

STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to review relevant literature and discussion about concepts, theories, and approaches in strategic human resource management. Empirical studies of related subjects which have been carried out overseas and in Thailand are also explored in this article. The author concludes by arguing that the future of Thai organizations depends more heavily than ever before on the quality of the management of its people. To equip the Thai HR professionals and business practitioners with the human resources skills needed to undertake value-added activities and to demonstrate that these business and strategic activities can successfully be developed and implemented, the author strongly urges that universities and graduate institutes in Thailand will need competent faculties and experienced researchers with a wide variety of human resources and business skills who are dedicated to develop academic programs and carry out HRM research that will respond to the needs of the future organizations. Although substantial advances in Human Resource Management research has been made during the past ten years, considerable work still remains to be done.

Introduction

In Thailand, attention during the early 2000s was paid to the development of human resource strategies and policies, which served to promote the achievement of organizational objectives. However, numerous studies indicate that much of organizational life and interaction is not directly related to achievement of organizational objectives. This discrepancy between formal objectives and behavior derives from a number of sources including the meanings people bring to organizational life (Silverman, 1979: 141), the operation of coalitions of competing groups often with interests different from those of stated organizational objectives, (Dalton 1950, 1959; Pettigrew 1973; Gowler and Legge 1975), the competing social interests and power relations of groups in the social structure (Salaman 1981; Purcell and Ahlstrand, 1994), the nature of the process of decision-making which is sometimes not a rational exercise of wisdom, judgment and expertise, but one in which managers act out of habit or instinct (Marshall and Stewart, 1981: 274; Anthony, 1977: 62; Wrinkler, 1974: 210; Simon, 1960: 28) and also the nature of the implementation of policy involves the creation and maintenance of informal, social networks based on doing favors, nurturing professional reputations

and controlling resources and information. (Kotter, 1996: 69-70; Whetten and Cameron, 2002 and Yukl, 2002)

From the literature reviews, this suggests that although a strategic approach to human resource management may have initially been explored in an organization, in practice, organizational dynamics might have limited its application. There are many obvious reasons why many organizations fail to develop and implement strategic approaches to human resource management. One of the conventional beliefs is that if line managers are not involved in setting the objectives and strategies, the plans then may not be effectively implemented. In addition, the development of planning systems in many organizations, which are typically bottom up, requires the involvement of too many people from different departments and levels in the whole organization. To make the concept work, what is critical is an understanding of the fit with the level of environmental turbulence, whether the culture of the organization could tolerate such an approach, and the fact that commitment alone is not enough to implement strategy.

Theoretical Review

Although, a strategic approach to Human Resource Management has evolved nearly 20 years ago with an article entitled “*Human Resources*