

An approach to implementing dedicated HRM practices at CCEM



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Executive summary

The China Research Center for Emergency Management of Wuhan University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as CCEM) is an educational and research-oriented public sector organization. Under the influence of power culture, HRM work is usually carried out directly by the leader of the organization. However, this non-professional division of labor has led to a series of problems for the organization and members, and it is time for the situation to change. By reference to academic sources and the specific circumstances of the organization, the present report analyses the causes, impact and changes to this division of labour.

This division of labor for HRM work by the leader was born out of the organization's culture of power. Through the "formal and informal team" theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the satisfaction of the organizational and member needs of CCEM is evaluated, and it is found that this division of labor cannot meet the needs of the organization and members well.

In terms of how to conduct HRM practices, the HR value chain framework can be used to establish CCEM's own dedicated HRM department, and psychological contract theory can be used to help meet the needs of organizational members to avoid the negative effects of power culture. Finally, three pieces of advice:

- **Setting up a dedicated HRM department starts with the appointment of an HRM specialist, and the effect can be referred to Becker's linking HRM and performance model.**
- **Strengthen and consolidate the psychological contract.**
- **Use digital tools to help with HRM efforts.**

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Introduction

The China Research Center for Emergency Management of Wuhan University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as CCEM) was established in 2018 under the leadership of Professor Yinghua Song. As a research institute under Wuhan University of Technology (and a public sector organization), CCEM aims to conduct research in the field of public safety and emergency management, as well as training master's and doctoral students. At present, the leader of CCEM is Professor Song, and under his leadership, CCEM is conducting research on more than a dozen projects such as "personnel evacuation" and "epidemic emergency management".

In the past, the HRM work of CCEM was carried out by Professor Song himself, but with the increase of members in CCEM, this management model needs to be improved. Therefore, CCEM members were asked to write a report analyzing the causes, drawbacks, and benefits of CCEM's current HRM work, providing a path to improve HRM work, and making corresponding recommendations.

1. Organisational overview

The China Research Center for Emergency Management of Wuhan University of Technology is an educational and research-oriented public sector organization located in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. The main objectives of this organization are to conduct research in public safety and emergency management, as well as to train master's and doctoral students. Now there are more than 20 faculty members and more than 100 students in CCEM, which means CCEM is a small organization. It is important to understand this context, as it means that CCEM members not only carry out academic work, but also have certain organizational responsibilities. This also means that there is no dedicated human resources department in this organization, but that faculty members work on a part-time basis for human resource management. The leader of the organization usually makes personnel transfers directly and occasionally delegates other faculty members to human resources management. It can be seen that the human resources department is not paid attention to in CCEM, which also leads to a series of problems.

2. Why CCEM needs a dedicated HRM department

2.1 The power culture of CCEM

According to Handy's (2007) description of organizational culture, power culture usually arises in small organizations. An organization's culture, decision-making, and external communication depend on a central person, a leader.

Just as in CCEM, the leader plays one of the biggest roles, in addition to focusing on the overall strategy of the organization, he is also actively involved in human resource management such as recruitment and personnel transfers. This division of labor stems from the process of formation and development of CCEM, as the current leader of CCEM was one of the original founders of the organization. Power culture, as an early organizational culture, is the main reason for this division of labor.

The advantage of this is that it can make decisions quickly and has greater flexibility in personnel management to respond to external changes and risks. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the organization's office style changed from offline to online, the leader's timely adjustment to the organization's division of labor ensured CCEM's efficiency during the lockdown.

But the disadvantages of this are also obvious, under Power Culture, human resource management without systems and professional departments is often based on the personal preference of the leader. This is neither a soft nor a hard approach to human resource management, i.e. people are neither seen as "resources worthy of training and development" nor as "costs to be minimized" (Truss, 1999). This is exactly where CCEM needs to improve in human resource management.

2.2 Impact of the absence of the HRM department on CCEM

The absence of systems and professional personnel departments has had several effects on the effectiveness of the organization: it does not meet the needs of the organization, it does not meet the needs of its members, and it runs inefficiently.

Armstrong (2023) classifies teams in an organization into two categories, "formal teams" and "informal teams" when elaborating on organizational behavior. The former is created by an organization to meet certain goals, with systematic management and guidance; The latter, on the other hand, is created by people in the organization who have a certain affinity for each other. CCEM's teams prefer the latter, where the existence of the team depends on the leader's connection with its members. The lack of HRM department left CCEM's team members with a lack of systematic management and guidance. This is not beneficial for meeting the needs of the organization, because informal teams are better able to meet the needs of members than the needs of the organization than formal teams.

However, even the needs of members cannot be well met in CCEM, an organization with power culture. Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be used to assess the extent to which members' needs are met.

Figure 1



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

(Mcleod, 2023)

Although for some, the hierarchy of needs of maslow is not accurate (Kremer & Hammond, 2013). But this is sufficient for a brief analysis of the satisfaction of the needs of the members of the organization. In CCEM, the leader can well reach the need at the top of the pyramid, that is, the realization of self-worth, because it is at the center of the entire power structure, and the entire organization is used for it. But for others in the organization, it is often only possible to meet "love and belonging" or even only "security needs". Strong

power culture makes the respect and freedom of non-leader members a luxury, and the satisfaction of "love and belonging" depends on how well members maintain a good relationship with the leader, otherwise they will be excluded from the team.

As for the impact of the lack of HRM on organizational efficiency. When discussing the strategic role of HR, John Boudreau and Ed Lawler note that "talent and human resource management are becoming increasingly important determinants of organizational efficiency" (CIPD, 2015). The absence of institutions and specialized human resources inevitably leads to a lack of organizational efficiency. This inefficiency comes from unclear division of labor, lack of incentives, and evaluation systems.

2.3 Benefits of a dedicated HRM department for CCEM

For CCEM, the system should be set and a dedicated HRM department should be formed. However, given that CCEM will not expand in size in the short term, the formation of the human resources management department can start with the appointment of a human resource manager with specialized knowledge. The benefits of this can be considered in several ways.

For the organization itself, as mentioned earlier, the appointment of dedicated human resources management personnel can improve the current situation of unclear human resources management responsibilities and bring about an increase in organizational efficiency.

For the leader of CCEM, a human resource manager with professional skills can free him from the complexity of human resource management and focus more on achieving the organization's strategy; For other CCEM employees, professional human resource managers can better avoid the negative effects of power culture, better meet their own needs and improve labor efficiency.

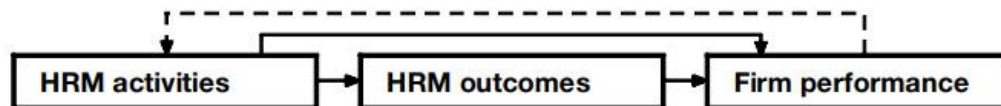
For other CCEM stakeholders, the establishment of the system and the appointment of dedicated human resource management personnel may increase expenses in the short term, but the completion of the system, the clear division of labor and the improvement of labor efficiency can bring long-term benefits. After all, professional human resource management skills are a necessary and insufficient condition for better business performance (Becker. et al., 1997).

3. HRM Practice: An Approach to Establishing an HRM Department at CCEM

3.1 HR value chain

An HR value chain model can be used to help CCEM build its dedicated HRM department.

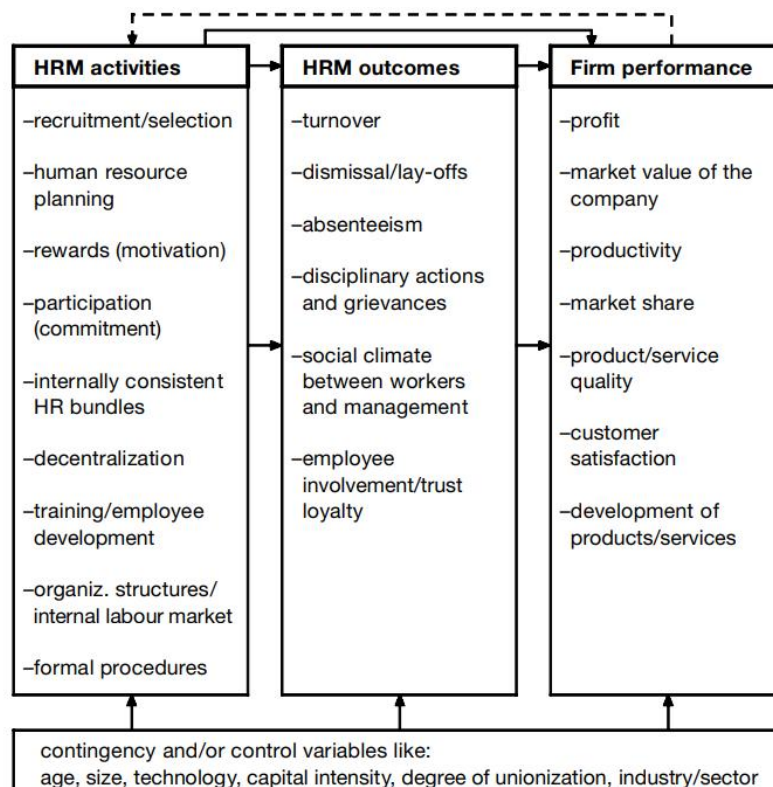
Figure 2



(Paauwe & Richardson, 1997)

The framework was proposed by Paauwe and Richardson to outline the relationship between general HRM activities and company performance. In a more figurative model of the framework, more detailed content is shown.

Figure 3



(Paauwe, 1996)

According to this framework, CCEM's HRM personnel should be empowered to recruit, reward, train employees, etc., and the focus of these activities should slowly shift from the leader to HRM personnel. But this does not mean that the status of CCEM's leader disappears, but allows the leader to focus on some more important things, such as the adjustment of personnel structure, the implementation of strategy, etc. This initiative is a good way to adjust the division of labor among CCEM members to better meet the needs of the organization. Just as a good HRM value chain not only has a direct financial impact, it also allows members to create more value (Pickles & Watts, 1999). Similarly, professional HRM personnel can enrich the diversity of employee structure compared to non-professional personnel. While this can be a problem, proper management can increase diversity productivity (Saxena, 2014).

3.2 psychological contract

While meeting the needs of the organization, the needs of the members of the organization also need to be taken into account. In order to avoid the negative effects of power culture, in addition to traditional HRM activities, HRM personnel should also pay attention to the psychological contract.

The concept of "psychological contract" emerged in the early 60s of the 20th century to refer to the subjective expectations, beliefs and obligations perceived by employers and employees, and this conceptual research mainly focuses on the perspective of employees and is central to understanding employment relationships (CIPD, 2019).

Unlike written employment contracts in law, psychological contracts are often used to describe an employee's uncertain views and expectations. In general, a psychological contract may include the following aspects of the employment relationship:

- Job security
- Career prospects
- Training and development
- Perceived fairness of pay and benefits
- Manager support
- Employer's reputation and impact on the society.

Obviously, the aspects covered by the psychological contract overlap considerably with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This means that when HRM activities meet the psychological contract, they can also meet the needs of members of the organization such as "security needs" and "love and belonging".

However, the concept of a psychological contract is used to explain behavior, by considering the extent to which employees believe their employer is honoring the commitments they believe their employer has made to them. Just like in any relationship, if commitments are kept, satisfaction and a desire to continue the relationship can be the result. On the other hand, if the commitment is broken, negative emotions and the urge to withdraw may follow (Conway & Briner, 2006). This means that CCEM's HRM staff needs to conduct regular surveys and inquiries and take action to meet the commitments in the hearts of members to ensure the validity of the psychological contract.

4. Conclusions

As a small public sector organization, CCEM's leader has taken on the bulk of HRM's work in the past. To some extent, this division of labor has led to the fact that the needs of the organization and members cannot be well met. Therefore, a dedicated HRM department needs to be established and gradually undertaken to implement HRM activities, so that the needs of the organization and members can be further met. In this process, in order to avoid the negative effects of CCEM's power culture, HRM personnel also need to pay more attention to the effectiveness of the psychological contract.

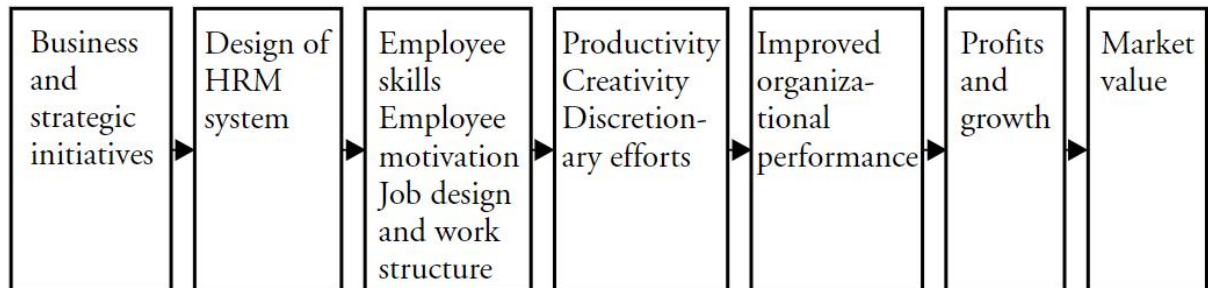
5. Recommendations

5.1 Appoint an HRM Commissioner

The first recommendation was the appointment of an HRM commissioner. Given the small size of CCEM, the establishment of a dedicated HRM department can begin with the appointment of an HRM specialist. This commissioner may be recruited or appointed to an existing staff member on a part-time basis. Regardless of the origin of this HRM person, it needs to be specialized in HRM. By implementing an HR strategy, it positively influences the behavioral outcomes of members of the organization, which in turn positively affects financial outcomes and return on investment (Chanda & Shen, 2009).

This effect can be referenced in Becker's model of linking HRM and performance.

Figure 4



(Becker, 1996)

However, consider that CCEM is a public sector organization for research and teaching purposes. The direct effects of HRM activities may not be directly visible from the financial results, but can be assessed in terms of shortened research cycles.

Another goal is to reduce the disruption of the power culture to organizational change – organizations with power culture tend to resist change, so changing on a small scale would be an approach.

5.2 Consolidate and strengthen the psychological contract

Whereas, the psychological contract is essential for people's performance and engagement at work.

Successful management of employee expectations requires HRM personnel to be invested in a broad range of organizational strategies, as well as to design and implement human resource management and development practices that support it.

This means HRM personnel need to:

- Maintain employer branding.
- Communicate with employees.
- Provide learning and professional development.
- Adjust management style.
- Conduct expectation management.
- Measure employee attitudes.

By adopting these methods, the psychological contract between employees and employers is consolidated and strengthened.

In CCEM, HRM personnel should focus on communicating with employees,

adjusting management methods, and measuring employee attitudes to meet employees' needs. Given the small size of CCEM, it is feasible for HRM personnel to communicate regularly with all employees or provide periodic questionnaires.

5.3 Adopt digital tools for human resources management

Considering that the HRM staff at CCEM may be part-time, and the current level of digital equipment development, digital tools can be used to help with HRM work.

Currently, digital HR management strategies have been moderately adopted throughout the HR value chain (Chapano, 2022). Although there are human, organizational, technical and environmental challenges in the specific practice process, these challenges have not hindered the practice of digital HRM (Chapano, 2023). AI and digital learning are already widely used in HRM efforts in many organizations (PwC, 2017).

Therefore, already mature digital tools can be used to help HRM work. Including databases, data analytics, artificial intelligence, etc. For example, by collecting the daily working hours of employees, the working conditions of employees are judged, so as to facilitate HRM personnel to intervene. The advantage of this is that the workload of HRM personnel can be reduced, and HRM personnel can be more accurately referenced through data. But the downside of doing so should also be noted, as excessive reliance on numbers and technology can foster an "always on" culture where employees are always ready to respond to leadership requests (Hogg, 2019). Especially in CCEM, which has a power culture, such situations should be avoided by HRM personnel. The privacy and legal issues of individuals in the adoption of digital tools should also be a concern.

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