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MANAGING TALENT BECOMES ONE'S EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY: THE CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (IHRM) IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANY (MNC). A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The In recent years, the challenges of international human resource management (IHRM) are being increased and give major impacts on the performance of multinational company (MNC). It is because the effectiveness of multinational company depends on the ability of the company itself to compete in international or global arena in cross-border recruitment by understanding the right approach and awareness besides familiarize with country-specific legal requirements and traditions in order to be success in selection process on global basis. MNC companies must be able to cope with the IHRM challenges facing by them. This paper brings out three challenges facing by most of the multinational companies globally. Firstly, this paper discusses the challenges of identifying talent on global basis. Besides, this paper also clarifies the challenges of developing talent on global basis and lastly discussing about the challenges of managing teams on global basis.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has been the springboard for many multinational corporations by steering them to move aggressively into the international markets. As more trade barriers and red tapes are being removed across the globe, it has made it much easier for these multinational corporations to explore newer global markets primarily in emerging markets. The rapid growth and development of global companies nowadays bring some new challenges in the managing of multinational companies. Because of the internationalization, companies must increasingly be managed globally and tackled with huge numbers of global challenges. According to Hoffman and Schiniederjans (2002) some of the global challenges are:

- Multinationals have to deal with issues like politics, economical, legality, social and cultural backgrounds
- Interactions between employees from headquarters and host countries becomes very challenging due to variations in social and economic conditions

- Geographical and cultural variance alongside with differences in business practices further complicates communication between headquarters and affiliates.
- Conducting analysis for present and future competition becomes more complicated due to the core differences in business practices and industrial structure.
- The level of key information pertaining to economic, marketing and other required information which are crucial for planning varies in depth and availability and reliability amongst countries.

Those challenges explaining above are the overall challenges that have to be facing by all the companies who involve in global business environment. However, specifically in the perspective of international human resource management (IHRM), multinational companies are facing some challenges regarding human resource management issues such as international staffing policy, selection of international managers, performance appraisal of international managers and training employees for international assignments. According to Dressler (2000) dealing with global HR challenges required companies to scramble to create Human resources policies and procedures just for handling global

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assignments. Based on the explanation of Dressler, multinationals companies have to address issues such as:

Replication of IHRM practices: Multinational Corporation do experience difficulties in the global scene. One of the most common problems faced is replication of IHRM practices. Johnason (2009) mentioned this has occurred largely due to the fact that Multinational Corporations lack foresight and planning capabilities with regards to the complexity of IHRM. Multinationals must try to find a solution whereby it enables them to integrate the host country practices and customs into their existing IHRM strategy. Based on the studies by Linder (2009), Multinational corporations that have been able to diligently and successfully will certainly achieve a competitive advantage.

Candidate identifying, assessing, and selecting employees: Apart from the candidates need to possess business and technical skills for the specific jobs, multinationals are also face by challenges in hiring candidates that has the ability and capability to adopt onto different cultures, environment and social backgrounds.

Cost estimations: Multinational corporations usually prefer to send employees from the headquarters for overseas assignments especially employees who have exceptional skills and ability to adapt in different environments. However, the cost of sending an employee away on International assignments could cost triple the employees basic salary package which in turn is too costly for the organization. Therefore, budgeting processes must include provisions that allow considerations of using an expatriate.

Assignment letters: Details of the assignee's job description and remuneration package have to be presented in great detail, agreeable to both employer and employees and communicated formally in the assignment letter in a manner that is clearly understood by all parties concerned.

Compensation, benefits, and tax programs: Coming up with IHRM policies and strategies that have a common approach to international pay structure that includes destination pay and home based plus supplement payments.

Relocation assistance: An employee on international assignment will require assistance from their employers for matters such as vehicle and residence maintenance, shipment fee, storage of household appliance and etc.

Family support: Employee's on international duties will need assistance for their families for matters like educational assistance for their children, language training to enable adaptability and cultural orientation programs.

International human resource management (IHRM) is a key tool designed to ensure that organizations are able to compete successfully across the globe. Armstrong (2001) explains in detail that International Human Resources Management (IHRM) as a method of hiring and creating people in International based companies that operate across the globe. It also states that IHRM is a process which works beyond International boundaries to develop and implement policies, practices, remuneration strategy and managing careers for an international workforce. IHRM also covers employees from parent company working as expatriates on long and short term

assignments, home country employees and third country nationals that are employed by the MNC but they are not parent company employees. The focal point of this study will focus on challenges brought by International human resource management faced by multinational corporations.

Challenges

Identifying Talent on Global Basis

There is always a common saying that you hire the people but don't hire the organization. When it comes to identifying talent at an international level, an organization must do its out must best because it ensures the success of the organization. Today, the task of identifying talent on an International level has become a challenge which Multinational Corporations have to deal with. Every multinational corporation has to formulate a sustainable approach to identify candidates on an international level. Armstrong (2001) explained that there are three approaches to identifying employees which Multinational corporations could use in the International scene. The first of this approach is whereby the organization concerned could choose to fill all vacancies with employees from the parent country. This approach is usually used during the infancy stage of internationalization. As these group of employees would be able to transfer knowledge gained onto the new affiliate. However, these groups of employees may face difficulties in adapting to new cultures and ne business practices. Second approach is whereby the MNC appoints home country employees to manage all the subsidiaries. This approach will help overcome some of the difficulties highlighted above but problems may still arise in the relationship as the country managers still remain in total control over the locals. These situations may arise due to the cultural and language differences which eventually could cause the organization being less competitive. Third and final approach is whereby the MNC appoint the most qualified individual for the job regardless of their ethnicity, country of origin or their cultural background. This will assist the MNC to develop a truly international manager. This move could be very difficult to implement as it needs centralized control. According to Hutching (2000) the set of skills required for employment in the International scene include:

An open mind

When it comes to running multinational effectively requires employees to stop making assumptions. The person should also be non-judge mental and possess knowledge to handle new situations and concepts. The key success is the ability to adopt to the local business practices and environment in the countries they operate. Briscoe and Schuler (2004) have highlighted some core criteria which enable to select the suitable international assignee. This includes the desire to undertake foreign assignment and their willingness to undertake the assignments freely out of their own free will. Candidates with these attitudes will eventually find a way to adapt to local practices and cultures thus eliminating some key problems.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is another challenge that most multinational corporations face in the global scenario. Due to the involvement of various cultures in a multinational corporation,

it would definitely lead to ethnocentrism. According to Bizumic (2014) ethnocentrism is where one culture characterizes another culture based upon its own self beliefs. This most often leads towards division of cultures or employee instead of uniting work force. Linder (2009) further claims that ethnocentrism has been proven to be the core reason for division amongst ethnics, religions and races. Ethnocentric persons believe that they are far better than other individuals and self-belief that they are superior than the other.

Cross-cultural and language skills

As mentioned by Hutchings (2000) any MNC should expect everyone to be a polyglot, but the ability to converse in one foreign language is usually set as criteria which a candidate is evaluated for global positions in MNC. The experience gained working in a language that is different from their native language would provide the employee with a better ability to help deal with others who are not native speakers of English. Additionally, learning a second language is considered to be a very effective way of learning and understanding the cultural difference if not handled properly it could jeopardize a potential business opportunity. Briscoe and Schuler (2004) unanimously agree that cultural and language skills requirements are a key important when it comes to employee selection. Adapting to new culture and gaining technical ability is the two important in determining the success of the organization's international assignment. When an individual is able to adjust to the new surrounding will be able to deliver better utilizing their skills and knowledge. Zwielski (2009), emphasize that in order for a candidate to adapt themselves onto a new job environment and perform well solely depends on their ability to observe cultural variance such as adapting to various time zones, differences in punctuality and ability to adapt to work environment. Sparrow *et al.* (2004) shared their opinion that doing global business is about establishing methods to unite individuals from different cultures and background to work together as a team. Chevrier (2009) there is always a huge necessity for international assignees to have a degree of understanding on local cultures in order to manage effectively. Especially for managers involved in handling the day to day operations and managing employees from cross cultural backgrounds. Javidan *et al.* (2006) explains that no one organization is able to guarantee that one acceptable business practice in one country will be workable in another.

Research or learning skills

The amount of knowledge required in order to operate a business on an international level is extremely huge that is impossible to expect any individual to know the right answer. Hutchings (2000) points out the crucial factor to this is having the capability to identify exactly where to search for answers and the ability to research a problem when it arises. The way forward of finding this is by looking at areas of special skills or mastery of a skill by the candidate in their graduate studies.

The fundamentals

According to Briscoe and Schuler (2004), some of the key selection criteria to be observed when it comes to identifying international candidates must be based on their ability to perform the job instead of technical expertise which many multinationals prefer.

This means that identify in candidates based on the ability to perform task as per requirement. Additional criteria's that can be used may include experience, education qualification and reference from previous assignments. However, Hutchings (2000) comments that based on the organization's area of business, employees must possess some basic skills to undertake international assignments. Global employees must have basic understanding on the related business and must know at least how the business needs to be managed and their specific requirements. As the definition of work continues to evolve, the range of skills that employees need have not necessarily been provided by traditional educational systems. In the 2013 EIU/SHRM Foundation survey, executives reported that the current disconnect between the skills fostered by education and those they actually need will represent a very considerable obstacle in the coming years. This makes it difficult for HR to assess applicants' qualifications properly. To complicate matters further, there is lack of standardization in education, especially in a global context. As businesses expand and hire beyond borders, the need for HR to scrutinize job qualifications carefully becomes ever more important. Major disparities exist between various regions and institutions in individual countries, as well as between countries. The ability to understand these differences will enable HR to make more informed hiring decisions. Through collaboration with other functions of the organization, HR can increase its understanding of qualifications and skill sets to ensure that hired employees are capable of executing their functions.

Developing Talent on Global Basis

International employee development is concerned with enabling home, parent and third country nationals to become more effective in their present job in an overseas location. It also aims to develop the competences required to progress either within the local organization or internationally and, overall to ensure that the organization has the number and quality of executives it is likely to need to manage multi-country or global operations the future. Briscoe and Schuler (2004) mentioned that organization operates in the global arena confront a number of special problems related to the training and development of their global workforces and managers. Therefore, that's the reason organizations have to prepare themselves to develop talent on global basis. According to Armstrong (2001) there are a number of significantly different factors to be taken into consideration in global development, that is:

- Cultural diversity factors and the impact of different legal, political, social and value system;
- The extent to which training should be left to local initiatives or centrally controlled;
- The specific competencies by international executives;

Cultural factors

Jackson (2002) argues that cultural differences are significant and multinational companies should take into account in their communication and interaction across nations. Jackson and Parry (2011, p.71) referred to Hofstede's definition of culture as: 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguished the members of one group or category from another'. Working in a multinational environment, employees can have different cultural backgrounds and it could be quite challenging to have the abilities to recruit them, select them

and retain them. This could be the difference between an organization having that talent, or the competitors benefiting from it. Cultural differences exist in multinational companies and it is extremely important to be aware of them in all stages.

Armstrong (2001) point out the factors which will affect how training is delivered in different in different countries or internationally, that are:

- Legal – local legal requirements relating to the provision of training opportunities without discriminating on the basis of race, sex or religion;
- Political – the national training and education framework, including support for youth and vocational training and further education facilities;
- Social – national approaches to learning and training, including the relative importance attached to on-the-job and off-the-job training, the significance of further education, graduate and post graduate qualifications;
- Value systems – the cultural factors which influence how people learn.

to manage HR effectively and to find managers who can manage across cultures. This has increasingly become a key factor in the success and failure of international business (Black *et al.*, 1999). It will be necessary to decide on what particular competences international managers within multinational may require. Armstrong (2001) defined competence as an essentially fundamental capabilities needed to do a job well. Many of these competences will be similar to those required by any effective manager in the organization, but a specific competence which may be required by international managers includes:

- Building and leading international teams;
- Cultural sensitivity – capable of understanding the culture of the country in which they are located and adapting their behavior to avoid conflicts with that culture and the values of the people with whom they work;
- The capacity to manage ethical as well as cultural differences;
- Adaptability – capacity to adjust rapidly to new

Table 1. Developed for research

Representative problems	Enabling situational conditions	Strategy	Complicating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in decision-making caused conflict • Differences in communication caused misunderstanding or stonewalling • Fluency issues or prejudice amounted to emotional tensions among the team • Team members are influenced by perceived status differences among teammates • Violations of hierarchy have resulted in loss of face • An absence of ground rules is causing conflict • A team member failed to adapt to the challenge and has become unable to contribute to the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members can redound a challenge to culture rather than personality • Higher-level managers are not around or the team would be embarrassed to involve them • The team and task can be subdivided to mix cultures or based on expertise • The problem has resulted a high level of emotion • The team has stalemated • A higher-level manager is able and willing to interfere • The team is permanent rather than temporary • Emotions are beyond the point of intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation • Structural Intervention • Managerial Intervention • Exit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members must be aware of the situation • Negotiating a common belief and understanding takes time • If team members aren't carefully distributed, subgroups can strengthen preexisting differences • Subgroup solutions have to fit back together • The team becomes overly dependent on the manager • Team members may be sidelined or resistant • Talent and training costs are lost

Local or central

According to Armstrong (2001) the usual approach is to devolve responsibility for the training of local country nationals in job skills to the subsidiary or overseas establishment. But central policy guidelines on training may be issued, a consultancy service may be provided, local managers may be trained in how to train and the effectiveness of local training arrangements maybe audited from the center. The development of international managers will be planned and coordinated centrally, although the aim maybe to make the maximum use of local education and training facilities and business school programs as appropriate. Some multinationals make special arrangements with business school. According to Briscoe and Schuler (2004) when organization operate overseas, the training of the members of their workforce takes on special importance and difficulty.

Competences for international managers

Not surprisingly, successful talent management requires good leaders and managers. A key international challenge today is

environments and working with people of different nationalities and cultures;

- Resilience – capacity to cope with pressure;
- Self-motivated – ability to motivate them and to take initiative in remote situations.

Research has shown that implementing the managerial practices of the home country in a foreign country is simpler if cultural values of both are similar and highly challenging if they are different (Ramamurthy and Carroll, 1998).

Managing teams on global basis

Globalization has led to many changes in the nature of project team work. Many international companies have projects spanning a variety of nationalities, involving great geographical distance and a range of time zones. The increasing number of geographically distributed project teams makes their work increasingly difficult. It's hard to manage teams on global basis because diversity has been known to lead to poor performing teams (Iles and Kaur Hayes, 2003). Virtual teamwork is more complex than working face-to-face

(Helmer and Vince, 2000) and site specific cultures and lack of familiarity are reported to be sources of conflict (Hinds and Bailey, 2003). Akola and Wilson (2004) warn that the importance of the human element and the way that people cooperate with each other should not be taken for granted. Before we discuss further the third challenge facing by multinational company, here we provide the definition of team as well as multicultural teams which is more related to the global basis teams. According to Katzenbach and Smith (2000) a team or a real team is a small group of people with complementary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose, goals, and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. According to them, team members are populating who:

- Have complementary technical, problem solving, and interpersonal skills,
- Are committed to a meaningful purpose and specific, understandable performance goals;
- Maintain a high degree of mutual accountability; and
- Can achieve high levels of performance.

Whereas, high-performance teams are those who are significantly outperform the average teams. Multicultural teams are defined as task-oriented groups consisting of people of different nationalities and cultures (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). High-performance multicultural teams are the multicultural teams that meet characteristics of high-performance teams and are composed of people from different nationalities or cultures. Mobilizing the energy and synergy of managers from various cultures to work as a team can lead to multiple perspectives and more creative approaches to problems and challenges (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). Multicultural teams can provide companies with significant gains in productivity (Townsend *et al.*, 2003). However, there are some challenges facing by Multinational Company in order to manage teams effectively on global basis. Especially if the teams are works virtually, the challenges will be tougher and all the team members have to cope with all the challenges to ensure they can achieve the teams' goals. This paper will present some of the challenges by using relevance literature.

Communication Barriers

The greatest challenges in term of communication comprise the time difference and the lack of face-to-face contact. Different time zones meant that teams are required to extend their working hours accordingly in order to communicate with the other counterparts from different time zones. According to Brett, Behfar and Kern (2006) one of the challenge in multicultural team is in the context of direct versus indirect communication. They point out that communication in Western cultures is typically straight to point. Whereas in many other cultures, the meaning is embedded in the way the message is presented. According to them, the differences between direct and indirect communication can cause serious damage to relationships when team projects run into problems such as reducing information sharing, creating interpersonal conflict, or both.

Developing trust

Face-to-face contact, mentioned above, was a key to developing trust and this was initiated by a formal team building sessions with a facilitator to "agree to the

relationship" and define the rules as to how the team was going to work. Informal contact was also mentioned, e.g. sitting down over lunch to break barriers. Another benefit of spending at least two days together included going through the "forming, storming, norming, performing" dynamic more quickly. It was generally assumed that members only really knew each other if they could put a face to a name. Knowing each other was reported to lead to higher efficiency. Problems were easier to solve if they knew that person on the other side of the line (Oertig and Buergi, 2006). Gesteland (2005) opine the business world has two types of cultures, deal focused and relationship focused. Katz (2008) explained, some high-context culture countries are "relationship focused" culture where individuals are more people oriented, focus on building lasting relationships and attempt to maintain harmony with others. Whereas some are low-context culture countries prefer "deal focused" where people are task oriented, direct and sometimes aggressive. MNCs may therefore need to have better understanding on both types of the culture to foster the business relationship.

Managing the task

Oertig and Buergi (2006) opine that it is important to be transparent about the invisible schedule. In general, keeping everyone on the same level of information is something that had to be worked at by everyone. In particular if things are moving fast in one particular area like within a frontline or at top management level at a particular stage.

Managing people

The importance of the team leader having one-to-one contact with "key players", for relationship building and maintenance, "bringing in" people over whom the leader had no authority, and then "making them stay". One leader pointed out that they could not "try to impose things" on people (Oertig & Buergi: 2006). They had to adopt different leadership styles and apply them as needed. Another described the importance of creating a pleasant environment with a positive atmosphere, and talking about good results to make people feel appreciated. Accepting people's weaknesses was mentioned as was empathy, e.g. showing understanding of the other pressures and influences affecting them, e.g. from their line function. Work overload was generally assumed.

Managing language and cultural issues

In a global or multicultural setting, language becomes the key thing for smooth communication across nations. Thus, the responsibility to decide the language choice and usage is part of MNC managers' job. Language systems in an MNC spanning a variable mechanism that needs to be designed properly in order to sustain the global integration with local adaptation aligned with corporate strategy and an evolving global environment. The ability to design and execute language design decisions will promise a better MNC operations and performance. Economist Intelligence Unit study (2012), based on a worldwide poll of 572 top executives found that language barriers had affected international deals and contributed to financial losses. Also, the report says the language barrier can become a most difficult hurdle when employees speak different languages. It is vitally crucial that managers and employees are able to communicate company business, as well as their own needs. Language barriers between the home and host country are part of the liability of

foreignness, an impediment to effective negotiations and alliance evolution. Language can also have an impact on conflict management in cross-cultural teams (Von Glinow *et al.*, 2004), headquarters–subsidiary relations (Gupta, 1987), training effectiveness (Tung, 1982), knowledge transfer and diffusion (Ghoshal and Nohria, 1989), and the efficiency of the global value chain (Govindarajan and Gupta, 2001). It is via language that MNC executives develop their strategies and policies, disseminate and implement them. Behfar and Kern (2006) opined accents and fluency is one of the challenges in managing language matters. Although English is the widely used language in international business, but misunderstandings or frustration may occur due to nonnative speakers' poor command of the language. Their difficulty communicating knowledge makes it hard for the team to recognize and utilize their expertise. Interpersonal conflicts can arise if teammates become frustrated or impatient with a lack of fluency. Nonnative speakers may become less motivated to contribute, or anxious about their performance evaluations and future career prospects. According to Brett, Behfar and Kern (2006) the most successful teams and managers used four strategies for dealing with multicultural team's challenges: adaptation (acknowledging cultural gaps openly and working around them), structural intervention (changing the shape of the team), managerial intervention (setting norms early or bringing in a higher-level manager), and exit (removing a team member when other options have failed). As mentions by them, there is no one exact guideline to deal with a particular kind of multicultural problem; indentifying the type of challenge is just the first step. The more important step is assessing the circumstances or enabling situational conditions.

Adaptation

Some teams find ways to adapt practices or attitudes without changing the group's membership or assignments. Adaptation works when team members realize their cultural differences, and willing to acknowledge and fix their weakness, at the same time learn from the process, which is the best possible approach that requires less managerial time and monitoring. Team members with such mind-set are tend to be creative about defending their own absolute differences while adhering to the process of others.

Structural intervention

A structural intervention is a deliberate restructuring of the organization or the assignment designed to minimize interpersonal conflicts or to remove a source of friction for one or more groups. This will be the most effective way when obvious subgroups blame the team (for example, headquarters versus national subsidiaries) or if team members are clinging to negative stereotypes of one another.

Managerial intervention

Manager posses the power to act like a judge, to make the final decision without the involvement of the team, neither the manager nor the team gains much insight into why the team has stalemated.

Exit

Possibly the last resort of solving the issue, because many of the teams we studied were project based, we found that leaving

the team was an infrequent strategy for managing challenges. Members will choose the leave the team either voluntarily or after a formal request from management. Exit most likely occur when emotions running high plus too much face had been lost on both sides to get rid of the conflict.

Conclusion

Globalization gives major impacts on organization throughout the world. Organizations have to cope with multiple political, economic, legal, social and cultural environments in order to be success in their business. Besides, globalization makes interactions between the national and foreign environments becoming more complex because of national sovereignty issues and widely differing economic and social conditions. All these condition give some big challenge to organizations including Multinational Companies (MNCs) who deals with international environment. This paper discusses the international human resource management (IHRM) challenges facing by MNC. Three challenges discussed throughout the paper. First challenge is about identifying talent on global basis whereby this paper touches about staffing approaches and discuss some criteria of international candidate selection. Second challenge is developing talent on global basis which is discusses the importance of develop people on global basis and explains some factors that have to take into consideration in develop talent on international arena. Lastly, third challenge is about managing teams on global basis. This part discussed the challenge of managing teams such as the communication barriers and cultural barriers in teams. It also discusses some strategy manage multicultural teams.

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