

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING AND PRACTICE

Helen De Cieri, Marilyn Fenwick & Kate Hutchings

Working Paper 59/03
August 2003

WORKING PAPER SERIES

ISSN 1327-5216

Abstract

Over the last two decades there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of organisations that have internationalised their operations, assisted and encouraged to do so by the removal of national protectionist trade policies, deregulation of international fiscal and monetary markets, and rapid advances in communications and distribution channels. The international movement of labour that has been concomitant with such expansion of international business has meant that issues associated with the management of human resources across international borders have become of increasing importance to international human resource managers and academics. The research on which this paper is based examines the pedagogy and practice of IHRM in Australia and shares knowledge about critical developments within this field. It reports international human resource management (IHRM) scholars' and practitioners' understanding of the major issues for teaching and practice in IHRM and elucidates current and future issues challenging this field.

This paper is a work in progress. Material in the paper cannot be used without permission of the author.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING AND PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades academicians and practitioners of international management have paid increasing attention to the impact of globalisation on the management of human resources across national boundaries. Just as international businesses have turned their attention to issues such as expatriate management, managing in other cultures, working with impatriates and managing diversity in multicultural domestic workforces, so too have academicians advanced understanding in these areas through the development of a distinct sub-field within the management discipline, namely international human resource management (IHRM). As more markets internationalise, more nations become integrated into the international world economy, and more businesses choose to expand their operations across national borders, issues around the people management and career development of both international managers and those they manage in international operations, becomes more critical to the international strategic planning and operations of firms. As this occurs, the importance of IHRM as a field of academic endeavour is becoming more pronounced.

We suggest that for the field of IHRM to develop, both practically and pedagogically, it is critical that knowledge is shared and different perspectives of IHRM academicians, educators and practitioners made known. However, knowledge sharing is not automatic and strategies to achieve it are not clearly elucidated by either academicians or practitioners. It seems that in the management/organisational behaviour (M/OB) field, from which HRM and IHRM evolved, knowledge sharing between academicians and practitioners cannot by any means be a taken-for-granted assumption. Concern about a gap between academic research, the basis for pedagogy, and management practice is not new. Rynes, Bartunek and Daft (2001), recent guest co-editors for a special research forum titled, "Knowledge transfer between academics and practitioners" for the *Academy of Management Journal*, report a "crisis in the field of organizational science". Its main symptom is that the more sophisticated our research technology has become, the less useful it has been seen for solving their organisational problems by practitioners. They note "[o]bservers have long noted a considerable gap between organizational research findings and management practices" (2001: 340). The co-editors' introduction to the research forum provides evidence of the pervasiveness of a management research-practice gap. They further comment that others have shown managers typically do not use academic research or academic research findings when developing their management practices. Moreover, when organisations agree to participate in academic research projects, generally they are not interested in perusing the results of survey/interview data made available to them by the academicians at the completion of the data collection phase or the project overall. Instances where researchers consult with practitioners when formulating their research questions are also rare, according to Rynes and Trank (1999). Practitioners perceive research results to be useful according to the degree to which they can interpret them, and when they are designed collaboratively and in context. Mohrman, Gibson and Mohrman's (2001) findings indicated practitioners found research results most useful when they are "jointly interpreted with researchers and are informative to self-design activities". Mohrman *et al.* (2001: 369) define 'self-design' as those actions and cognitive processes that individuals use to reorganise and redesign their organisations in accordance with the dynamism of organisational environments.

In 1989, Cyn D Fisher wrote that a practicing HR manager lamented the fact that international HR managers are working in an information void and needed support from academics through research and courses in International HRM (Fisher, 1989:160). At the time she also noted that conceptual papers were beginning to appear, and some empirical research on strategic HRM had been reported. However, she suggested that a research-practice gap clearly existed, with research lagging behind the current needs of practicing HR executives. Moreover, she claimed that the state of practice in most organisations lagged far behind the state of knowledge (Fisher, 1989:174). Further, despite past investigations into the gap between the "normative recommendations of organizational researchers" (Rynes *et al.*, 2001: 340) and management practices, it appears that there has been no attempt to investigate the existence, nature and extent of any such gap in the specific genre of IHRM, some 14 years after Fisher's (1989) article.

One way in which academicians do transfer their research-based knowledge to current and future practitioners is through the pedagogy of their IHRM courses. The primary objective of the research presented in this paper is to analyse both IHRM managers' and scholars' understanding of the pedagogy and practice of IHRM. In aiming to develop understanding of the major issues for teaching and working in IHRM in Australia, our research has entailed surveying key IHRM university academics and IHRM practitioners around Australia for their views on current issues and future directions for this field. The research is designed to: compare academicians' and practitioners' views about IHRM, including innovations in IHRM; to determine the extent to which the current teaching of IHRM reflects those views; and to identify issues and challenges in the pedagogy and practice of IHRM. We intend the findings to prompt discourse about the extent to which IHRM pedagogy and practice are aligned, and how academicians and practitioners, together, can assist in the development of the IHRM field. The following section reviews academic research that has provided the basis for IHRM pedagogy and to an extent, IHRM practice.

DEVELOPMENTS IN IHRM TEACHING AND PRACTICE

As the pace of internationalisation has accelerated, and the scope broadened to include various sizes and types of organisation, the need for cross-cultural awareness, and understanding of the daily operations of international businesses has become more salient. In both academic circles and the popular press much has been written about the need for individuals and organisations to be cross-culturally sensitive, adaptive and responsive when managing across national borders. The belief in the need for cross-culturally sensitivity and adaptation came from recognition that culture shock (defined by Oberg, 1960, as feelings of frustration and alienation in a foreign culture) can lead to inability to adjust to the foreign culture and ultimately to expatriate failure. Expatriate failure was initially defined as being the measurable financial costs of early return of expatriates and disruption to international operations (Garonzik et. al., 2000; Milkovich and Newman, 1996) or as expatriates who are not retained by the organisation after completion of the assignment. Less readily measurable financial costs incurred by expatriates who may complete international assignments but who contribute to loss of business confidence, damaged relations with the host country market and, potentially, the host country government through committal of cultural faux pas have also been included in the definition of expatriate failure (Caudron, 1991; Copeland and Griggs, 1985; Harzing, 2002; Harvey, 1985; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Selmer, 2002; Stephens and Black, 1991; Tung, 1990). It also includes the immeasurable psychological costs for the expatriate him/herself through his/her non-adjustment on business and social levels (Grant, 1997; Shaffer and Harrison, 1998) and difficulties for companies' future expatriate recruitment (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, and Stroh, 1999).

Since the 1970s a plethora of literature in the field of IHRM has highlighted the vital importance of organisations providing comprehensive, strategic, pre-departure preparation programs for expatriates managing abroad; most particularly highlighting the value of cross-cultural capability (Babcock and Du Babcock, 2001; Caligiuri, 2000; Forster, 2000; Osman-Gani, 2000; Sargent and Matthews, 1998; Solomon, 1996) for adaptability and avoiding expatriate failure (for a thorough review of expatriation, see Black *et al.*, 1999). At the genesis of research in this field was a focus on expatriate management functions. These included recruitment and selection (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Harvey and Novicevic, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Stedham and Nechita, 1994; Tung, 1982), training and development (Baliga and Baker, 1995; Caudron, 1991; Desphande and Viswesvaran, 1992; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Selmer, 2001; Tung, 1988; Zakaria, 2000), support (De Cieri, Dowling and Taylor, 1991; Harris, 1989; Hippler, 2000; Kraimer, 2001), performance assessment (Caligiuri, 2000; Fenwick, De Cieri and Welch, 1999), compensation (Cunningham, 2001; Harsch-Porter, 2001; Hunt, 2001; Milkovich and Newman, 1996), repatriation (Bender and Fish, 2000; Harvey, 1989; Vermond, 2001). Management of workforces in other cultures was also a theme in this body of literature (Harris and Moran, 1989; Solomon, 1995).

Further research within this area has also considered the role of dual career couples in international assignments, the spouse and family's role in adaptation to international assignments (De Cieri *et al.*, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Stephens and Black, 1991; Riusala and Suutari, 2000; Tung, 1988), the importance of involving the family in selection and training (Forster, 2000; Halcrow, 1999; Ledman, 2001; Tung, 1982; 1988), and issues associated with women expatriates (Adler, 1993; Harris, 2002; Linehan and Walsh, 1999; Tyler, 2001). In addition to the literature on generalist preparation, a body of

literature has grown around preparation for specific cultural environments (see, for instance, Hutchings and Murray, 2002; Selmer, 2002; Tung and Worm, 2001).

De Cieri and Dowling (1999) suggest that building upon these analyses of expatriates and their management, three broad approaches have developed in the IHRM literature. These developmental approaches can be seen to fairly accurately correlate with developments in practice. De Cieri and Dowling (1999) suggest that early work in this field emphasised a cross-cultural management approach and examined human behaviour within organisations from an international perspective, as noted in the work of authors such as Adler (2001) and Phatak (1997). It can be regarded as *building IHRM*, with its focus on identifying the likely impact of cross-culturally similar and different human behaviour on the prescriptive elements of HRM such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and reward management. The second approach is argued to have developed from the comparative industrial relations and HRM literature and sought to describe, compare, and analyse HRM systems across various countries (Jackson, 2002; Shenkar, 1995; see also Bowen, Galang and Pillai, 2002). This literature incorporates discussions about convergence and divergence in HRM practices, corporate and social responsibility and analyses of the impact of political, legislative, cultural and developmental factors of specific subsidiary nations on the practice and policies of international organisations. Some aspects of HRM cross-nationally have also been addressed in the international management and employment relations literature (see, for instance, Deresky, 2000; Hodgetts and Luthans, 2000). This approach reflects a focus on *realigning IHRM*, emphasising cross-cultural management, and analysis of comparative HRM systems.

A third, and most recent, approach seeks to focus on aspects of HRM in multinational firms in respect to implications of the process of internationalisation for the activities and policies of HRM. This literature takes account of the relevance that IHRM may have for small and internationalising firms that also face significant international management issues (Dowling *et al.*, 1999). This third approach incorporates the increasingly strategic focus of organisations that seek to outsource many of the prescriptive HRM functions to free IHRM managers to examine issues of strategic importance such as diversity management, creation of global teams and development of global consciousness (For a summary of the diversity management literature, see Albrecht, 2000). These changes also allow HRM managers to position themselves alongside other first order business operations such as research and development, accounting, and marketing, and to take their place in decision making in the early stages of a company's establishment of international operations.

This third approach, the strategically advanced practice of *steering via IHRM*, with its recognition of the dualities confronting HRM (Evans, Pucik and Barsoux, 2002; see also Evans and Genadry, 1998) suggests that HRM departments will not just become involved in the international arena in respect to ad hoc management of expatriates and employees in other cultures. Rather, HRM departments will be increasingly involved in the whole process of internationalisation from start-up of international operations and acquisitions and mergers, through detailing strategic levels of IHRM, managing the expatriation process and preparation of expatriates for managing in other cultures, steering the strategic expansion of international operations, managing multicultural domestic workforces, managing diversity, engineering of global teams, and engendering of global consciousness. Such an approach recognises HRM's role in assisting the development of flexible, adaptive international organisations and highlights the role that HRM can play when it broadens its function to that of change agent in transforming the global thinking of organisations (for a discussion of the boundaryless world, see Sanchez, 2000). In line with organisational developments in IHRM, revised editions of IHRM texts (Dowling *et al.*, 1999) and newer IHRM texts (Evans, Pucik and Barsoux, 2002) also highlight a greater strategic focus in their discussion of IHRM issues¹.

Thus, the view of the need for IHRM to be a strategic business partner is clearly expressed by IHRM academicians, and in our pedagogical development, but whose view is it? Is it a view exclusively espoused by academicians or do they also espouse the view of practitioners? While this question has not been addressed in empirical IHRM research until now, within the broader field of HRM, recent Australian

¹ We note that while De Cieri and Dowling (1999) refer to three distinct sets of literature within IHRM, the terms *building*, *aligning* and *steering* HRM have been adopted for our discussion from categorisations developed by Pucik, and Barsoux (2002).

research has revealed that senior human resource managers are adopting the more strategic role advocated by researchers, particularly through increasing representation in senior executive committees that regularly meet to discuss organisation-level HRM (Fisher, Dowling and Garnham, 1999). Fisher *et al.* (1999) reported that the senior HR managers they surveyed perceived a role change and strongly agreed that HRM policies need to reflect a strategic focus and to be integrated with business strategy. An interesting consideration for IHRM arising from this finding is whether, given what senior managers do (look at the global, big picture) and what operatives do (the day to day practicalities, like arranging visas and compensation), their views on IHRM are aligned. Does the 'line of sight' (Boswell and Boudreau, 2001) of IHRM officers (lower level managers) reach global horizons, or is it limited to administrative functions?

The research presented in this paper builds upon previous research in the field of IHRM and fills a gap in the literature by assessing whether the surveyed cohort of academics and practitioners view IHRM as being part of the process of strategic development of internationalising organisations. It considers whether those surveyed advocate a) *building HRM* (with a focus on the prescriptive elements of HRM such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and reward management), b) *realigning HRM* (with a focus on cross-cultural management, and analysis of comparative HRM systems) or c) the strategically advanced practice of *steering via HRM* (reflecting the role of HRM in the development of flexible, adaptable international organisations).

Our research questions are as follows:

- (1) What is the structure and extent of formalisation of IHRM teaching/learning in Australian universities?
- (2) What is the structure and extent of formalisation of IHRM in organisational practice?
- (3) What do academicians and practitioners view as the current issues in IHRM?
- (4) What are viewed by academicians and practitioners as the most important issues in the coming 3-5 years;
- (5) What roles should IHRM academicians and practitioners play in assisting the development of the IHRM field?
- (6) What are the IHRM areas most in need of improvement within organisations; and
- (7) Are there evident innovations or examples of best practice in managing IHRM within organisations?

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample

Two surveys were conducted in late 2002. The first survey was e-mailed to 62 academicians, representing all 39 universities in Australia. We received 29 usable responses (a response rate of 46.8 per cent), representing all Australian states and territories except one. The respondents included self-designated IHRM academicians in 22 universities. The non-respondents were generally academicians who reported that they did not teach or research directly in IHRM.

The second survey was e-mailed to 1645 members of the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) who had previously registered their professional interest in IHRM. Due to the broad nature of this database, all members with an *interest* in IHRM were surveyed, with the knowledge that only a small number would be IHRM practitioners. Eighty-seven responses were received. Respondents' organisations were generally representative of major Australian industries, with 19% in engineering, electronics, telecommunications, or IT; 13% in banking, financial legal or insurance; and 11% in management consultancy. Their organisational headquarters were most likely to be in Australia (43%), the U.K. and Europe (20%) or the U.S.A. (16%). The number of countries in which the firms operated ranged from 1 to 200. In terms of organisational size, the sample appeared to be bi-modal, with 55% having 500 employees or less, and 48% with more than 1000 employees. The number of expatriate employees ranged from none to 5,000.

Measures

In respect to the formalisation of IHRM, the IHRM academicians were asked about: the IHRM subjects taught at their university within the broad areas of international management, business and communication,

and the levels at which these units are taught. The practitioners were asked about: the relative centralisation or decentralisation of IHRM activities within their organisation; the formalisation of specific policies on IHRM for those employed on international assignments; and whether cost analyses are undertaken for individual international assignments. Both academicians and practitioners were questioned about: what they view as the three most important current issues in IHRM; what they see as being the most important issues in the coming 3-5 years; the role IHRM academicians and practitioners should play in assisting the development of the IHRM field; the three IHRM areas most in need of improvement within organisations; and areas they consider to be most innovative or examples of best practice in managing IHRM within organisations.

The majority of survey questions were developed for this project. Some of the qualitative survey questions were adapted from Wright, Dyer and Takla (1999). The responses were content-analysed and categorised by themes, and the most frequently cited categories are reported below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structure and Extent of Formalisation of IHRM Teaching in Australian Universities

With regard to our first research question, we found that an IHRM unit² is being taught at 13 of the 22 universities at undergraduate level, and at 17 of the 22 universities at graduate level. Related units include international management, international business, cross-cultural management, comparative industrial relations, and cross-cultural communication. It is interesting to note that few universities offer units in comparative HRM (4 undergraduate, 2 graduate) and that the postgraduate units tend to be more interdisciplinary in focus and cover considerably more topics than the undergraduate units.

Structure and Extent of Formalization of IHRM in Organizational Practice

With regard to our second research question, we asked managers to indicate the structure that best describes how IHRM activities are organised in their organisation. Whilst some organisations indicated that two or more structures were in place, the structure most common amongst respondents was a strategy where responsibility was decentralised to regional or country headquarters (47.1%). A centralised structure with IHRM activities being organized via a worldwide headquarters was also common (40.2%). Much less frequent was the use of a decentralisation of IHRM activities to individual business units (16.1%) and the outsourcing of some IHRM activities (10.3%). It was interesting to note that none of the responding organisations outsourced all IHRM activities. This directly contrasts Pucik, and Barsoux's (2002) suggestion that the majority of HRM functional activities should be outsourced by organisations, thus 'freeing up' HRM professionals to take their place alongside other senior managers in defining the strategic scope of the organisation.

We also asked managers to indicate the total number of paid employees working in IHRM roles in their organisation. Fifteen respondents reported no paid employees working in IHRM roles. The most common responses were nineteen respondents (27%), reporting one paid employee working in IHRM roles, and 24 respondents (34%) reporting between 2 and 9 paid employees working in IHRM roles.

To investigate the extent of IHRM policy formalisation, we asked managers to indicate whether a range of policies were in place (yes/no) or currently being developed. The results are shown in Table 1. Around 50 per cent of organisations have policies in place for expatriate management activities such as remuneration, performance appraisal, selection and placement, visa arrangements, and relocation. However, around two-thirds of organisations reported having no policies in place for areas such as employee training for international assignments, repatriate career management, industrial relations for multiple international locations, and evaluation of IHRM activities.

² A 'unit' is a one-semester course of study, also known as a 'subject', or as a 'course' in the USA. In Australian universities a unit typically comprises 39 hours of class contact or equivalent by distance education.

Table 1: IHRM Policies

IHRM Areas	Yes (%)		No (%)		Policies are currently being developed (%)	
HR Planning for I.A.*	32	(40.5%)	36	(45.6%)	11	(13.9%)
Recruitment for I.A.	38	(46.9%)	36	(44.4%)	7	(8.6%)
Selection & placement for I.A.	46	(55.4%)	31	(37.3%)	6	(7.2%)
Expatriate visa arrangements	48	(58.5%)	29	(35.4%)	5	(6.1%)
Employee training for I.A.	22	(27.2%)	53	(65.4%)	6	(7.4%)
Career devt. involving I.A.	39	(48.1%)	27	(33.3%)	15	(18.5%)
P.A. for I.A.	44	(54.3%)	31	(38.3%)	6	(7.4%)
Remuneration for I.A.	47	(58.0%)	29	(35.8%)	5	(6.2%)
Expatriate taxation	38	(46.3%)	39	(47.6%)	5	(6.1%)
Repatriate career management	19	(23.8%)	54	(67.5%)	7	(8.8%)
Evaluation of IHRM activities	22	(27.5%)	53	(66.3%)	5	(6.3%)
IR for multiple international locations	12	(14.5%)	59	(71.1%)	12	(14.5%)
Diversity management	24	(30.8%)	45	(57.7%)	9	(11.5%)
Relocation (housing, education, etc.)	45	(55.6%)	26	(32.1%)	10	(12.3%)
Other IHRM activities	1	(4.5%)	10	(45.5%)	11	(50.0%)

*I.A. = international assignments

Current Issues in IHRM

Our third research question explored the academics' and practitioners views on and awareness of developments in the area of IHRM. The issues identified most commonly by academicians as the most important current issues for IHRM were: a strategic focus; research and theoretical issues; employment issues (such as visas), cross-cultural issues, and dual-career couples. In contrast, managers identified the most important current issues for IHRM as remuneration and benefits; cost management, recruitment/selection, formal IR policies, and taxation issues. It is interesting to note that there is no 'match'.

Future Issues in IHRM

When asked to consider the IHRM issues likely to become important in the next 3-5 years, in response to our fourth research question, academicians nominated: global political risk/security; increased research and theory development; a strategic focus; remuneration; and top management support for IHRM. In contrast, managers identified remuneration; cost management, recruitment and selection; employee retention; and formal organisational policies. Managers' responses are similar to those for the previous item. Both academicians and managers recognised remuneration as an emerging issue.

Given the focus in the academic literature on the need for organisations to take a more strategic approach in their HRM practices internationally, and that Fisher et al.'s (1999) research suggests that senior managers are claiming to favour a more strategic focus, it is perhaps alarming that the practitioner respondents to this survey were overwhelmingly focused on operative level issues of cost management and visa processing. In terms of practitioner roles (at least in larger organisations) there is a gap between what senior managers do (a macro focus on the organisation's position globally and the linkages between HR and other first order strategies of the organisation) and what operatives do (a much more micro focus on the day-to-day

practicalities of managing expatriates' postings in terms of their compensation, visas and other logistical/relocation matters).

It should be noted, though, that as this survey was administered through AHRI and responded to by all those who claimed an interest in IHRM, we are not able to ascertain the actual positions held by respondents. It is feasible, then, that a significant number of respondents may have been quite junior-level managers and/or operatives. Hence, the operational focus of their job may have skewed their responses in favour of the issues with which they deal daily and, accordingly, the results do not reflect the strategic focus identified by academicians that could also be expected to be the responses of more senior managers.

IHRM Roles for Academicians and Practitioners

Our fifth research question sought to identify both groups' perceptions of the roles they should play in assisting the development of the IHRM field. Academicians wanted to do more research, develop theory and build links with industry, while managers would like to see academicians becoming more 'practical and relevant' to industry. This presents something of a challenge! With regard to the role practitioners should play, academicians felt that managers should support their research and be more strategic. Managers were enthusiastic that practitioners should learn, share knowledge and disseminate information, and be more strategic. At least they agree on some things!

Improvements and Innovations in IHRM

To address research question six, we then asked for the three IHRM areas most in need of improvement within organisations. Both academicians and practitioners nominated repatriation/career development as their number one issue. Other frequently cited issues were also remarkably similar between the two groups. Finally, our seventh research question asked both groups to identify areas they consider to be most innovative or examples of best practice in managing IHRM within organisations. An alarmingly high percentage said they had not heard of any! Several innovative and fascinating practices were nominated by academicians and practitioners.

Clearly, the two groups have quite different perspectives of the issues facing their field of expertise. We suggest that such a gap between researchers and practitioners presents a serious challenge for IHRM. The following implications for IHRM academicians and practitioners are proposed as a tool for reflection and as a first step toward meeting the challenge.

Implications for Academicians, Practitioners and Meeting the Challenges of IHRM

Implications for Academicians

It is clear from our practitioner responses, that academic IHRM is perceived irrelevant and removed from reality. Given, that the two constituencies could be considered to hold different roles the field of IHRM, should academicians be concerned about this perception? -In their findings concerning the struggle for credibility by the behavioural sciences in many U.S. colleges of business, Rynes and Trank (1999) offer the following comments about HRM that seem relevant to our research. They note, from an educational psychology perspective, that perceptions of relevance positively affect students' motivation to undertake particular courses. The most effective way to become more relevant is to help students to reach career goals. That is, if students perceive particular behavioural science courses such as HRM ones to be relevant to achieving their goals to practice HRM after graduation, then they are more likely to undertake them. The changing environment of academic institutions in the U.S., is characterised by increasing emphasis on student preferences as a basis for resource allocations. This trend is also evident in Australian universities, so "M[anagement]/OB and HR would appear to be well advised to develop strategic responses to current perceptions" (Rynes and Trank, 1999: 817). Therefore, we suggest that while course popularity alone is not an indicator of academic merit, ensuring that our IHRM courses remain relevant to and accessible by IHRM practitioners *does* appear to have academic merit. That this might consequently attract more students to our courses and help to ensure course viability appears to be in the best interests of present and future IHRM academicians and practitioners.

Using the organisational field to guide pedagogy is not new to IHRM academicians. Indeed, the collection of stories of leading M/OB academicians in the U.S. edited by André and Frost (1997) reveals the unanimous view that research, including field research, not just guides but enhances pedagogy. However, Rynes and Trank (1999: 815) suggest that a multidisciplinary approach be incorporated more into the lectures, case studies and discussions of HRM. They claim past research suggests “that full time business students are most likely to be interested in consulting, financial or marketing careers. Therefore, one way to increase relevance for these students is to ally M/OB content with material from these other disciplines”. They note this evident already in management approaches like Kaplan and Norton’s (1993) balanced scorecard, which links financial, operational, customer, and HR goals and measurements. We suggest that such a multidisciplinary approach is also implied in the ‘HRM as a business partner’, steering role for HRM reviewed earlier. In order for IHRM practitioners to assume this role credibly, they must possess knowledge and understanding of their organisation’s other first order business operations (Ulrich, 1997).

This view was unanimously volunteered by senior IHRM practitioners from 11 multinational enterprises well known in Australia, including Unilever, HBSC (Hong Kong Shanghai Bank), Cadbury-Schweppes, Shell and BP, at a recent research round table for academics and practitioners held by the Centre for Research into Expatriate Management at Cranfield University, Great Britain (at which the second author was an attendee). These people were asked to identify the major problems confronting HRM in their organisations and they indicated that lack of business knowledge by up and coming HRM practitioners created a lack of credibility with other senior management about the worthiness of HRM to be considered a business partner. Of course, the dilemma for many IHRM academicians is one of internal politics. The issues here appear to mainly concern the need to stake out and ‘protect’ ‘intellectual territory’ through clear demarcations between disciplines, and to minimise the negative consequences, including student dissatisfaction, of content duplication across disciplines and courses.

Other longer term solutions to ensuring the relevance to practice of IHRM pedagogy drawn from Rynes and Trank (1999: 818) concern the use of text books, improved research on teacher effectiveness and “types of research likely to have high utility in the classroom”. They claim text books form the basis of most HRM teaching in the U.S., and that these are usually structured around HRM tasks and activities, and as such have very limited scope for demonstrating how HRM knowledge can resolve organisational challenges such as corporate failure, and developing synergy across business units. They suggest experimenting with using texts that are organised around specific business problems might be worthwhile. Reviewing texts used in the University courses identified in the present study in light of these suggestions would be a prudent exercise. With regard to high-utility research, recent HRM research that links HRM practices to organisational success, by Becker and Gerhart (1996) for example, is recommended as likely to reduce student skepticism about the importance of HRM to organisational success. Encouraging students to analyse HRM problems from “financial, consulting, or marketing perspectives” is another suggestion for providing students with the business skills they need to achieve their HRM career goals (Rynes and Trank, 1999: 815).

Further, though we did not investigate it, we suspect that student/practitioner skepticism is not the only skepticism in play to undermine the relationship between IHRM academicians and practitioners. What about academicians? In their quest to remain objective and to maintain the traditional positivist scientific stance, we suggest many academic researchers may doubt the value of practitioner participation in research. Consider the negative views in the academic literature reviewed by Rynes *et al.* (2001). They concluded that many academicians were concerned that collaboration with practitioners might lead to pursuit of managerial interests over those of employees or society at large or the conduct of narrow, short term and or commercially profitable research studies only. Another concern identified was that research progress would be curtailed by “corporate restrictions on data collection, interpretation, and dissemination” (Rynes *et al.*, 2001: 342). The last point regarding dissemination is somewhat ironic if we consider that academicians have been criticised for making their research inaccessible to practitioners by virtue of publishing in academic journals rather than in practitioner literature. Action research (Rynes and Trank, 1999) and the modification of conventional research designs to allow for collaboration in design and interpretation of results and perspective taking by academicians and practitioners (Mohrman *et al.*, 2001) study are two strategies that have shown it is possible to produce research that is at once both academically rigorous and useful to practitioners.

Implications for Practitioners

Academicians surveyed in this research project view participation in their research by practitioners to an important role in the development of IHRM. Participation can occur at two levels: practitioners can be members of a sample group or organisation being studied and they can be a part of the research design team, working alongside academicians. Anecdotal evidence from academia suggests growing problems with organisational access and participant response rates, both internationally and within Australia. For example, a recent article by an academician in the popular Australian press suggested that participation in research and development by Australian business was well below the OECD average and that attitudinal problems towards research and education were barriers to Australia becoming a “knowledge nation” (Marginson, 2001: 17).

The Future: Collaborating to Meet the Challenges of IHRM?

Considerable discussion has appeared in the literature regarding the need for organisations to continually benchmark their managerial and other business practices, including HRM, if they are to achieve and retain international competitiveness (Ulrich, 1997). Concomitant with this literature is another body of literature that specifically examines comparative HRM practices/activities and suggests those that might be used internationally as best practice (see for example, Von Glinow, Drost and Teagarden, 2002). Much of this literature, however, relies on description by academicians of what is done in particular organisations, often limited to one nation, rather than cross-national, studies. Moreover, as we noted earlier, practitioners tend to be somewhat reticent to read academicians’ research and academicians, for their part, tend not to publish in the practitioner-friendly journals. This then means that much organisational information about best practice in IHRM tends to be anecdotal and not shared between academicians and practitioners. What is missing in this equation is a feedback loop in which practitioners respond to the academicians’ theories and models and suggest whether their experience is consistent with the academic assessments of their practice and academicians, in turn, respond with any necessary adjustments and make their findings more widely readable and accessible. Such activity is consistent with recommendations by Mohrman *et al* (2001). While improved dialogue between the groups necessitates a dismantling of current barriers to knowledge sharing, to do so can greatly increase the potential to expand available information about international best practice.

A further challenge of IHRM is the gap between the strategic focus of academicians and the operational focus of practitioners indicated in this survey. Even allowing for the fact that our results may represent a specific cohort of lower-level managers/operatives, there is still need to improve dialogue to ensure that teaching/learning has relevance to practitioners (and students as future practitioners) and that practitioners more readily access theory and model development that may detail best practice in IHRM. In essence it seems essential that a) practitioner knowledge of what other organisations do in respect to IHRM, and their potential to benchmark against this, is increased, and b) teaching/learning reflects what students will actually do when they become practitioners while also maintaining the potential to broaden students’ horizons to the more macro, global, strategic picture. Both of these goals can be achieved by a few simple actions that bring the two groups closer together.

In respect to enhancing practitioners’ knowledge of international best practice, it seems advisable to enhance the research linkages they have with academicians. In order to avoid the historical unwillingness to be involved in the development of research questions, practitioners need to be involved in specific organisation-based projects that provide them with the ‘relevance’ of information which they seek but which can also benchmark them against their industry competitors. Such joint projects can also be used to present organisation-specific workshops that involve participants from academia and industry, and industry partners can be encouraged to also jointly present research findings in academic fora, such as conferences. In order to enhance perceptions that teaching/learning does not have enough relevancy to industry, use of industry guest lecturers could be encouraged by academicians. Moreover, the use of organisations for site visit case studies and student internships can enhance the ‘real world’ focus of IHRM teaching. To do not only provides students with opportunities to experience the day-to-day realities of organisational life but also potentially provides the opportunity for the students to transfer some of their strategy-focused learning to the organisation.

Finally, debate between practitioners and academicians can be effectively enhanced by simply increasing the contact the two groups have with each other. This can involve increasing the attendance each has at the other

group's seminars, increasing the representation of academicians on industry boards, increasing the representation of practitioners on university advisory committees, and establishing joint working groups to dialogue current issues in IHRM. One such example of the latter is a networking group in which the third author participates. Formed in 2001, the IHRM Advisory Group includes representatives from academia as well as IHRM practitioners who meet monthly to debate current issues in IHRM as well as to discuss particular problems that may have been encountered by individuals in member organisations. The forum provides an opportunity for brainstorming ideas as well as sharing new developments in theory and praxis.

CONCLUSION

In respect to the categorisations of HRM referred to earlier, we have concluded that overall, the academic responses could be best categorised as focused *on realigning* IHRM (with a focus on cross-cultural management, and analysis of comparative IHRM systems) and those of the practitioners as *building* IHRM (with a focus on the prescriptive elements of IHRM such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and reward management). While this presents a gap between the groups, there is some common ground; with responses from both groups suggest that they some recognition of the need to develop the strategically advanced practice of *steering via IHRM* (see Evans, Pucik and Barsoux, 2002). We argue that the development of pedagogy and practice in the field must involve iterative steps based on effective dialogue and knowledge sharing between these two key groups. While our paper begins this reflexivity, the next step is to initiate opportunities for academicians and practitioners to collaboratively examine the reasons for the gaps and their implications, and to develop strategies/take steps towards narrowing this gap for the mutual benefit of practitioners, academicians and students.

REFERENCES

- Adler, N. (1993) 'Women Mangers in a Global Economy', *HR Magazine*, 38:52-55.
- Adler, N. (2001) *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, 4th edn. Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing.
- Albrecht, M.A. (ed.) (2000) *International HRM : Managing Diversity in the Workplace*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- André, R., and Frost, P. (eds) (1997) *Researchers Hooked on Teaching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Babcock, R.D., and Du-Babcock, B. (2001) 'Language-based Communication Zones in International Business Communication', *The Journal of Business Communication*, 38(4): 372-412.
- Baliga, G., and Baker, J. (1985) 'Multinational Corporate Policies for Expatriate Managers', *Advancements in Management Journal*, 3: 31-38.
- Becker, B., and Gerhardt, B. (1996) 'The Impact of Human Resource Management on Organizational Performance: Progress and Prospects', *Academy of Management Journal*, 39: 779-801.
- Bender, S., and Fish, A. (2000) 'The Transfer of Knowledge and the Retention of Expertise: The Continuing Need for Global Assignments', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 4(2): 125-135.
- Black, J.S. Gregersen, H., Mendenhall, M., and Stroh, L. (eds) (1999) *Globalizing People through International Assignments*. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- Black, J., Mendenhall, M., and Oddou, G. (1991) 'Toward a Comprehensive Model of International Adjustment: An Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives', *Academy of Management Review*, 16(2): 291-317.
- Boswell, W.R., and Boudreau, J.W. (2001) 'How Leading Companies Create, Measure and Achieve Strategic Results Through "Line of Sight"', *Management Decision*, 39(10): 851-859.
- Bowen, D.E., Galang, C., and Pillai, R. (2002) 'The Role of Human Resource Management: An Exploratory Study of Cross-Country Variance', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 40(1): 123-145.
- Caligiuri, P. (1999) 'The Ranking of Scholarly Journals in International Human Resource Management', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(3): 515-519.
- Caligiuri, P. (2000) 'Selecting Expatriates for Personality Characteristics: A Moderating Effect of Personality on the Relationship Between Host National Contact and Cross-Cultural Adjustment', *Management International Review*, 40(1): 61-80.
- Caudron, S. (1991) 'Training Ensures Success Overseas', *Personnel Journal*, 70: 27-30.
- Copeland, L., and Griggs, L.. (1985) *Going International*. New York: Random House.
- Cunningham, S. (2001) 'Outsourcing: The Key to Adding Value', *International Tax Review*, 12(6): 13.
- De Cieri, H., Dowling, P., Taylor, K. (1991) 'The Psychological Impact of Expatriate Relocation on Partners', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2(3): 377-414.
- DeCieri, H., and Dowling, P.J. (1999) 'Strategic Human Resource Management in Multinational Enterprises'. In *Research and Theory in SHRM: An Agenda for the 21st Century*. Wright, P., Dwyer, L. D., Boudreau, J. W. and Milkovich, G. T. (eds) Connecticut: JAI Press.
- Deresky, H. (2000) *International Management: Managing Across Borders and Cultures*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.
- Desphande, S., and Viswesvaran, C. (1992) 'Is Cross-Cultural Training of Expatriate Managers Effective?', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16: 295-310.
- Dowling P.J., Schuler, R.S., and Welch, D.E. (1999) *International Dimensions of Human Resource Management*, 3rd edn. Cincinnati: South-Western.

- Evans, P., and Genadry, N. (1998) 'A Duality Based Perspective for Strategic Human Resource Management', In *Research and Theory in SHRM: An Agenda for the 21st Century*. Wright, P., Dwyer, L. D., Boudreau, J. W. and Milkovich, G. T. (eds) Connecticut: JAI Press.
- Evans, P., Pucik, V., and Barsoux, J-L. (2002) *The Global Challenge: Frameworks for IHRM*. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Fenwick, M., De Cieri, H., and Welch, D. (1999) 'Cultural and Bureaucratic Control in MNEs: The Role of Expatriate Performance Management', *Management International Review*, 39: 107-125.
- Fisher, C.D. (1989) 'Current and Recurrent Challenges in HRM', *Journal of Management*, 15(2): 157-180.
- Fisher, C., Dowling, P., and Garnham, J. (1999) 'The Impact of Changes to the Human Resource Management Function in Australia', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(3): 501-514.
- Forster, N. (2000) 'Expatriates and the Impact of Cross-Cultural Training', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 10(3): 63-78.
- Garonzik, R., Brockner, J., and Siegel, P.A. (2000) 'Identifying International Assignees at Risk for Premature Departure: The Interactive Effect of Outcome Favourability and Procedural Fairness', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(1): 13-20.
- Grant, L. (1997) 'That Overseas Job Could Derail Your Career', *Fortune*, 135:166.
- Halcrow, A. (1999) 'Expats: The Squandered Resource', *Workforce*, 78(4): 42-48
- Harris, H. (2002) 'Think International Manager, Think Male: Why are Women Not Selected for International Management Assignments?', *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 44(2): 175-203.
- Harris, P. (1989) 'Moving Managers Internationally: The Care and Feeding of Expatriates', *Human Resource Planning*, March: 49-54.
- Harris, P., and Moran, R. (1989) *Managing Cultural Differences*. Houston: Gulf Publishing.
- Harsch-Porter, S. (2001) 'Think Big: Competing in the Global Market', *Workspan*, 44(7): 36-43.
- Harvey, M., and Novicevic, M.N. (2001) 'Selecting Expatriates for Increasingly Complex Global Assignments', *Career Development International*, 6(2/3): 69-86.
- Harvey, M. (1985) 'The Executive Family: An Overlooked Variable in International Assignments', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 20(1): 84-92.
- Harzing, A-W. (2002) 'Are Our Referencing Errors Undermining Our Scholarship and Credibility? The Case of Expatriate Failure Rates', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(1): 127-148.
- Hippler, T. (2000) 'On-Site Adjustment Support for German Expatriates in the Republic of Ireland: An Exploratory Study', *IBAR*, 21(2): 15-38.
- Hodgetts, R.M., and Luthans, F. (2000) *International Management: Culture, Strategy and Behavior*. Boston: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.
- Hunt, J.W. (2001) 'Fewer Criticisms From Abroad: Companies, It Seems, Have Been Dealing with the Complaints of Disgruntled Expatriates', *Financial Times*, London, July: 6:9.
- Hutchings, K., and Murray, G. (2002) 'Australian Expatriates' Experiences in Working Behind the Bamboo Curtain: An Examination of Guanxi in Post-Communist China', *Asian Business and Management*, 1: 1-21.
- Jackson, T. (2002) *International HRM: A Cross-Cultural Approach*. London: Sage.
- Kraimer, M.L., Wayne, S. J. and Jaworski, R.A. (2001) 'Sources of Support and Expatriate Performance: The Mediating Role of Expatriate Adjustment', *Personnel Psychology*, 54(1):71-100.
- Ledman, R.E. (2001) 'The Family Impact of Expatriate Assignments: An Experimental Exercise', *Journal of Management Education*, 25(3): 341-351.

- Linehan, M., and Walsh, J.S. (1999) 'Recruiting and Developing Female Managers for International Assignments', *The Journal of Management Development*, 18(6): 521-530.
- Marginson, S. 2001. 'A not-so-clever country'. *The Age*, 28 June: 17.
- Mendenhall, M., and Oddou, G. (1985) 'The Dimensions of Expatriate Acculturation', *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1): 39-47.
- Milkovich, G.T., and Newman, J.T. (1996) *Compensation*, 5th edn. Chicago: Richard Irwin.
- Mohrman, S., Gibson, C., and Mohrman, A. (2001) 'Doing Research That is Useful to Practice: A Model and Empirical Exploration', *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(2): 357-375.
- Oberg, K. (1960) 'Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments', *Practical Anthropology*, 7: 177-182.
- Osman-Gani, A. (2000) 'Developing Expatriates for the Asia-Pacific Region: A Comparative Analysis of Multinational Enterprise Managers From Five Countries Across Three Continents', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 11(3): 213-235.
- Phatak, A. (1997) *International Management: Concepts and Cases*. Cincinnati: South-Western.
- Richardson, J. (2000) 'Metaphorical Types and Human Resource Management: Self-Selecting Expatriates', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 32(6): 209.
- Riusala, K., and Suutari, V. (2000) 'Expatriation and Careers: Perspectives of Expatriates and Spouses', *Career Development International*, 5(2): 81-90.
- Rynes, S., Bartunek, J., and Daft, R. (2001) 'Across the Great Divide: Knowledge Creation and Transfer Between Practitioners and Academics', *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(2): 340-355.
- Rynes, S., and Trank, C. (1999) 'Behavioral Science in the Business School Curriculum: Teaching in a Changing Institutional Environment', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 808-824.
- Sargent, J., and Matthews, L. (1998) 'Expatriate Reduction and Mariachi Circles', *International Studies of Management and Organisations*, 28(2): 74-96.
- Selmer, J. (2001) 'The Preference for Predeparture or Postarrival Cross-Cultural Training - An Exploratory Approach', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 16(1): 50-55.
- Selmer, J. (2002) 'Practice Makes Perfect? International Experience and Expatriate Adjustment', *Management International Review*, 42(1): 71-88.
- Shaffer, M.A., and Harrison, D.A. (1998) 'Expatriates' Psychological Withdrawal from International Assignments: Work, Non-Work and Family Influences', *Personnel Psychology*, 51: 87-118.
- Shenkar, O. (ed.) (1995) *Global Perspectives of Human Resource Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Solomon, C.M. (1996) 'Danger Below! Stop Failing Global Assignments', *Personnel Journal*, 75(4): 78-85.
- Stedham, Y., and Nechita, M. (1994) 'The Expatriate Assignment: Selection, Training and Repatriation - Best Practices', *Proceedings of the Fourth Conference on International Human Resource Management*, Gold Coast, Australia, July 5-8.
- Stephens, G., and Black, S. (1991) 'The Impact of Spouses' Career Orientation on Managers During International Transitions', *Journal of Management Studies*, 28(4): 417-428.
- Tung, R., and Worm, V. (2001) 'Network Capitalism: The Role of Human Resources in Penetrating the China Market', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(4): 517-534.
- Tung, R. (1982) 'Selection and Training Procedures of US, European and Japanese Multinationals', *California Management Review*, 25(1): 57-71.
- Tung, R. (1988) *The New Expatriates: Managing Human Resources Abroad*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

- Tung, R. (1990) 'International Human Resource Management Policies and Practices: A Comparative Analysis', *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, Supplement 2: 171-186.
- Tyler, K. (2001) 'Don't Fence Her In', *HR Magazine*, 46(3): 69-77.
- Ulrich, D. (1997) *Human Resource Champions*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Vermond, K. (2001) 'Expatriates Come Home', *CMA Management*, 75(7): 30-34.
- Von Glinow, M.A., Drost, E. A. and Teagarden, M. B. (2002) 'Converging on IHRM Best Practices: Lessons Learned From a Globally Distributed Consortium on Theory and Practice', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 40 (1): 146-166.
- Wright, P.M., Dyer, L.D., and Takla, M.G. (1999) 'What's Next? Key Findings From the 1999 State-of-the-Art & Practice Study', *Human Resource Planning*, 22 (4): 12-20.
- Zakaria, N. (2000) 'The Effects of Cross-Cultural Training on the Acculturation Process of the Global Workforce', *International Journal of Manpower*, Bradford, 21(6): 492-502.