular focus on public organizations of UK in trade along with industry divisions of UK government. The reviewed literature depicted that in project-based organization (PBO), the achievement of long term competitive advantage is one of the important goals in large public and private organizations that lead to the modifications in management practices of new modes of operations. The transition from traditional to optimized project management techniques in government organization not only involves the management's change of mind sets, but it also requires changes in operational compatibilities of human resources.

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Proposed Title

Challenges of Strategic Human Resource management (SHRM) in Project based public organisations in trade and industry sectors of UK

1. Introduction

Successful progress of any organization requires effective performance of Human resources as an integral component of organizational resources and capabilities. The studies of Hayton (2005), Peiseniece and Volkova, (2010), and others have convincingly declared the human resource management (HRM) as one of the most critical management function as a driver of value chain. Project management is one of the contemporary management approaches with more concentration on the achievement of a single objective. With the increase in dynamics and complexity of external business environment, the change management and project management approaches are widely used in public organizations as well (Kaufman and Miller, 2011). This research proposal is based on the analysis of human resource challenges posed in the public PBOs during the transition phase. The literature is reviewed with respect to the important perspectives of studies about challenges in achieving dynamic performance of HR in PBOs. Further, the discussion on research methodology is part of this proposal.

1.2 Rationale of Research

According to Mathis, and Jackson (2011), strategic human resources management (SHRM) is one of the most important differentiation function a traditional management based organisation and a project based organization (PBO). Pronjogo and McDermott, (2011) argued the limitations of human resource management in public organizations project management approaches. In view of the traditional approaches followed in bureaucratic set up of government or public departments, transition towards PBO has certain challenges related to performance and skills management, adaptation to change, and modifications of operational strategies. Therefore, it is important to analyse these challenges in view of the theoretical frameworks for HRM in public sector PBOs in United Kingdom (UK).

1.3   Research Aim

The aim of this research is proposed to cover the important aspects of SHRM is *To explore SHRM challenges in increasing the HR capacity and adaptation to change resulted from transition of public sector project-based organisations (PBO) from traditional public sector in UK.*

The proposed research will be related to the achievement of following research objectives;

1. To understand the changing role of employees in public organization in context to the requirements if PBO in UK.
2. To identify the modifications required in the HRM policies, practices, and designing of project teams in public sector PBOs.
3. To assess the capabilities and adaptation to transitional changes in human resources of selected PBOs in UK

1.3.2 Research Questions

In view of the complexities involved in the transition process faced by public sector organizations due to their size and diversity in human resource characteristics, the research will endevours to answer the following questions;

1. What are the main challenges posed during the transition of traditional public organization to a PBO in UK and how do these challenges affect the modifications of HR practices to new design of HRM in PBOs?
2. How do the roles and capabilities of HRM modify in view of the designing and management of project teams in public sector PBOs in UK?
3. What is the consequence of transition from a traditional to PBO on HR development and employees adaptation to the new project environment in public organizations' context?

2. Literature review

This section reviews the relevant literature of project organizations and the challenges to HRM during the transition from traditional to project based organization (PBOs).

2.1   Transition to Project based Organization (PBO)

The switching of traditional organizations to project based, process based, and change management oriented organizations are quite common in private sector. Similarly, the public organizations also face the challenges of attaining the required performance in project based settings. According to the proposed notion of Garies (2010), more frequent changes are observed in recent era due to the increased complexity and dynamic environment in consumers and business environment. Therefore, Turner (2009) declared the transition to project based organizational setup is important to attain strategic organizational goals with more focused approach. In contrast to the private organizations, the activities of PBO require more focused and dynamic approach from public organizations due to their bureaucratic stricture with less flexibility and larges employees base to control HRM activities (Young and Howard, 2012).

The definition of PBO is stated in terms of Muller and Turner (2010) is an organization that delivers the services and products as per specifications of customers and provided custom-built designs to suit the specific needs of clients or markets. Project-based organizations (PBOs) comprised of set of various projects and formed on the basis of two categories of original PBOs and Projectified Organizations as shown in the following illustration:


Figure 1 Projectification and project-based organisations
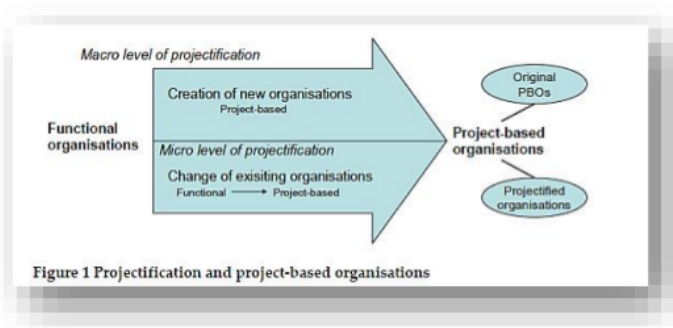
Source: Turner (2009)

2.2   Characteristics of PBOs in public sector

The category of government sector in UK are considered as Projectified organizations due to the transition made from traditional organizations to a more flexible and dynamic delivery of custom designs in view of the changes in business environment. Further Gurbuz, and Mert (2011) argued that the public organizations offered projectification to certain departments and service areas in view of specified requirements of government projects and the other sections and departments are governed through traditional management approaches. Hence, the requirement of effective human resource is one of the preliminary requirements in PBOs.

In view of the researches of Perkins and White (2010) and Turner, (2009) the changes in HR practices in PBOs are important to address as the projects development is associated with the designing of new work environment on Projectified organizations. Jalocha et al (2014) emphasize the development of key competencies in project mangers of Public organizations. The designing and enforcement of project centric trainings and perspectives development of individual employees are considered as two main aspects of key competencies (Jalocha et al 2014). Further, Shaw et al (2013) and Crawford et al (2013) discussed the links of HR practices in a PBO with reference to the employees' development from the beginning of project management teams formation till the release in a project.

Fig. 2: HRM linkages in a PBO
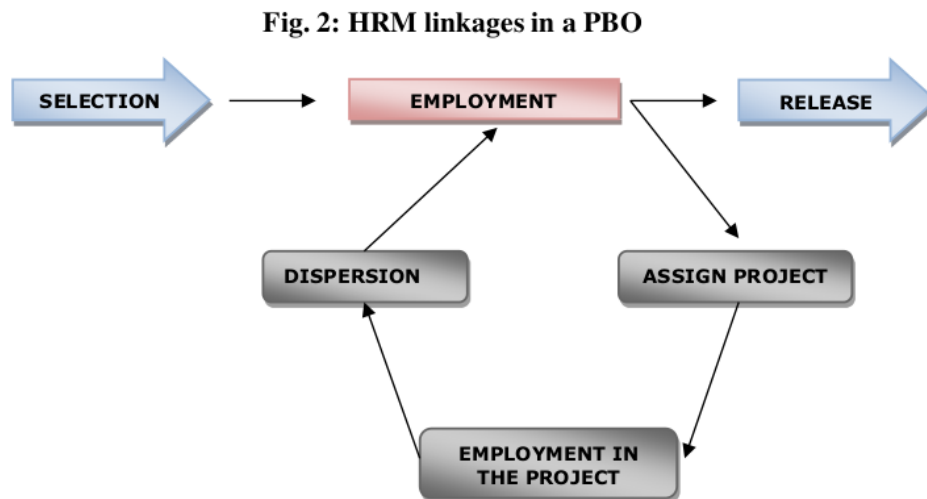
Source: Adapted from Crawford et al (2013)

2.3   SHRM challenges in the public PBO

As compared to the newly formed PBO, the Projectified organizations like public organizations face resistance to change from existing employees. In this regard, Perkins, and White (2010), and Snape and Redman, (2010) highlighted that the public sector organizations have permanent set of HRM practices and faced difficulty to change in dynamic project based environment where tasks change and roles change on regular basis, Therefore, inertia and status quo are basic hindrances in rapid change management. The framework of SHRM activities in PBO is designed by Mathis, and Jackson, (2011) to elaborate the major challenges in incorporating the Project based HRM in large organizations.

Fig. 3: The SHRM Structure in PBO
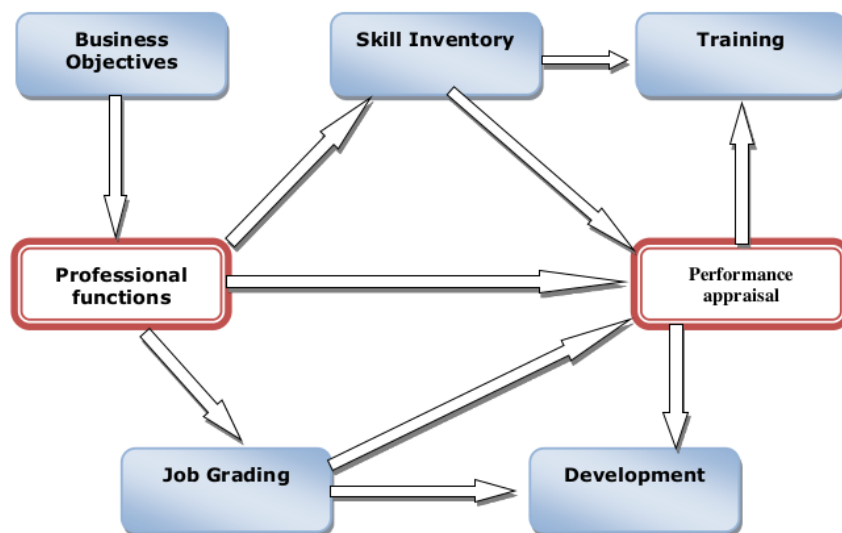
Source: Mathis, and Jackson, (2011)

The important challenges identified from review of literature in PBOs are the work overload on project teams require elevated levels of intensity of dedicated output m, but public sector workers found it difficult to manage high workloads in dynamic environment, Ingason and Jónasson, (2009) argued the presence of stressful work environment as a reason of employees demotivation. In addition, the increased requirements of soaring performance are difficult to achieve in view of the work concept in public organization employees. The other important factors identified by the

studies of Li-Yun, and Pan, (2011) and Muller and Turner (2010) are linked to development of career opportunities, flexibility in work routines, and consistency in performance appraisal system for various projects in a single organization are some important issues to be addressed.

3. Research Methodology

The exploratory research methodology governed by an interpretivist paradigm is selected for this research. The application of theoretical constructs of a PBO on the public organizational project settings in UK need a detailed and comprehensive study to align the concepts to real life practices of these PBOs. The development of SHRM practices in view of the challenges in recent project based working scenarios of public organizations of UK are the main areas of exploration. The studies of Li-Yun, and Pan, (2011) and Jalocha et al (2014) provided the necessary literature base for the HR settings in PBOs. Further the works of Crawford et al (2013) and Snape and Redman, (2010) will assist in determining the important variables of HR performance development in SHRM planning and HR linkages in PBOs.

The empirical research will be based on detailed personal and group interviews in five selected public organizations in UK. The government departments operating in trade and industry are the main focus of the proposed research. The nature of this longitudinal study will use inductive approach in collection of and qualitative data from interviews of project managers and HR managers in selected public organizations in UK. Coding of data collected from interviews will be done by feeding of qualitative data of interviews in RDA/QDA or ATLAS to convert qualitative data to quantitative. The evidence in qualitative data will be collected through brain storming, interviews, and focus group discussions with the project planners and HR managers in public sector organizations.

4. Summary and Conclusions

The changes in environment and practices of individual employees in a public sector PBO are the most challenging aspects as the employees' integration with project tasks need a change in mindset from traditional to task based operations. The proposed research is expected to explore important

insights in the major transformations in public organization SHRM in order to match the requirement of dynamic environments.

5. Proposed Work Plan

The span of the study is tentatively planned to three years and detailed plan is attached in Appendix.

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Appendix – Detailed Research Schedule

Tasks for year 1	Feb	Mar	April	May	June-July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Research gap analysis, Finalization of research purpose, title, and specific research plan	■	■								
Collection and finalization of literature review for proposal		■	■							
Finalization of research plan and methodology to be presented in research proposal				■						
Writing of research proposal					■	■	■			
Submission, defend, and acceptance of research proposal								■	■	
Literature collection from specified sources and within the realm of finalized research title, literature collection method, and issues to be discussed.						■	■			
Classification of collected literature, finalized the most current and relevant literature, theoretical and conceptual framework development							■	■	■	■

modular arrangement of literature, hypotheses development									🟧	🟧 🟧
critical review of classified literature in view of the identified research literature									🟨	🟨

Tasks for year II	Jan	Feb-Mar	April	May	June-July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Introduction finalization, background, research purpose and significance	🟦	🟦								
Research objectives, questions, limitations, dissertation structure			🟦							
Alignment of developed theoretical and conceptual framework				🟥						
Methodology, research design, sampling plan and finalization of reliability, validity issues					🟦					
, questionnaire designing, survey planning and ethical considerations. Arrangement of physical resources to conduct survey, pilot test of questionnaire						🟨	🟨			

Data collection from interviews and focus groups								███	███	███		
checking of chapters drafts, Writing methodology chapter											███	███
Coding of questionnaires and interviews										███		

Tasks for the year III	Jan	Feb-Mar	April	May	June-July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Coding of data collected from interviews Feeding of qualitative data of interviews in RDA/QDA or ATLAS to convert qualitative data to quantitative.	███	███								
Analysis of qualitative data from RDA/QDA or ATLAS software				███						
Rechecking of acquired results from qualitative and quantitative data analysis					███					
Data interpretations and explanations of collected results, analysis of variations and similarities of interviews and survey results						███				

Writing data analysis and discussion on findings										
Conclusion and recommendation										
Implication of future researches, scope, limitations, and personal reflection										
Finalization and submission										

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