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The Future of IHRM Research: Continuing a Discussion…
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In May 2013, we started this discussion based on a panel session during the *1st Global Conference on International Human Resource Management* (held at Penn State University on May 10, 2013), including input from the following panel members: Chris Brewster, Dennis Briscoe, Paula Caligiuri, Tony Edwards, Mila Lazarova, Astrid Reichel, and Vlad Vaiman. This input started a conversation to guide us as scholars in the IHRM field on future topics, methodologies, and other issues we face. On May 15, 2015 we were able to continue this conversation during a further panel session (including: Torben Andersen, Lisbeth Claus, Michael Morley, and Miguel Olivas-Luján, chaired by Chris Brewster) during the *2nd Global Conference on IHRM* at Penn State. The points below merge the 2013 and 2015 thinking amongst our panelists:

- *Societal impact*: We need to consider not only the quality of our research and publications in the IHRM field, but also their relevance to society (practitioners, policy makers, etc.) and students. At one level, this is about putting our research results in a format and language easily accessible by all (e.g. two-minute highlights through social media; more white-papers; publications in local language, etc.). From a practice perspective, there are numerous new trends emerging in leading edge US companies, including: workers becoming more like contractors, being moved around the firm; making how work is organized more agile, including off-shoring arrangements; the importance of social media on a global scale affecting HRM processes such as recruitment; advancing technologies changing the way that performance is managed with more 'just-in-time' style apps for agile management, rather than attempting to use global ranking systems (too costly, include unconscious bias, not relevant on a global scale); training and development is being re-engineered to focus on firm-specific materials, and short interventions, again using social media; HR analytics are speeding up reaction times, producing data-driven HR. Many of these trends focus on speed and being smarter with less on a global scale in HRM, and many are also topics for which we have no academic literature. The gap between practice and research is potentially widening as the world of practice speeds up, potentially basing activities on research models that are outdated as they do not represent the temporal or short-term focus of emerging HRM trends. At the same time we have to balance this trend with ensuring our research is rigorous, and does not just jump between 'fads' as they emerge.

- *Research sampling to uncover real issues in real research sites*: There is still too much focus on research in a few 'high performing' MNCs from developed countries – what about the less well-known (smaller, family-owned, indigenous) firms: what do we know about them as they form the majority of organizations? What about state owned enterprises that are huge employers? Similarly, managerial and professional grade employees most commonly form our samples – what about other employee groups which make up the biggest share of workforces worldwide? What about the informal sector which is a huge part of employment especially in emerging markets? There is also too much focus on a few key 'WEIRD' countries (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) – what about the others? We need this information in order to really explore

universalist vs. contextual paradigms. This limitation is being addressed by a focus on emerging markets, but again we run the risk of only focusing on the 'BRICS' (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) rather than other countries too. In a similar vein, we should avoid focusing on the relevance of largely US practices in very different cultures given that they are being used by such a small sample within that country. Instead we need to understand more about what local practices are being used (perhaps a focus on grounded theory rather than hypothesis testing might help us to achieve this). We need to know more about what is going on in these countries and, in particular, the factors that lead to dominant HRM practices to help us theorize the field further. We need to understand our observations beyond describing them – answer the 'why' questions so that we are able to extrapolate ideas to apply to other relevant contexts.

- *Methodologies*:
  o When we do comparative analysis, be careful about what is being compared across countries – is it even comparable? Focus on using appropriate controls across countries so that we can really identify where effects are coming from.
  o We should focus more on our construct clarity and the definition of IHRM terms – e.g. we still do not have consensus on what is an 'expatriate' is (e.g. a person sent on assignment from an MNC versus a person living and working in another country), and how has this construct changed as practice has changed? We shouldn't be creating constructs for the sake of it – what can we learn from other parts of our field so that we become more integrated as a broad academic community?
  o 'Geocentric' research teams (i.e. avoiding a dominant country) are needed for good quality IHRM studies to understand the nuances of different countries. The process of co-creation of research would help to avoid blind spots in our research.
  o Wherever possible…collect data from multiple sources and at multiple time points…

- *Interdisciplinary research*: We should produce more interdisciplinary research, working with people applying different lenses to our research questions, but in the process, we should also be cognizant of the requirement for more explicit joining of disciplines. A recent trend has been to integrate the global talent management and global mobility literatures, which would be a case in point. Other sources of inspiration might include economics (labor mobility) and sociology (cultures, grounded theorizing) perspectives. Relatedly, consider alternative reasoning behind country variations in HRM beyond culture, such as religion, corruption, and power, which are largely being ignored. Unless the IHRM field can show cross-fertilization of theories and thoughts, the field will be slow to develop.

- *Additional suggested topics for future IHRM studies*:
  o Talent management: how does 'talent' and its definition vary between cultures (e.g. are older people wiser, or are high performers more valuable)? What are the implications for talent management based on these potential differences in meaning?
  o Disasters and violence disrupting the workplace (e.g. earthquakes, fires, etc.): how do national level disasters affect workplaces globally given the readily available information as and when events occur?
  o The 'dark side' of IHRM: research on how HRM is dealing with mental health problems, aging, etc. across cultures.
  o International issues within the domestic setting: as workforces become more cross-culturally diverse, we need a level of IHRM understanding that applies to domestic firms and not just multinationals.

As one panelist put it: "let's pick up the stuff we've been ignoring" and move our field forward! Please feel free to share your thoughts…

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