



The Function of HR

50MHR

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SUMMARY OF TOPICS

MAIN POINTS COVERED

The HR Function
HR – Change Management
Delivering the HR Function
A Collaborative Approach
Ethical Practice
The HR Contribution
Research – HR and Positive Organisational Outcomes
References





"In a world of increasing change and complexity, we have a lot to think about as we develop the future for HR. But we also have a great opportunity to position HR at the heart of business, rising to our role in building organizations that are more agile and adaptive, more diverse, more responsible and sustainable, and that drive greater value."



Peter Cheese
Chief Executive, CIPD

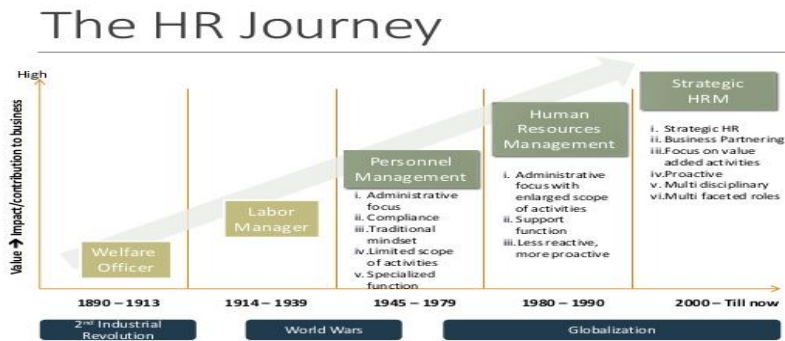
(CIPD, 2015).

The HR Function

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO



THE EVOLUTION OF THE HR FUNCTION



(Slideshare, 2016)

The HR function originates back to the 19th century and the establishment of large manufacturing companies, local and national offices which required personnel departments. They were primarily responsible for administrative tasks such as creating policies and procedures, inputting employee records and wage administration. Towards the end of the 20th century the idea that non-monetary factors had more of an impact on worker productivity meaning Personnel evolved to 'Human Resource Management', as people were more valued (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).

Around this time, Taylor's Scientific Management (SM) theory was born. Taylor studied the efficiency of tasks by timing them to highlight the most efficient method and finding the 'one best way', this provided the first foray into job analysis and the effects of compensation based pay on worker productivity. Many of Taylor's theories have helped to formalise the foundations of the HR function (Dulebohn & Ulrich, 2015).

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

AIM

- *Effectively manage people to ensure that the organisations strategy and objectives are met which will support overall organisational performance.*

OBJECTIVES

A 2007 report by the CIPD titled 'The Changing HR Function' asked respondents what they believed the main objectives of the HR function to be:

- The recruitment & retention of staff: 70%
- To develop employee competencies: 62%
- To maximise the involvement and engagement of employees: 59%
- The performance of management & staff: 61%

(CIPD, 2007)

The focus of HR changed as a result the evolution of the profession. This contributed to an evolution in terms of the aims and objectives of the HR function. Torrington (1998) describes the evolution as being 'sequential' with new activities added to the function at different times (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005).

The overall aim of the HR function is to ensure that organisations' employees are effectively managed to meet organisational objectives. These vary depending on type of business, the industry, and responsibilities of HR employees. A survey by CIPD titled 'The Changing HR Function' demonstrated that the most popular activity for HR Professionals was the recruitment and retention of staff (70%) and least popular answer being 'To maximise involvement and engagement of employees' (CIPD, 2007).

Ulrich (2018) explains the importance of being able to understand the business context of the HR function within different situations, and how to apply a HR perspective to ensure organisational objectives are met. Ulrich then explains the importance of creating a HR function that has the ability to look from the 'outside in', factoring in external changes and the importance of these on effecting internal objectives.

Essentially, the overriding objective is recruitment and retention, as these directly impact on other HR functions and organisational objectives.

IS THE HR FUNCTION EVOLVING?

- The remit of HR has already developed a great deal since the end of the 20th century where it had more of an administrative function
- Becoming increasingly more strategic
- A report by the CIPD in 2020 titled 'Next Gen HR' highlighted two key objectives for the future due to the changing nature of the function:
 1. Future proofing organisations – a more sustainable view
 2. Being insight-driven
 3. Become provocative leaders
- Highlighted a need to move away from short term performance to create a longer term sustainable performance with a greater understanding of business objectives.

(Personnel Today, 2010)

Over the last 30 years the modern HR function has evolved as a strategic player, with involvement in making decisions at the highest level, and assisting to guide and support organisations to meet strategic goals and objectives.

Previously HR professionals would be involved in mainly administrative duties, however the function is now a key player in management and implementing often complex procedures. Today, HR professionals are responsible for a wide range of activities such as succession planning, management development, payroll and accounts tasks, with a more strategic input, ensuring people with the right skills are recruited, and the skills of current employees are developed and exploited to add maximum organisational value, both in the short-term and long run (Personnel Today, 2002).

The recent evolvement of the HR profession can also be characterised in three 'waves', the 'Administrative wave', 'HR Practices' and 'HR Strategy'. The final wave refers to the HR strategy being aligned to business strategy which sets the criteria for HR practices. There are three levels of involvement between HR and business strategy. These include *implementation only*, *Input & implementation* and *full partnership role*. The latter sees the HR function become a key player in both creating

and executing business strategy, and is where most HR functions aspire to be (Dulebohn & Ulrich, 2015).

Professor Dave Ulrich encapsulates the necessity of the HR function as a workforce driver. He states that the HR function has “never been more necessary”, and that excellence is achieved by a focus on “learning, quality, teamwork and reengineering” and that these factors are largely driven by the organisations way of working, and the way that staff are treated. Professor Dave Ulrich stated that achieving organisational excellence must be the work of HR (Ulrich, 1998).

A report by the CIPD in 2020 titled ‘Next Gen HR’ highlighted three key objectives for the HR profession. These objectives are designed to ensure that HR professionals are adept in understanding business objectives, and are insight driven. There is a huge emphasis on ‘future-proofing’ organisations and looking at longer term performance rather than current issues (Personnel Today, 2010).

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

THE HR CONTRIBUTION



What causes change?

Change can be caused by:

1. Growth
2. Changes in the economy
3. Changes in strategic direction
4. Changes in technology
5. Pressure from competitors
6. Mergers & acquisitions
7. Pressure from customers
8. Changes in legislation
9. Government initiatives

Change Management Models

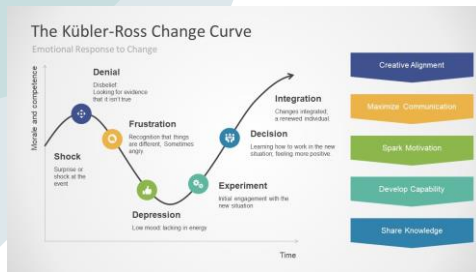
Kotters Change Management Theory
McKinsey 7 S Model
Kubler-Ross – 5 Stage Model
Bridges Transition Model
(Belyh, 2015).

Change is an ongoing commodity within the business context. Small changes happen regularly, and larger changes occur every couple of years. The HR function plays an important role in supporting and guiding organisations through periods of change, and is pivotal in supporting organisations through periods of change by supporting, advising and orchestrating change management activities.

Internal and external factors such as legislation, technology, and economy can drive the need for change. To overcome change, an organisation must first become resilient. Worryingly, in a recent Management Agenda by Roffey Park, only 6 out of 10 managers believed that their organisations were 'resilient'. Subsequently, lacking the ability to adapt to change (Roffey Park Institute, 2018).

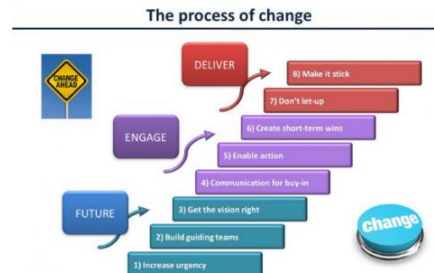
Change Management Models

Kubler-Ross Change Model



(Sketchbubble, 2020).

Kotter's Change Management Model



(Businessballs, 2020).

Change management models are effective in assisting organisations to organise solutions to change, plan for potential issues, and ensure that the team remain informed about the change and what it entails. There are 5 methods which can be used by organisations.

Kubler-Ross 5 stage model of change charts the effect of change on individual emotions. This model was later widely applied to change management practices, although originally designed to explain the grief cycle. The curve is now widely used to gauge how employee performance is going to be affected by change and allows organisations to manage the change management process more effectively with this understanding. The five stages are: Denial, Anger, Depression, Acceptance, Integration.

The change curve is particularly useful when managing team or individual change and can help HR professionals to understand what stage of the process an employee is at, and what additional support they may need. It can also help to guide an organisation through the change process by allowing them to time the implementation of various changes and structure the process for maximum practicality so that the workforce can become productive again after all changes have been implemented (University of

Exeter, 2020). Kubler-Ross' model is excellent in allowing an organisation to understand the potential impact of change at each step and enables managers to understand the effects of these changes on worker productivity. Unfortunately, individuals' reactions to change are not a one size fits all, and some individuals may experience these changes in a different order.

Kotter's change management model can also be used to assist with the implementation of change. Kotter's model focuses more on the practicality of implementing change, rather than the stages of grief that an employee or individual will go through as a result of change. Kotter's change model highlights 8 stages that organisations must go through in order to effectively manage change.

Kotter's model is an essential tool in assisting through periods of change. It allows the development of a robust change plan and would be good in situation which face opposition or negativity from employees. However, it requires a top down management approach therefore it is important to ensure that channels of communication are open and staff are able to provide feedback (Status net, 2020).

THE ROLE OF HR IN MANAGING CHANGE

Controllable Factors

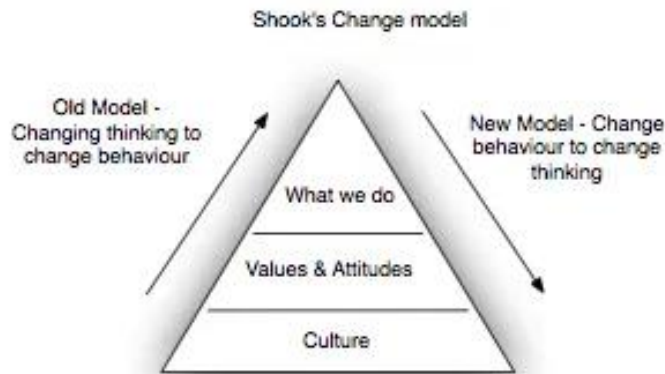
- Assisting with advising senior managers at the planning stage and studying the short term goals against the long term goals
- Analysing all potential impacts of change on the organisation and stakeholders
- Weighing stakeholder objectives against organisational objectives
- Advising on appropriate communication methods
- Evaluating the impact of change and reporting these to senior management - changes made as required

Uncontrollable factors – (stakeholder reactions)

- Awareness of potential reactions at planning stage and making allowances for these – understanding best management approach
- Supporting organisation, stakeholders and employees in coming to terms to the change by implementing different approaches to change
- Ensure management approaches are adaptable and HR personnel are present and approachable for discussions regarding the change (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).

Change management activities can be categorised into 'controllable' and 'uncontrollable' factors. The controllable factors refer to the processes that are followed, how objectives are met and how the change will be communicated, the practical, planned elements of change management. Alternatively, HR professionals are also responsible for managing the effects of change on an organisation and its employees, and these changes are often referred to as the 'uncontrollable' factors, as it is impossible to control the reactions to change which can vary depending on a whole number of factors although organisational culture plays a predominant part in determining these reactions and in determining the resilience of an organisation throughout these periods of change.

Shein's Culture Triangle



(AllanKellyAssociates, 2020).

Schein's model of organisational culture, also known as the 'Culture Triangle' assumes that culture consists of a series of layers, with the basic underlying assumptions of employees being the most ingrained belief and can otherwise be described as 'the way things get done around here'. It is important for HR professionals to understand these assumptions to be able to gauge the potential reaction to change management activities.

A positive culture can often determine the overall success of a company and will become more resilient, as in the case study of Nokia and Ericsson and their different reactions in relation to supply chain disruption which confirmed a positive culture determines organisation resilience and assists with change management activities (Roffey Park Institute, 2018).

Delivering the HR Function

THE HR CONTRIBUTION



How is HR Delivered?

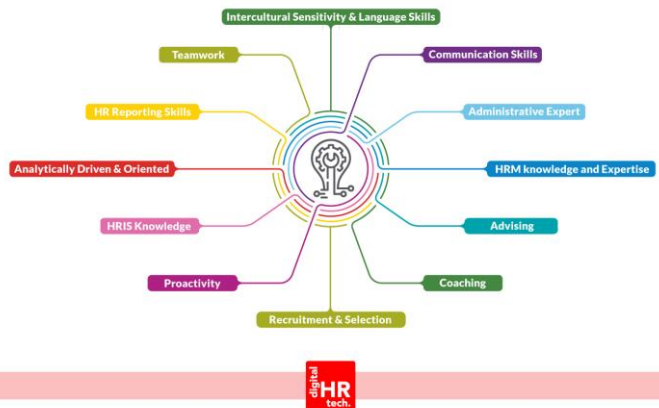
- HR delivery types vary depending on several factors such as the size and distribution of the organisation, as well as the industry that it operates within.
 - The HR function can be carried out by several different means, and the business case for each will largely depend on the above factors:
 - HR Generalist Model
 - Ulrich's 3 Legged Stool Model
 - Outsourcing
 - Self Service Model
- (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).

HR services must be deliverable across the workforce, known as the HR Service Delivery Model. Different models will be utilised depending on size, type and distribution of an organisation, however there are business cases for and against each. HR services can also be delivered in-house or elements can be outsourced. Outsourced functions include Payroll, Legal Advice/Case Management, with a third of SME's outsourcing these elements (CIPD, 2018).

The two most popular delivery methods are the 'Generalist Model' and 'Ulrich's Three-Legged Stool Model'.

HR Generalist Model

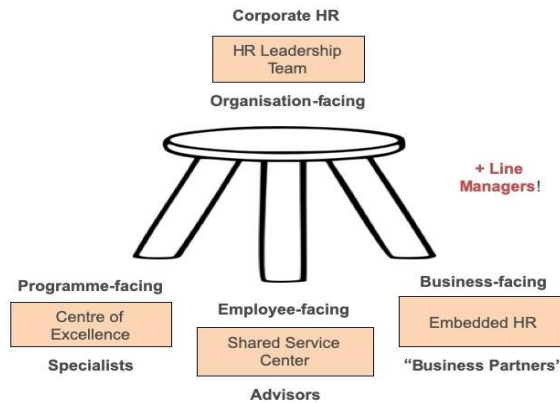
The 12 HR Skills Every HR Generalist Needs



(AIHRDigital, 2019).

HR generalists are responsible for delivering all aspects of HR across an organisation and may derive from all specialties of the HR Profession map. Generalists priorities are shaped by the demand and current situation of an organisation with fluctuating priorities (CIPD, 2020). This is a fairly simple structure, and HR departments may consist of several 'generalists' who carry out the HR function for the entire organisation. This structure relies on the strengths and knowledge of a few individuals and their overall understanding of the organisation.

Ulrich's Three Legged Stool Model



(The Digital Transformation People, 2019)

'Ulrich's Three Legged Stool' Model is a concept derived from Ulrich's original 'Four Factor Model' and stipulates that a three pronged approach is more beneficial and HR departments that utilise this model would typically consist of 'shared services', Strategic Business Partners and Centres of Excellence working together to deliver the overall HR function. This model can also be adapted, for example some organisations will outsource activities undertaken by the shared services function and others will fully implement the 'three-legged stool'. Its strength lies in its ability for organisations to create a structured HR department, however it can be costly and time consuming to set up and can have a longer 'pay back' period.

In 2019, HR Magazine reported that HR models are finally beginning to develop past Ulrich's model incorporating teams, communities and other networks in to their design making it more 'people centric' (Ingham, 2019).

A Collaborative Approach

THE HR CONTRIBUTION



HR Collaboration – Working with Line Managers

- HR guide's managers through complex staffing issues such as Disciplinarys and Grievances, Performance Management etc
- Devolvement of tasks varies greatly between organisations but there are general trends that show that training & development, training, pay etc remain with HR where as recruitment and work organisation mainly lies with managers.
- **Responsibility for employee relations:**
 - 14% HR Professionals
 - 78% General Managers

(Van Wanrooy, et al., 2011).

- It is important to educate managers on HR issues as effective management of HR issues by managers, means more time for HR managers to spend on strategic issues and planning!!

The relationship between HR services and managers is extremely important as managers often deliver frontline HR processes in collaboration with HR professionals. HR work with line managers to implement policies and procedures, advise on complex issues, performance related issues, employee engagement and the recruitment and retention of employees.

HR Managers & Line Managers should work collaboratively to ensure the consistent and effective management of employees. Policies, procedures and any relevant HR information should be passed to managers, and where appropriate, managers should be trained on HR issues and their effective implementation. In 2011, a Study by WERS found that 14% of HR professionals held responsibility for employee relations, in comparison to a staggering 78% of general managers who reported employee relations as part of their wider duties. Thus, highlighting the importance of the relationship between HR and senior managers in delivering the HR function (Van Wanrooy, et al., 2011).

A study on perceived Line Manager behaviour and perceived HRM practices in 2013 highlighted the effect of perceived behaviours on employee engagement which links to individual performance and therefore organisation performance (Alfes, et al.,

2013). This consolidates the importance of a collaborative relationship and the perceived behaviour of HR professionals on employee performance.

Ethical HR

.What is the business case for it?



What does ethics mean?

Ethical practice is the practice of utilising ethical values in organisational behaviour and applies to all aspects of organisational delivery. It can be regarded as discretionary decisions that organisations and employees make in different situations.

Some examples of ethical behaviour:

- Treating colleagues with dignity and respect
- Treating customers and other employees fairly
- Making payments on time
- Acknowledging responsibility to wider society (CIPD, 2019).

CIPD Code of Professional Conduct - 4 Principles

- Professional Competence and Behaviour
- Ethical Standards and Integrity
- Representative of the Profession
- Stewardship

These principles apply at every stage of HR career from entry level to professional membership (CIPD, 2020).

In a world where there is increasing pressure from internal and external sources, ethical conflicts can occur. However, it is important that HR practitioners are able to act ethically and challenge unethical practice by being familiar with the core values of their organisation and be able to make judgements based on different circumstances which may not always be 'best practice' (CIPD, 2017).

An ethical culture can be developed through the implementation of ethical values in the everyday operations of a business and through ensuring that organisational values are embedded in an ethical manner into the organisation. The organisations ethical climate is also important as it defines the social norms and values and defines what the 'right behaviour' is and defined by the organisations policies and procedures. It is important to embed these ethics in to the organisation and ensure that senior managers and all other employees are familiar with how to deliver the values of the organisation in an ethical manner throughout their work.

Ethical practices can limit the risk of legal or civil trouble. Unethical disciplinary procedures or discrimination may lead to employment law tribunals which could be costly and have an adverse effect on employer brand. Ethical practice also supports the reputation of a company as legal and civil case may be reported in local

newspapers, publications, on the internet. The importance of ethical HR practices is exhibited through its inclusion in the CIPD's Code of Professional Conduct which all members must uphold and maintain.

Why should HR be managed ethically?

Ethical behaviour assists an organisation to:

- 1) Develop and maintain positive relationships
- 2) Enhances the employer brand and reputation
- 3) And acts as a role model to all other employees
- 4) Ensures that integrity is demonstrated in decision making
- 5) Assists with the development of transparency and trust
- 6) Creates a positive ethical culture!

8 Ethical Lenses

The 8 ethical lenses are Fairness, Merit, Markets, Democracy, Wellbeing, Rights & Duties, Character and Handing Down.

Ensuring that a business understands the different needs and requirements of its employees and stakeholders, and being aware of the consequences of different courses of actions are crucial to ethical practices (CIPD, 2020).

The CIPD published a report in 2015 titled: 'Ethical decision making: 8 perspectives on workplace dilemmas'. The report discussed the different ethical perspectives that should be considered in order to make ethical decisions.

None of the lenses will provide the 'right way' to solve an issue, however they will provide professionals with the right questions that need answering, and food for thought to ensure that ethical decisions are made (CIPD, 2015).

Corporate Responsibility

Ensures long term ethical practice

Areas of corporate responsibility include:

- Workplace – rights & wellbeing of employees
- Market Place – impact of products or services
- Environment impact
- Community – positive & negative effects

Increased demand from regulatory bodies for information on corporate standards as a result of recent crises such as labour disasters, environmental crises, reckless lending and financial transactions (CIPD, 2020).

Corporate Responsibility (CR) ensures that an organisation acts ethically in the long run. Central to CR is the ability to add value to an organisational activities by ensuring they have a positive impact on society, the environment and local economy, supporting organisations to become robust and sustainable.

HR's role in CR is in the following areas:

Employment and People Management Practices

It is essential that HR professionals integrate CR in to core HR practices relating to employment and people management, whilst ensuring that all statutory regulations and legal requirements are met. It's important that employees are managed in a fair and just way, and that HR professionals go above and beyond to ensure fair treatment of staff, for example the fair treatment of whistle-blowers.

Supporting a broad CR strategy

HR should educate employees at all levels on CR, and embed these values in to people management policies ensuring that the organisations values, culture and

business become aligned.

Volunteering schemes

Engaging in community and volunteering schemes has been proven to boost engagement and can build cohesive and sustainable community relationships.

Many organisations have Corporate Responsibility Strategies, such as Tesco's who's CR strategy highlights some of their focal points to improve ethical practice, including minimising food waste across the UK, sourcing responsible specialists and reducing emissions (TESCO, 2016).

THE HR CONTRIBUTION

Evaluating Value



How is the HR contribution evaluated?

Balanced Score Card



(Latest Quality, 2020).

The HR function has historically been evaluated through the efficiency of its services, along with its ability to meet overall business objectives, however more recently, organisations rely on other measures such as internal SLA's and the HR departments influence on strategy. Tools such as HR Metrics, KPI's and balanced scorecards provide numerical feedback on the effectiveness of HR functions and qualitative and quantitative measures can also be used.

A balanced score card will list an agreed set of performance measures in a table format with the inclusion of a strategy map showing how the performance measures relate to the organisations strategic objectives. This method enables organisations to create a clear structure whilst ensuring that it is easy to analyse. Employees will be able to identify clear goals and objectives and to see how these have an impact on one another. It also allows for employees to identify how their particular goals fit in with the overall strategy (Jackson, 2020).

HR metrics refers to information on recruitment statistics, employee attrition rates, recruitment spend, disciplinary and grievance statistics etc. On their own, they are able to offer limited information, however they are useful in terms of benchmarking against other departments or previous years. They can help to quantify the amount

spent on each of these activities and can highlight problematic areas or trends. Metrics can also help an organisation to analyse if they are running effectively by looking at the cost spent on hiring and firing and learning and development (Berman, 2020).

Modern ways of evaluating the HR function include stakeholder analysis, service level agreements, and benchmarking to name but a few.

However, to understand how HR is 'adding value' to an organisation, it is important to understand what specific outcomes the organisation requires from the HR department and where the value can be added. For example, HR can add value to senior managers and employees by providing training, recruitment practices, and service and advice all of which can be measured easily. Stakeholders may require an efficient service, a positive reputation and leadership development (Today, 2012).

RESEARCH

POSITIVE ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES



HR and positive organisational outcomes

Various published research has confirmed the link between HR policies and procedures and positive organisational outcomes

(Marin-Garcia & Martinez Thomas, 2016) - AMO

Harris et al (2007) – Link between HRM practices on positive outcomes in a healthcare setting

Gest et al (2003)

Research suggests that there is a strong link between ethical HR policies and procedures and the positive effect of these on organisational performance. Research has been carried out to establish which 'HR formula' is the best approach with the best combination of policies and practices, and there are several theories:

Research conducted on 'best practice HRM' by John Purcell and colleagues at the University of Bath highlighted several factors that were key to the 'Bath Model of People and Performance', these included Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO). This study found that for teams and individuals to engage in effective discretionary behaviour, three conditions of AMO must apply:

Enough employees with required abilities

Motivation to apply these abilities

Opportunity for employees to engage in discretionary behaviour

This model provides a structured framework for assessing the relationship between HRM and performance, however the extent of its effectiveness is in doubt and believes that employees perform when they have the necessary abilities, motivation, and the opportunity to participate. The AMO model has been endorsed as it's

findings highlighted a link between HPWS and organisational performance (Marin-Garcia & Martinez Thomas, 2016). However it is fairly limited in its reliability. Results show variability in research approaches and considered variables and very little research has been conducted to corroborate the AMO model and it would benefit from being studied in a systematic way to verify its veracity. A thorough understanding of the model could lead to a better understanding of the problems that organizations face when implementing human resource practices.

Working in a private SME healthcare setting, I often see the effect of HR on positive organisational outcomes. In support of this, the Journal of Health Organization and Management published a research report by Harris, et al., (2007) confirming that a relationship had been found between a “range of HRM practices, policies, systems and outcomes”. The report also highlighted that increased autonomy for healthcare organisations due to the formation of foundation trusts meant that HR systems were becoming more specific and tailored to that particular area or group of employees meaning that it was easier for organisational objectives to be met. This also associates with the AMO model, in its belief that there must be opportunity for employees to engage in discretionary behaviour. In support of this, an analysis indicated that HPWPs have the ability to increase performance by 20 percent. There are limitations to this research. They include a relatively small sample size, and the use of HR Directors as respondents as well as a cross-sectional research design. There was also no evidence of causality.

In contrast to the two studies above, Guest et al (2003) concluded that the results linking HRM to positive organisational outcomes were ‘mixed’ and were ‘predominantly negative’. His research concluded a link between HR practices and lower labour turnover, however showed no apparent link between effects of HR practices and productivity, which is in contract to the AMO model. Over all Guests study declared that there were no obvious links between greater implication of HRM on organisational performance (Marchington, et al., 2016).

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