



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Job specifications for teaching HRM at university level

Bashir, Jibrán and Afzal, Sara

Highly Keen - The HR Institute

5 December 2012

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/65907/>

MPRA Paper No. 65907, posted 04 Aug 2015 09:25 UTC

Job Specifications for Teaching HRM at University Level

(A Viewpoint Paper)

Principal Author:

Jibran Bashir

Chief Executive Officer

Highly Keen – The HR Institute

Co-Author:

Sara Afzal

Director Operations & Communication

Highly Keen – The HR Institute

DO NOT COPY

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

Job Specifications for Teaching HRM at University Level

Authors: Jibran Bashir, Sara Afzal

Abstract

Background: This is a keen observation of various experienced HR Professionals about fresh HR graduates that when they move for job interviews after completing degrees they don't know about practical Human Resource Management knowledge and they have no idea of how to execute HR functions in organizations. These graduates only know about some employee motivation theories and ideal HR practices of some utopian organizations but they don't have knowledge about real time human resource department's role in practicality.

View Point: In authors' view the reason of the above mentioned problem is that in various universities the teachers who are teaching HRM subject have never ever touched the industry as an HR professional and they have no idea of operational and strategic issues of HR Functions, and just on the basis of their theory based Masters or Ph.D. degrees they cannot transfer the real essence of subject to their students.

Paper Suggestions: This paper suggests four job specifications for teaching positions in HRM subject on the basis of authors' personal HRM teaching and learning experiences. First; HRM teachers need to have one comprehensive university degree of HRM in shape of Honors or Masters. Second; Teacher should have experience of hardcore HR by working as HR generalist in two to three organizations. Third; Teachers need to have an experience of writing and presenting practitioner research papers in field of HRM. Fourth; teacher should act as corporate trainer while transferring his practical knowledge to university students.

Design/ Methodology: The methodology used is authors' personal experience of teaching HRM and studying HRM in student life. (Word Count: 275)

Keywords: Job Specifications, HRM Teaching, Role of Teachers, Practical HR Studies

Paper Type: Viewpoint

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

Background

In corporate sector of Pakistan, many professionals have a common observation that business schools are not producing students who can face the realities and challenges of various local business operations. According to Saleem A. Butt, chief operating officer at Hascol Petroleum Limited, an oil marketing company that runs 250 retail outlets across Pakistan, 'most business schools are churning out unemployable graduates'. He added that 'fresh graduates of even the best business schools had only a 'superficial knowledge' of the corporate world'.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is one of the aspects of business administration and as HR practitioners it is our observation that fresh HR graduates of business schools know nothing about the practical operations of HR functions, country labor laws and typical policies and procedures of HR. Students are familiar with only some motivational theories and ideal HR practices of multinational organizations. They used to study foreign books and case studies but they have no idea of local Pakistani HR issues. Moreover various HR Professionals have the same observation that fresh HR graduates are just the degree holders with nil practical knowledge and exposure who need job only for the sake of job but they are not the solution providers for their employers. During the work on this paper we solicited such opinions in written form from a small sample of HR Professionals. The comments made by these professionals are narrated as under;

According to Saria Zaheer, Head HR and Organization Development at Sapphire Textile Mills Ltd., I have observed in my experience the fresh HR students who come up for an HR job have no practical hardcore knowledge of Human Resource Management. They do not have the

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

exposure of real time HR issues. What I think the reason is that the teachers of these institutes have only given them knowledge without practical grounds.

Saad Masood, Officer Human Resources at Association for Academic Quality says, 'In our culture it is a very common practice that when the fresh graduates start applying for jobs in different organizations, they face different kind of issues while heading towards their professional careers. The first issue is faced when they move for job interview and are asked questions related to operational HR; they simply fail – fairly because they did not have the practical procedural knowledge to perform that very job'.

Imran Khan, Assistant Manager Training & OD at Master Group says, I often meet fresh HR graduates during interviews and training sessions and whenever they are asked any function or operation specific HR question they show a flat face depicting they have no idea. But I don't really blame these young, eager, and talented students coming straight out of business schools because in my view the problem lies at our business schools who are at a pacific oceans distance from corporate sector. Giving broad based theories in lectures to students is worthless without giving procedural grip on the operational aspect. The operational knowledge if given, can increase the practical exposure of students thereby making them absolutely ready to enter the market and get employed'.

Further endorsing Imran Khan's point of view; Wasif Mazhar, Manager OD and Talent at Gourmet Pakistan is of the view that, 'The business schools are required not to focus on management theories, rather head to develop core competencies in students by giving them industry exposure and operational learning. Further it is also important that business school's

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

start welcoming professionals from the industry who could pass on the learning experience through proper learning environment rather referring to slide show. This would surely play a key role in bridging up the gap between industry and academia’.

Authors’ View Point

Whatever has been shared as observations of different HR professionals has raised a general statement that the HR graduates being produced by universities are not ready to take corporate challenges since they are not aware of operational grounds of work. At one end are the observations shared by multiple professionals in corporate sector and at other end exist our (authors’) own experiences initially as Human Resource students in business schools and later as HR professionals working with various organizations as employees as well as consultants and trainers. This self experience has helped us in judging that though the HR graduates are incapable of performing HR operations jobs right after their degrees but this situation arises because the faculty that is teaching them is not having hard core practical experience. Now there is again a big list of reasons behind; just like the rules and regulations of Higher Education Commission that the faculty must possess M.Phil or Ph.D. degrees. If a faculty member completes his 18 years or above education he becomes eligible for teaching but the dilemma is no one has ever pointed out that the person who has not self applied anything into any organization, how can he deliver that to the pupils. Reading through the theories, books and multiple researches, performing researches is itself a reputable task but only this cannot be a substitute of hands-on experience. Thus when these teachers have themselves not performed the jobs at corporate sector, or they have not practically applied all that what was present in theories

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

and case-studies, they cannot guarantee a complete practical or procedural knowledge transfer thereby resulting in a less exposure lot of graduates coming out of business schools.

Some say that the curriculum needs to be practically designed and altered, but authors are of the view even if the curriculum is designed on modern tones and faculty is not practically experienced they cannot deliver what is actually required.

Authors' Suggestions

Since we have fairly developed a view point that in various universities the teachers who are teaching HRM subject have not themselves practiced as an HR professional and they have no idea of operational and strategic issues of HR Functions. They cannot transfer the real essence of subject to their students only on the basis of their theory based Masters or Ph.D. degrees. This paper suggests four job specifications for HRM faculty.

- 1. HRM teachers need to have one comprehensive university degree of HRM in shape of Honors or Masters.***

We suggest that the individuals who go for a teaching profession in Human Resource Management must have one sound professional degree in this field, be it an Honors or a Masters degree specializing in HRM; as it will help form the basics of the individual about the field. This one degree will not only give them clear base about the core concepts of the HRM field but it will give a procedurally linked overview of what the HRM field is about. Now we propose the individuals who want to opt a career in HRM teaching need not to go for next degree in shape of an M.Phil or Ph.D. since they are not looking for a research based career. Because if they will get into a lot of research base on theories and perspectives they will frame their mind accordingly and will be discussing a more theoretical aspect of the field in classes.

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

We have observed that the HRM teachers who have done their doctoral degrees in Human Resource Management Field, in classes they are more inclined towards discussing their theoretical research perspectives, motivational theories or human behaviors. Whereas the requirement or need of the students is actual issues of various industries that they are facing operationally related to Recruitment & Selection of key workforce, Compensating employees in tough budgets, or calculating return on investment on training initiatives etc.

2. Teacher should have experience of hardcore HR by working as HR generalist in two to three organizations

Continuing to what we have discussed earlier that the HRM Teachers should possess one formal degree in Human Resource Management we suggest that they need not to straight away start from a teaching career. The individual must work in the industry for a few years where he can practically perform what he has studied and can get hands on experience of all the human resource functions. He should experience to know how the organizational structures are made, how manpower planning is done, how recruitment activities result in generating a pool of candidates and what recruitment pressures are faced during this activity, how interviews are arranged and what hurdles are faced while arranging interviews with line managers. He needs to know that how compensation slabs are designed and what are the effects of company's business strategy on employee benefits. He must be aware of how to evaluate a trigger for knowing whether it's a true training need or an environmental issue of the organization. He needs to be aware about the process of performance evaluations and how to minimize favoritism risks during evaluations. By working in the corporate sector for a couple of years the person will be well aware of how the Human Resource Functions actually work in different scenarios, what issues are usually faced on job while performing these activities and how an HR professional can best cope with the challenges coming his way. Further, the individual must get an experience of working in atleast two to three organizations

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

from different sectors and of various sizes i.e. they can go for one service sector organization, then one production sector and then might be an import & retail set-up etc. working in multiple and varying organizations will help clear the understanding of changing nature of HR Department Roles with changing business nature as well as the varying nature of issues being faced with a slight shift in industry, business type or organization size etc.

Now when after having this detailed experience with a solid degree at back, the individual when go to teach he will be a real value addition to the students' knowledge base as he will not only tell them the theory or what is written in books but will be able to tell them what is practically required by the industry, how students can go about performing their core jobs in HR, what type of issues they can face and then giving practical tips to students that how they can cope with these issues. This way the HR faculty can give realistic job previews to students and can ensure that they get successful even at their initial careers.

3. Teachers need to have an experience of writing practitioner research papers/articles/blog in field of HRM.

A person who has developed his profile after getting a degree and a professional experience by working in HR department is sound enough to teach human resource management at university level. How can he move a step further for adding value to his teaching in our view is that he needs to be a bit research focused so that he can enlighten not only his own self but also add to his students exposures of the HRM field by performing research, writing articles or blogs on areas where he finds gap between industry practices which he has seen and the literature that he has studied on Human Resource management. The gist behind this suggestion is that the HR faculty member should be research focused for creating new knowledge and sharing that knowledge for the betterment of students' exposure and learning curve, not to get another research based degree for him.

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

4. Teacher should act as corporate trainer while transferring his practical knowledge to university students.

We all have preferences or ways of doing things. Some appear to be genetic, such as left- or right-handedness. Others are based on our previous experiences and often are based on the inclination of those who taught us. In a teaching style of a teacher the preferences can be modified to meet the situation and a training style can be adopted to give better understanding to participants. In a traditional class room arrangements the teachers usually follow a text book or their notes, use white boards or PowerPoint slides and carry on to deliver somewhat a mono tone lecture to participants where pupils start losing interest after initial ten minutes of the session. We (authors) here suggest that the teachers at university level need to adapt their teaching styles and opt the style of a corporate trainer who can transfer his field knowledge and experience in a procedural way while grabbing the attention of participants through his training styles. Trainers use practical terminologies in their discussion rather than the difficult conceptual vocabularies and they are much concerned about their volume, the rate of delivery and the tempo of speech. Trainers use their tone ups and downs to avoid monotony and keep the interest of participants in the session. They encourage the trainees to stretch beyond their limits during process of their learning and make sure that everyone participates by giving some reward or prizes to encourage participation and competition in the class. Their ability to ask probing questions force the trainees to open their minds and stay focused on the topic because the learning of the trainees will be better served by asking questions rather than providing too much information. But here the key is that trainers use direct or indirect open ended questions rather than pointing one specific question and asking for an answer. Lastly the trainers use humor as a training and attention grabbing tool. Humor includes jokes, tricks, stunts, funny stories, funny videos, funny words, which can be used for slight loosening up and entertainment as well as for learning.

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.

Conclusion

This is a view point paper by authors as a spot of initiation for researchers and practitioners to conduct researches in this area. Our objective to bring this subject under discussion for research is two folded, first there needs to be a research on how to reduce the gap that exists between university degrees and industry requirements for Human Resource field. Second, the specifications required for teaching human resource management at university level can be found which can result in making an impact on students through teacher experiences and teaching styles, so that they can be prepared as a solid corporate product. Since it is a view point paper there may be chances that people have different opinions. Our intention is just to forward a topic for research which can open a debate either in favor or against our view point and suggestions.

References

Ms. Saria Zaheer
Head HR & OD
Sapphire Textile Mills Ltd.

Mr. Wasif Mazhar
Manager OD and Talent
Gourmet Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Imran Khan
Asst. Manager Training & OD
Master Group Pakistan

Mr. Saad Masood
Officer Human Resources
Association for Academic Quality (AFAQ) Pakistan

Mr. Saleem A. Butt
Chief Operating Officer
Hascol Petroleum Limited.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 15th, 2011(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/306761/was-that-mba-worth-it/>)

Declaration: This paper was presented in 4th South Asian International Conference 2012 arranged by Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA). Copy Rights of this paper are reserved by AGBA. The paper is being shared by the authors only for learning purposes.