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## Short Communication

# Human resource competencies and roles in India

T Bayavanda Chinnappa<sup>1</sup>, N Karunakaran<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Management, People Institute of Management Studies, Munnad, Kasaragod, Kerala, India

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Economics, People Institute of Management Studies, Munnad, Kasaragod, Kerala, India



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### ABSTRACT

The 1990s era is Liberations, Privatizations and Globalizations, the Indian corporate sectors has been experiencing rapid changes in external environment due to opening up of the economy and thereby forcing the organizations to make internal adjustments to align with the changing situation. As a result of this, along with other functionaries, H R manager had to brace up for dealing with changing needs of the organization through development of new competencies and roles. The present paper is to find out new sets of competencies and roles required by H R managers to perform successfully in the context of changing business environment.

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## 1. Introduction

The 1990s were a wake up call for the human resource profession. The changing scenario of Liberations, Privatizations and Globalizations era the changing nature of the employment relationship in the 1990s and new competencies and roles required of HR professionals to be successful in the new environment. HR professionals know the new demands on them and competencies and roles required to be successful in this new environment.<sup>1</sup> However on the supply side, i.e., management institutes and other professional bodies, there is a need for a systematic description of new competencies and role requirements so that efforts can be made to best prepare the next generation of H R Practitioners. This paper is a step in the direction of finding out the competencies and roles perceived as important by HR practitioners in India.

## 2. Methods and Materials

A systematic search was conducted to understand the sets of competencies and roles required by H R managers to

perform successfully in the context of changing business environment. Important reports and articles were used for reference.

## 3. Results, Analysis and Discussion

The evolution of personnel function in India goes back to early 1920s when the Tata group implemented employee welfare measures like provident and leave rules. The Trade Union Act of 1926 gave formal recognition to the worker unions. The Royal Commission of 1932 recommended the appointment of labor officers. After independence, the Factories Act of 1948 outlined the welfare measures for workers as also the roles and responsibilities of labor welfare officers. All these developments laid the foundation of personnel function in India. In the 1950s, two professional bodies namely, Indian Institute of Personal Management (IIPM) and National Institute of Labour Management (NILM) were set up. In the 1960s, the scope of personnel function began to expand beyond the welfare aspects with three areas of labor welfare, Industrial relations and personnel administration developing as the constituent roles of the emerging profession. In the 1970s, the focus of the personnel function shifted towards greater

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [narankaran@gmail.com](mailto:narankaran@gmail.com) (N. Karunakaran).

organizational efficiency and effectiveness issues. In the 1980s, issues like human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) started invading the domain of personnel function.<sup>2</sup> The setting up of two professional bodies like National Human Resource Development Network (NHRDN) in 1985 and academy of HRD (AHRD) in 1990 further augmented the evolution of personnel function. These two bodies accelerated the shift of personnel function towards the human resources management and development orientation. Firms across the country responded by adopting HRM/HRD nomenclature for their personnel function and appointed professionals to head these functions. After initiation of economic reforms in 1991, there is an increased pressure and expectation from the HR function that it plays a strategic role and become an active player in achieving the corporate goals. Further, the recent liberalization of economic policies and the increased level of competition by overseas firms have put a lot of pressure on the human resources function in domestic firms to prepare and develop their employees, so that these firms are able to compete with overseas firms in skills, efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> The inclination of firms, which have come under pressure from economic liberalization, has been to look for an answer to human resource development rather than to human resource management. Thus in turn has made the human resource management as a center-stage function and HR practitioner a key player in facilitating development of competitive advantage through people. As a result of this, HR practitioner is expected to possess new set of competencies for performing new role expectations, however, no empirical work has been carried out in the Indian context to identify the new competencies and roles required to be a successful HR practitioner in the emerging economic environment. The recent changes in the competitive and economic framework has resulted in a lot of debate regarding the relevance of existing competencies of HR managers in the new millennium and new competencies required to cope with emerging challenges. Rao 1990, had developed a checklist of HR competencies grouped under three categories namely; Professional knowledge, Professional skill, and Personal attitudes and values.<sup>4</sup> Marquardt and Engel 1993 identified 16 competencies that HR Practitioners need to be effective in cross-cultural settings. These include broadly, respect for other cultures,

tolerance of ambiguity, commitment to HR principles and practices, initiative, and a sense of humor. They further argued that even among domestic HR practitioners, many are ignorant about their own firm's corporate cultures—their histories, rituals, structures, strategies, communication processes and symbols.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In the business context, HR professionals who would have likely to succeed today, expected to play new roles, and to be able to play those roles, they need new competencies. As a result of the Human Resource Competency analysis, in India, greater understanding of the competencies needed by HR professionals and agendas needed by HR departments to affect business performance is quite relevant and updated.

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#### Author biography

**T Bayavanda Chinnappa**, Assistant Professor

**N Karunakaran**, Principal and Research Guide in Economics

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