

Managerial Insight into HR Issues and Competencies Needed for Entry-Level HR Professionals

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Abstract

The present paper aimed at identifying the current HR issues and challenges in India and competencies required for entry-level HR professionals to address them. The data collected from 978 managers working in different organizations across India using a survey questionnaire formed the basis for analysis. The data was analyzed quantitatively using mean scores and t-test. The study found that performance management, employee motivation, career development and ethics in workplace are major HR issues of concern for managers. Consistent with the HR issues, developing career development plans emerged as the topmost important competency required for HR professionals. The study further found that there were significant differences in the perception of HR issues and HR competencies based on nature of business, organisational size, and geographical orientation of the organisations, and managers' nature of work and their length of service.

Keywords: Entry-Level HR professionals, HR Issues, HR competencies, HRM curriculum

Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) operates in a wider economic, technological, political, and social context with a major theme of 'competing through people' (Bohlander & Snell, 2013). It is moving away from the transactional, paper-pushing, hiring/firing support function, it has seen, and is becoming a bottom-line business decision maker (Caudron, 1994). The context, changing nature of HR function and the people, pose different issues and challenges to HR function in corporate companies on a day-to-day basis. HR professionals need to demonstrate the appropriate competencies to address these issues by demonstrating appropriate HR competencies. The present paper aimed at identifying the current HR issues and challenges in India and knowledge and skills required for entry-level HR professionals to address them.

Review of Earlier Literature and Research

HR Issues: Different studies were conducted in different regions on the HR issues and challenges over a period of time. Bureau of National Affairs, United States of America (1991) identified training and development, employee benefits, recruiting, selection, and placement, compensation administration, and employee/ labor relations as the major HR issues. According to Kermske (1998) workplace flexibility, global business, work and society, workforce development, the definition of jobs, and the strategic role of HR are the major HR issues. Giannantonio and Hurley (2002) found that managing change, job satisfaction, loyalty and commitment, performance/productivity, skill shortages, raising health care costs, turnover, encouraging innovation and strategic HRM are the main HR issues of concern for HR managers. According to them the HR issues that are of least concern for HR managers are: age discrimination, outsourcing HR services, telecommuting, internet abuse, global competition, downsizing, elder care, reverse discrimination, immigrant patterns and international assignments. Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy (2004) classified the HR issues into three types. One is the challenges that emerge from environment in which HRM operates. This consists of challenges such as rapid change, rise in the internet, workforce diversity, legal framework, evolving work and family roles, skill shortage and the rise of service sector. The second type of challenges emerges from within the context of the organization. Competitive position of the organization, cost and quality concerns, decentralization, downsizing, organisational restructuring, self-managed work teams, growth of small business, organizational culture, technology and outsourcing are the challenges of this category. The third type is individual. This includes matching people and organizations, ethics and social responsibility, productivity, empowerment, brain drain and job insecurity. Banfield and Kay (2008) mentioned that the most common challenges of HRM are motivating employees; understanding employee wants and identifying the best way to reward them; recruiting and retaining them; getting workers to be more flexible and delivering higher levels of discretionary effort; balancing between treating workers fairly and ensuring organisational interests; and reducing or eliminating the causes of conflict and building loyal workforce. Bohlander & Snell (2013) reported that responding strategically to changes in the market place, competing, recruiting and staffing globally, setting and achieving corporate social responsibility and sustainability goals, advancing HRM with technology, containing costs

while retaining top talent and maximizing productivity, and responding to the demographic and diversity challenges of the workforce are the competitive challenges of HRM.

HR Competencies: HR managers have to perform their roles addressing these issues and challenges. To address them, what competencies are required for entry-level HR practitioners? HR competencies generally focus on the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes of HR professionals. Ulrich and his colleagues conducted several studies, over a period of time on HR competencies. The original HR competency study conducted in 1987 indicated that HR professionals needed business knowledge, HR delivery, and change management competencies regardless of position, industry, or geography. 1992 study identified personal credibility, the fourth HR competency. 1997 study found the ability to manage culture as an important competency for HR professionals. Culture and change competencies are rolled into a new domain called strategic contribution in the subsequent study in 2002. This study further identified another new competency called 'HR technology'. In 2008, Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz and Younger conducted global level HR competencies study that classified HR competencies into six clusters such as credible activist, culture and change steward, talent manager/organisational designer, strategy architect, operational executor, and business ally.

These studies predominantly focused on overall HR competencies that influence firm performance, irrespective of level of the position of the HR professional. The present study is concerned with competencies required for entry-level HR professionals. There are some studies conducted in the past addressing HR competencies required for entry-level positions. Hansen, Berkely, Kaplan, Yu, Craig, Fitzpatrick, Seiler (1996) divided knowledge required for entry-level HR practitioners into two categories, namely, substantive and enabling. Substantive knowledge is comprised of the subject matter of a discipline, while enabling knowledge represents the skills individuals possess that allow them to apply their substantive knowledge. An example of substantive knowledge would be writing a job description. They considered that communication (written and oral), active listening, decision making, and analytical skills are the most important areas of enabling knowledge for entry-level HR practitioners. Lawson (1990) suggested that HR executives should have business knowledge, influence management, functional and organizational leadership skills, goal and action management skills, and HR technical proficiency. Kaufman (1996) suggested that HR professionals need management and leadership skills; consulting, advising, and negotiating skills; analytical skills; quality and organizational change skills; computer and information technology skills; and oral and written communication skills. Schoonover (1997) established a set of core HR competencies consisting of leadership style, management intuition, functional abilities and personal attributes. Huselid, Jackson and Schuler (1997) classified broad competencies into professional HRM capabilities and business-related capabilities. Professional HRM capabilities are related to delivery of traditional HRM activities such as recruiting, selection and compensation. In contrast, business-related capabilities reflect an understanding of the business and the implementation of competitive strategy. Both contribute to HRM effectiveness, which in turn have a substantial positive effect on several measures of firm financial performance. Giannantonio and Hurley (2002) found that customer service skills are more important to executives in large organizations and from the service

sector. Executives from small organizations gave more importance to organisation skills. Executives from the service sector rated conduct of job satisfaction survey as more important than executives from manufacturing sector. Johnson and King (2002) found that integrity, impersonal communication, managing relationships, recruitment and managing change are top five skills required for entry-level HR professionals. Way (2002) also found similar competencies (integrity, ability to work effectively with others outside HR, communication skills, proactivity, ability to approach problems with clarity etc.) are required for HR professionals. Kaufman (1994, 1996), Hansen et.al (1996), Van Eynde and Tucker (1997), Giannantonio and Hurley (2002), Johnson and King (2002) and Way (2002) suggested that in the context of transformation of HR function, university HR programs should make changes in curriculum incorporating needed skills for future HR professionals.

Research Methodology

The setting of the study is India covering different types of organizations across the country. HRM in India is transformed over a period of time from clerical to administrative, administrative to managerial, managerial to executive, and executive to strategic partner (Venkata Ratnam, and Srivastava, 1991; Budhwar, 2009). Over a period of time, a diverse set of HR issues emerged from the internal and external environment of HRM in India, which HR department has to address. The objective of the study is to find out the managers' perceptions on HRM issues and challenges, and competencies required for entry-level HR professionals. A questionnaire was created based on the earlier studies on HR issues, and HR competencies. After having face-to-face discussions with some of the HR managers, the items in the questionnaire were finalized. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section one covered HR issues and challenges. Section two dealt with HR competencies required for entry-level HR professionals. Final part of the questionnaire consisted of questions relating to respondent's information. The questionnaire was distributed among managers working in different organisations at different levels in India. 978 usable filled-in questionnaires were considered for the analysis. The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha co-efficient method for the data set and found that the reliability value was 0.97. The methods of analysis of data were calculating mean scores, and standard deviation (S.D) for each item in the list of HR issues, and HR knowledge and skills. Grand means were calculated for HR issues, and HR competencies required for entry-level HR professionals. Then items were divided into two types. Items more than one S.D. above the grand mean were considered as the most important for the respondents and the items which were more than one S.D. below the grand mean were considered as least important. T-Tests were conducted to find out association between HR issues, and HR competencies with respondents' factors such as their functional area (HR and non-HR), their experience, nature of business of their companies, their geographical orientation and their organizational size.

Results and Analysis

The Respondents' background: The respondents were distributed to manufacturing sector (45.81%) which included automobile, construction, engineering, fast moving consumer goods, processing and power companies, and service sector(54.19%) such as banking, consulting,

financial services, insurance, IT services. As far as ownership is concerned, an overwhelming majority (86.50%) of the respondents worked in privately owned companies, whereas 8.49% belonged to public companies. With regard to geographical orientation, 42.64% of them represented foreign multinational companies; 31.39% of them worked for Indian multinational companies; and the remaining 25.97% belonged to local Indian companies. Organizational size wise, the respondents were by and large equally distributed to small companies (employed less than 5000 employees), and large companies (employed above 5000 personnel). As far as their level of management is concerned, a majority (59.51%) of the respondents were in the middle management cadre. With regard to functional areas, an overwhelming majority (85.38%) of the respondents were non-HR managers. Experience wise, a single largest group (40.29%) had 5 to 10 years of experience.

The Most and Least Important HR Issues and HR Competencies: The respondents were asked to identify their level of concern for the HR issues based on their experience in their respective organizations on a four point scale from one to four, with ‘one’ being ‘no’ concern and ‘four’ being ‘major concern’. Similarly, the respondents were asked to rate listed HR competencies required for entry-level HR managers on four point scale, with ‘one’ being ‘not important’ and ‘four’ being ‘most important’. Mean ratings for all HR issues were calculated. The overall grand mean of the HR issues is calculated as 2.52 and standard deviation (of means) is calculated as 0.21. The results found that performance management, employee motivation, career plateauing, ethics in workplace, balancing work and family life, training and development, employee retention, managing highly talented personnel, employee benefits and services and cost control were the top ten HR issues. Internet abuse, handling trade unions, sexual harassment, outsourcing HR services, mergers and acquisitions, women in workforce, and international assignments were found to be the least important HR issues of the managers (Table 1).

Table 1. Mean Scores of HR issues

S. No.	HR Issues	Mean	SD
1	Performance management	2.84	0.95
2	Motivating employees	2.8	0.89
3	Career plateauing	2.79	0.88
4	Ethics in workplace	2.78	1.01
5	Balancing work and family programmes	2.73	0.93
6	Training and development	2.73	0.95
7	Employee retention	2.72	0.96
8	Managing high talented personnel	2.72	0.93
9	Cost control	2.71	0.98
10	Employee benefits and services	2.71	0.92
11	Recruitment	2.71	0.93
12	Changing attitudes toward work	2.7	0.88
13	Employee relations	2.68	0.97

14	Salary fixation	2.68	0.95
15	Measuring HR contribution	2.66	0.92
16	Handling employee grievance	2.65	0.89
17	Discipline management	2.64	0.97
18	Human resource planning	2.64	0.98
19	Managing change	2.64	0.95
20	Selection of employees	2.64	0.95
21	Pay-for-performance schemes	2.6	0.99
22	Cost and benefit comparisons of HR programmes	2.57	0.91
23	Deployment/redeployment of employees	2.57	0.93
24	Global markets and competition	2.53	0.96
25	Legal Compliances	2.5	1.01
26	Managing diversity	2.48	0.94
27	Downsizing	2.46	1.05
28	Strategic HRM	2.44	0.96
29	Changing profile of workforce	2.41	0.85
30	Absenteeism	2.38	1.04
31	Health care	2.37	0.95
32	Changes in information technology	2.36	0.96
33	Contingent/temporary workforce	2.33	0.95
34	Employee privacy	2.31	1.01
35	Flexible working hours/workdays	2.29	0.96
36	International Assignments	2.24	1.03
37	Women in workforce	2.22	0.99
38	Mergers and acquisitions	2.2	1.02
39	Outsourcing HR services	2.17	0.94
40	Sexual harassment	2.17	1.13
41	Handling trade unions	2.13	1.07
42	Internet abuse	2.09	1

The grand mean of HR competencies required for future managers is calculated as 2.87 and standard deviation (of means) is calculated as 0.23. The results showed that the top ten HR competencies were: developing career development plans, interpersonal skills, designing performance appraisal system, decision making skills, recruiting skills, verbal and written communication skills, integrity, interviewing skills, and problem solving. The least important areas were: union negotiations, knowledge of production, operations research, domestic inquiry skills, marketing management, research methods, economics, accounting and finance, assessment center, e-business, HR issues in mergers and acquisitions, and advanced quantitative methods (Table 2).

Table 2. Means Scores of HR Competencies

S.No.	HR Competencies	Mean	SD
1	Develop career development plans	3.23	0.85
2	Interpersonal skills	3.22	0.9
3	Design performance appraisal system	3.19	0.87
4	Decision making skills	3.18	0.86
5	Recruiting skills	3.17	0.81
6	Verbal Communication skills	3.16	0.92
7	Written communication skills	3.16	0.91
8	Integrity	3.16	0.99
9	Interviewing skills	3.12	0.85
10	Results orientation	3.08	0.92
11	Negotiation skills	3.08	0.86
12	Problem solving skills	3.08	0.84
13	Conflict resolution skills	3.06	0.82
14	Handle employee grievances	3.05	0.88
15	Develop overall HR polices	3.05	0.9
16	Develop mentoring programmes	3.04	0.88
17	Conduct training needs assessment	3.02	0.85
18	Conduct performance counseling	3.02	0.85
19	Thorough knowledge of legal aspects of HR/IR	3.01	0.92
20	Create HR information system	3.01	0.91
21	Analytical skills	2.99	0.92
22	Conduct training programmes	2.98	0.88
23	Develop pay-for-performance programmes	2.98	0.86
24	Skill to respond to the market demands	2.97	0.81
25	Conduct training evaluation	2.96	0.87
26	Conduct job evaluation	2.96	0.89
27	Insure legal compliance	2.96	1.01
28	Develop strategic HR plan	2.96	0.93
29	Create employee selection programme	2.95	0.83
30	Knowledge of business ethics	2.93	0.93
31	Human resource demand and supply estimates	2.92	0.84
32	Coordinate employee benefit and service	2.92	0.88
33	Conduct employee satisfaction/ engagement surveys	2.92	0.91

34	Knowledge management	2.92	0.8
35	Knowledge in taxation of salaries	2.9	0.9
36	Conduct job analysis	2.88	0.87
37	Conduct salary surveys	2.88	0.92
38	Design training programmes	2.88	0.9
39	Train line managers in HR	2.88	0.92
40	Skill to market HR programmes to line managers	2.86	0.86
41	Knowledge of employee participation schemes	2.84	0.82
42	Knowledge of corporate social responsibility	2.84	0.89
43	Culture management skills	2.83	0.94
44	Measure HR contribution	2.83	0.9
45	Organisation structure, and process design	2.82	0.92
46	Knowledge of basic quantitative techniques	2.77	0.88
47	Knowledge of enterprise resource planning	2.75	0.89
48	Knowledge of managing redundancy	2.74	0.85
49	Develop psychometric testing	2.73	0.89
50	Knowledge of international HR practices	2.72	0.95
51	Cross culture management skills	2.66	0.91
52	Knowledge of advanced quantitative techniques	2.64	0.89
53	Handle HR issues in mergers & acquisitions	2.63	1.03
54	Knowledge of e-business	2.6	0.86
55	Implement an assessment center	2.57	0.91
56	Knowledge of accounting & finance	2.54	0.88
57	Knowledge of economics	2.51	0.88
58	Knowledge of research methodology	2.47	0.9
59	Knowledge of marketing management	2.44	0.94
60	Conduct of domestic enquiry	2.42	0.98
61	Knowledge of operations research	2.38	0.9
62	Knowledge of production management	2.32	0.94
63	Negotiate with unions	2.3	1.1

Interestingly, handling trade unions did not seem to be an important area as far as this study is concerned as it was rated low as both an issue and as a skill to be obtained by HR future managers, despite a sample where 45.81% respondents were from manufacturing sector where traditionally industrial relations have been an important concern. On a related note even conducting domestic inquiry received low importance rating. This might be because of the fact that the functions such as handling unions and conducting domestic inquiry are generally carried out by the senior HR professionals who possess these skills, whereas the respondents of this study were asked to rate the skills required for HR managers in the making. On the other hand, most important issues and skills both pointed to an emphasis on performance, motivation, and career management. Consistent with popular trend, ethics at workplace was given high importance, while internet abuse received the lowest importance as an issue.

Respondents' Factors and HR Issues and HR Competencies: An attempt was made in this study to find out differences in HR issues and skills based on the respondents' factors using T-Tests. It was found that there were significant differences of opinion on the importance of 11 HR issues between line and HR managers. While line managers rated downsizing as significantly more important than did HR managers, on the other 10 issues it was the HR managers who gave significantly higher importance. These issues were: cost control, global markets, employee grievance, compliance, managing change, managing high talented personnel, measuring HR contribution, motivating employees, strategic HRM and training and development. On the HR competencies front, HR and line managers significantly differed in their opinions in 20 cases. In 19 cases it was the HR managers who gave higher importance ratings. The highest differences among these were observed in case of integrity, problem solving skills, analytical skills and interpersonal skills. The only case which line managers gave significantly high importance than HR managers was developing psychometric testing.

With respect to experience, it was found that experience influenced the perceptions of managers on HR issues and HR competencies required for entry level HR professionals. Among managers with less than 10 years of experience and those with more than 10 years of experience, the study found significant difference of opinion on the importance of three issues. Managers with less years of experience gave significantly higher importance to cost and benefit comparison of HR Programs, international assignments and sexual harassment. On the HR competencies front, managers with less years of experience and those with more years of experience significantly differed in their opinions in three cases such as job evaluation skills, culture management skills and written communication skills. While managers with more experience gave greater importance to the first two, it was the other way around for written communication skills.

Among managers from the manufacturing sector and those from the services sector, the study found significant difference of opinion on the importance of nine issues. While managers from the manufacturing sector gave more importance to ethics in workplace, handling trade unions, healthcare programmes, managing high talented personnel, mergers and acquisitions, outsourcing HR services and selection of employees, managers from the services sector gave

higher importance to sexual harassment and employee privacy. On the HR competencies front, managers from manufacturing sector and those from services sector significantly differed in their opinions in seven cases, namely, employee selection skills, training and development skills, engagement survey skills, cross cultural management skills, knowledge management skills, negotiating skills with unions, and knowledge and skills relating to developing overall HR policies. While managers from services sector gave greater importance to the first five, it was the other way around for negotiating with unions and knowledge management.

Among Indian and foreign multinational companies, the study found significant difference of opinion on the importance of six issues. While managers from Indian multinational organisations gave more importance to healthcare programmes, mergers and acquisitions, outsourcing HR services and training and development, managers from foreign multinational companies gave significantly higher importance to absenteeism and employee retention. On the HR competencies front, managers from Indian multinational companies and those from foreign multinational companies significantly differed in their opinions in seven cases which were: developing psychometric testing, designing performance appraisal system, creating HR information system, developing overall HR policies, knowledge of e-Business, knowledge of research methodology and skills to market HR programmes to line managers. While managers from Indian organizations gave greater importance to the first five, it was the other way around for knowledge of research methods and skills for marketing HR programmes.

Among managers from smaller organizations and those from larger organizations, the study found significant difference of opinion on the importance of three issues. While managers from smaller organizations gave more importance to ethics in workplace and discipline management, managers from larger organizations gave higher importance to employee retention. On the HR competencies front, managers from small and large organizations significantly differed in their opinions in as many as 21 cases which included: knowledge of CSR, knowledge of ERP, strategic HR and implementing assessment center, etc. All 21 issues were rated more important by managers from larger organizations.

Conclusion

The analysis leads to the conclusion that, overall, performance management, employee motivation, career development and ethics in workplace are major HR issues of concern for managers. It is significant to note that the first three issues are interrelated and broadly relevant with the increasing aspirations and expectations of employees. The tools and techniques used to motivate employees to perform better might not result in improving their performance and employees also might not be happy with the career development opportunities available within the organisation.

Consistent with the HR issues, developing career development plans has emerged as the top most important HR competency required for HR professionals. A look at the top knowledge and skills leads to the conclusion that enabling skills are more important than substantive HR knowledge for entry-level HR professionals, because seven out of ten top HR knowledge and

skill areas are pertaining to enabling skills such as interpersonal skills, decision making skills, communication skills, both verbal and written, problem solving skills and integrity.

Another interesting observation of this study is that length of service is associated with the perception of HR issues and HR competencies required. Managers with less years of experience considered cost & benefit comparison of HR Programmes, as the topmost HR issue. It means that young managers recognized the importance of cost effective HR initiatives consistent with the emerging trends in HRM. They also differed with senior managers in rating knowledge and skills required, indicating written communication skill as the topmost skill required for entry-level HR professionals.

Nature of business analysis leads to the conclusion that ethics in workplace and handling trade unions are the top issues of concern in the manufacturing sector, whereas in service sector the sexual harassment and employee privacy are the top concerns in service sector. Consistent with the issues, managers from manufacturing sector gave more importance to union negotiation skills. On the other hand, managers from service sector gave more importance to employee selection skills, and training and development skills. They might have thought that appropriate selection of employees and effective training may address the major issues of the sector such as sexual harassment and employee privacy.

The analysis related to organizational size and HR issues and HR competencies leads to the conclusion that ethics in workplace and discipline management are the major HR issues in small companies, whereas employee retention is the major issue in large ones. On the knowledge and skills front, managers from small and large organizations significantly differed in their opinions in a large number (21) of items. The essence of it is that large organizations expect higher levels of HR competencies from entry-level HR professionals.

Geographical orientation of the companies also contributed for significant difference in HR issues and HR competencies. While Indian multinational organizations gave more importance to healthcare programs, and mergers and acquisitions, foreign multinational companies gave significantly higher importance to absenteeism and employee retention. On the knowledge and skills front, managers from Indian multinational companies and those from foreign multinational companies significantly differed in their opinions. While Indian organizations gave greater importance to developing psychometric testing, designing performance appraisal system, managers from foreign multinational companies gave more importance to knowledge of research methods and skills for marketing HR programs. The reason might be that the issues such as absenteeism and employee retention issues in foreign multinational companies can be handled effectively with a sound research base on the issues, which would help in creating appropriate HR strategies overcome the problems. But creating strategies alone does not serve the purpose. The HR department has to orient and market the HR strategies to the line managers for effective implementation so that the issues can be addressed.

Implications

This paper made an attempt to find out practicing managers' viewpoint on HR issues, and HR competencies required for entry-level HR professionals. The results of the study may be

considered as an input from industry for designing and delivering HRM programs to make the students ready to take up entry-level positions in HR in various corporate companies. Employers in India look for candidates to fill entry-level positions in HR from two streams. One is the students of MBA with specialization in HRM. Another one is the students of Master's programme in HRM (a full-fledged two year HRM programme). This study has implications for designing and delivering both the programs. This study identified that performance management, employee motivation, career planning and development, ethics in workplace, work life balance, training and development, employee retention, managing highly talented people, employee benefits and services and cost control are the top ten HR issues. Generally students of Master's programme in HRM are exposed to many of the major HR issues as separate courses such as performance management, training and development, business ethics, career planning and development, employee benefits and services. Topics like employee motivation, managing highly talented people, employee retention, and cost control are covered as topics in various courses. This exposure on the higher rating of concerns might not be enough to master the content. It would be supplemented with integrating the concerns (for example, motivation and retention) into different, but relevant courses of HRM. The MBA programme with a specialization in HRM does not cover all the topics either as separate courses or topics in their curriculum. Measure may be taken to ensure MBA (HRM) curriculum relevant to the industry by incorporating all major HR issues as separate courses. If not feasible, measures may be taken to integrate the topics in relevant HRM courses.

With respect to substantiate knowledge, the study found that creating career development plans, designing performance appraisal system, recruiting and interviewing skills are among the top ten knowledge and skills required. Adding courses on these areas does provide the knowledge, but does not provide skills required to undertake these activities without appropriate teaching methodology. Therefore, as far as possible, all courses of HRM curriculum should have a project which provides them hands-on-experience in these areas. Managers expect that entry-level HR professionals should possess enabling skills. In fact, six out of ten top HR knowledge and skills identified in this study are relating to enabling skills like interpersonal skills, decision making skills, communication skills, both verbal and written, integrity, and problem solving skills. The courses such as Organisational Behaviour, Business Communication, and Ethics provide the students basic knowledge of the areas, but do not help in acquiring the skills in these areas. Every course of the HRM curriculum should be taught with exercises, students' presentations, oral and written, team projects, and case discussions. This methodology would help them in acquiring the required enabling skills. Though the study found that knowledge of business management areas (accounting and finance, marketing, production management etc.) is less important, it is not suggested to drop these courses. The fundamental knowledge of business management would certainly help HR professionals to understand the business in which HRM operates. This would help HR professionals to serve better their internal customers. However the advanced courses on these areas may be dropped. The basic courses of business management should be taught from the HR perspective, by integrating HR and business management.

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Appendix. Questionnaire: Current HR Issues and Skills required for future HR Managers

The below are the current HR issues. May I request you to rate the items based on your work experience as a professional in your respective organization on a four point scale with 1 being 'no' concern and 4 being 'major concern'.

I. HR issues

1. Absenteeism
2. Balancing work and family programmes
3. Career plateauing
4. Changing attitudes towards work
5. Changes in information technology
6. Changing profile of workforce
7. Contingent/temporary workforce
8. Cost and benefit comparisons of HR programmes
9. Cost control
10. Deployment/redeployment of employees
11. Discipline management

12. Downsizing
13. Employee benefits and services
14. Employee privacy
15. Employee quits
16. Employee relations
17. Ethics in workplace
18. Flexible working hours/workdays
19. Global markets and competition
20. Handling employee grievance
21. Handling Trade unions
22. Health care programmes for employees
23. Human Resource planning
24. Internet abuse
25. International Assignments
26. Legal Compliances
27. Managing change
28. Managing diversity
29. Managing high talented personnel
30. Measuring HR contribution
31. Mergers and acquisitions
32. Motivating employees
33. Outsourcing HR services
34. Pay-for-performance schemes
35. Performance management
36. Recruitment
37. Salary fixation
38. Selection of employees
39. Sexual harassment
40. Strategic HRM

41. Training and development

42. Women in workforce

II. Knowledge and skills required

The following are general areas of HR knowledge and skills. Based on your organization and your HR experiences, please indicate their importance for HR managers in making on four point scale, with 1 being not important and 4 being most important.

1. Conduct job analysis
2. Human resource demand and supply estimates
3. Recruiting skills
4. Create employee selection programme
5. Interviewing skills
6. Develop psychometric testing
7. Conduct training needs assessment
8. Conduct training programmes
9. Conduct training evaluation
10. Develop career development programmes
11. Develop mentoring programmes
12. Design performance appraisal system
13. Design performance counseling
14. Conduct salary surveys
15. Conduct job evaluation
16. Develop pay-for-performance programmes
17. Coordinate employee benefit and service
18. Handle employee grievances
19. Thorough knowledge of legal aspects of HR/IR
20. Conduct of domestic enquiry
21. Insure legal compliances
22. Create HR information system
23. Negotiate with unions
24. Implement an assessment centre

25. Conduct employee satisfaction/engagement surveys
26. Design training programmes
27. Train line managers in HR
28. Develop overall HR polices
29. Develop strategic HR plan
30. Culture management skills
31. Cross culture management skills
32. Knowledge of international HR practices
33. Knowledge of managing redundancy
34. Measure HR contribution
35. Handle HR issues in mergers & acquisitions
36. Organization structure, and process design
37. Knowledge of basic quantitative techniques
38. Knowledge of advanced quantitative techniques
39. Knowledge of research methodology
40. Knowledge of marketing management
41. Knowledge of accounting & finance
42. Knowledge of production management
43. Knowledge of operations research
44. Knowledge of economics
45. Knowledge of business ethics
46. Knowledge of enterprises resource planning
47. Knowledge of e-business
48. Knowledge management
49. Knowledge of employee participation schemes
50. Verbal Communication skills
51. Interpersonal skills
52. Analytical skills
53. Decision making skills

54. Results orientation
55. Skill to respond to the market demands
56. Skill to market HR programmes to line managers
57. Conflict resolution skills
58. Negotiation skills
59. Problem solving skills
60. Integrity
61. Knowledge in taxation of salaries
62. Knowledge of corporate social responsibility

III. General Information

- 1) Your organization belongs to which industry
- 2) Ownership of the organization (Circle the appropriate)
 1. Public Sector
 2. Private sector
 3. Joint Venture (Public & private)
 4. Joint venture (Private & private)
- 3) Geographic Orientation (circle the appropriate)
 1. Indian Company
 2. Indian MNC
 3. Foreign MNC
- 4) Total number of employee (Headcount) of the organization in your present location (circle the appropriate)
 1. Less than 5000
 2. More than 5000
- 5) Your Functional area; HR/Non-HR
- 6) Your experience (in years):