

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aims and design

The primary aim of this book is to provide a concise, current and jargon-free guide to management and business students whose interests span a range of management disciplines, together with a range of levels of study: for example, from undergraduate to graduate; from in-company learning and development interventions to participation in MBA programmes. As a secondary aim, this book is designed to inform the decision-making of management practitioners whose activities encompass both major and minor degrees of HRM responsibility and (being optimistic) opportunity.

In line with other Routledge 'Key Concepts' titles, this book is designed primarily to serve as a source of reference and support for students whose focus is on understanding more about the what, why and how of HRM across a range of national, industrial and organisational contexts. Assuming that these students of management seek eventually to become effective practitioners of management, our aim is to provide a reference book in support of further study in the field of HRM generally and in relation to selected key concepts in particular. The references and suggested further reading lists attached to each concept essay offer an accessible entry point to this process of more focused self-study and enquiry. Also in line with other titles in the Routledge 'Key Concepts' series, the concepts in this book are arranged alphabetically and thus can be referenced easily. As part of this 'how to use this book' guidance there is (below) a section that usefully reconfigures the list of alphabetically listed concepts into the four main areas of HRM plus a section on emerging issues in HRM, each with its list of alphabetical concepts. This feature allows readers to interpret HRM in terms of its main areas of strategic practice.

Within each concept essay, key concepts (and their derivatives) discussed elsewhere in the book are highlighted in **bold**. As a further

source of cross-reference and guidance, each concept entry has a *see also* section designed to encourage readers to cross-refer systematically between individual concepts and thereby develop a holistic picture of current and emerging trends in HRM research and practice. In terms of style, where HRM terminology usage differs – for example, between standard styles of British and American English (e.g. ‘compensation’ for ‘reward’) – these differences are discussed in each concept essay and highlighted again in the cross-referencing ‘see also’ rubric.

Concept selection

In term of why the particular entries are used, this was an iterative exercise. No list can ever be complete nor satisfy everyone’s own personal biases, taste or fashion. We are grateful to the many HRM scholars and practitioners, along with students of HRM, who have commented on earlier drafts of this book. Of course, we can all add more concepts and claim that concept ‘x’ is missing and is critical to the field. Yet, we are restricted to 50 concepts and ‘x’ would mean removing which concept from the 50 exactly? For those who radically disagree with our content we simply suggest they do their own book. We originally compiled a long list of possible entries and then sent them to colleagues and took advice from authors in the field. In terms of the background of the book, this is mixed, with numerous experts and authors from, and based in, the UK, USA, Australia and China.

Accommodating a variety of learning styles

Regardless of their individual provenance, we assume that readers will use this book according to their own preferred styles of reading and learning. In this introductory discussion we offer some brief and general guidelines about how to use this book as a source of reference for further studies and as a source of guidance towards improved HRM practice.

As implied already in respect to linking HRM to conceptualisations and experiences of people management, HRM is one aspect of management activity that all working people have direct experience of: we are all consumers of HRM. Indeed, negative experiences of HRM commonly act as a spur persuading working people to engage in further study and strive after higher professional qualifications. It also ‘colours’ people’s views and perspectives of HRM.

At various stages in our life most of us undergo some experience of being employed; and at significant stages in our life experience other people's attempts to 'manage' us. If, for example, you are currently enrolled at a university, you are likely to be combining roles of client, student and member of a particular organisation as you experience other people's attempts to 'manage' you, your course of studies and, in relation to the work you produce, your 'performance'.

By cross-referring between concepts, you will notice that the contributors to this book express different styles and differing perspectives on key issues. This is valid, as there is no one 'correct' answer in discussions of HRM – even the concept of **best practice** in HRM is contentious (cf. Rowley & Poon, 2008) as are its individual practices, such as **performance management** (cf. Rowley & Yang, 2008). Furthermore, you will note that each contributor brings to bear perspectives honed by experiences across business and national contexts for HRM. Indeed, our intention has been to bring together contributors whose views and experiences might reflect in aggregate those of the people likely to read and work with this book: in other words, people like you.

HRM research approaches

There are several tried and tested methodological bases for adopting such an approach. For example, some readers might use this book in support of a 'researcher as participant observer' approach, systematically recording how HRM decisions appear to be made in an organisation or context for work that they are contributing to directly. Alternatively, there is the 'observer as participant' approach, where readers might use this book to inform their reflection on how HRM decisions appear to have been made in an organisation of which they have no direct experience – except, perhaps, as members of case study discussion groups. Readers can find detailed guidance in developing these approaches in a wide range of books focusing on business research methods, several of which appear in the various lists of referents presented at various stages in this book. Of particular relevance here is the section of the book where there is a list of HRM-related open-access websites together with selected other resources such as international HRM and business journals. Many of these also appear in the *suggested further reading* sections that appear at the end of each concept entry in the book.

Key HRM areas and concepts

As explained above, underlying the alphabetical listing of concepts in this book is a structure of both established and emerging HRM research. This structure assumes that, across organisations and business sectors, one way to organise thinking around the necessary or preferred series of strategic HRM decisions and interventions is to identify and locate key functions or strategic decision domains. Thus, the interpretation of the HRM concept developed in this book assumes four core domains of HRM activity – domains that commonly appear in textbooks and programmes of professional development and qualification for HRM specialists. These four domains are: *employee resourcing* (e.g. decisions relevant to **recruitment** and **selection**); *employee rewards* (e.g. decisions about pay and promotions); *employee development* (e.g. decisions to upgrade skill and competence levels of individuals and **teams**); and *employee relations*: the perceptions, processes and institutions in the relationship between employee and employer. In order to reinforce the future orientation of this book, we have chosen to work with an additional section that connects across these four domains and reflects the increasing globalisation of business and thereby of HRM theory and practice: *emerging issues in HRM*.

Hence, implicit within the list of 50 concepts that form the core of this book is a pattern of organisational activity that describes four main areas of HRM practice. Readers might choose thus, to focus on one particular core HRM function. To guide and support this approach, the 50 concepts listed in this book might be reordered and read as follows:

Employee resourcing

These concepts explain (among other key issues) how people might come to be employed as members of staff in organisations and how HR managers can resource business strategies efficiently. The following list identifies the concepts in this category:

- assessment
- contracts of employment
- discrimination
- human resource planning
- induction
- job planning
- organisational exit

- recruitment
- resourcing
- retention
- selection
- talent management.

Employee rewards

These concepts explain (among other key issues) how and why people might choose to remain employed in a particular organisation and how managers can attract, retain, motivate and reward employees fairly and effectively. The concepts listed separately in this category are:

- compensation strategies
- executive rewards
- expatriate pay
- information systems
- labour markets
- motivation and rewards
- non-monetary rewards
- pensions and other benefits
- performance and rewards
- valuing work.

Employee development

These concepts explain (among other key issues) how employees might seek to add value to themselves and to their organisations and how managers might obtain, develop and maintain the skills their organisation needs immediately and in the future. The concepts to be read in conjunction in order to understand this set of HRM interventions better are:

- development
- career development
- cross-cultural training
- cultural and emotional intelligence
- knowledge management
- leadership development
- models of HRM
- organisational learning

- performance management
- teams
- training and development.

Employee relations

These concepts explain (among other key issues) perspectives and how both managers and employees might negotiate and otherwise manage the employment relationship which, in many ways, represent the core of how we all experience employment and of being managed as a ‘human resource’. The concepts that help us understand this experience are:

- collective bargaining
- conflict management
- dispute settlement
- employment relations
- employee involvement and participation
- frames of reference
- grievance and discipline
- health and safety
- legal aspects
- management styles
- psychological contract
- trade unions.

Emerging issues

These concepts examine and explain some of the emerging issues in HRM. As highlighted in the introductory discussion above, as a concept HRM is itself a work in progress. Concepts in this book that serve to illustrate this work are:

- best practice
- diversity management
- international HRM
- outsourcing
- strategic HRM.

These five concepts in particular illustrate how interpretations of HRM are shifting in response to increasingly turbulent international and global business environments.