

Book Review:

Human Resource Management: Transforming Theory
into Innovative PracticeAuthors: Hartel, C.E.J., Fujimoto, Y., Strybbsch, V.E. &
Fitzpatrick, K.Hartel, C.E.J., Fujimoto, Y., Strybbsch, V.E. & Fitzpatrick, K., (2006). *Human Resource Management: Transforming Theory into Innovative Practice*, Pearson Education Australia

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Teachers of Human Resource Management in Australia can select from a range of well-designed textbooks, often supported with additional resources contained in publishers' websites. *Human Resource Management: Transforming Theory into Innovative Practice* is an attractively packaged resource for undergraduate students, which includes many of the features that readers of such texts have come to expect. The text makes good use of colour and paragraphs broken up by diagrams, recommendations for further reading and reminders of definitions appropriately placed in margins.

The book is structured in three parts, conveniently divided into twelve chapters to accommodate the 12–13 week structure of the typical Australian academic semester:

The first part: *Strategic HR in Context* establishes the processes of Strategic HRM, and addresses the motivation of staff, an important element in the implementation of an organisation's HRM strategy.

The second part *Issues, Challenges and Theoretical Developments* provides a cluster of five chapters dealing with recent (and not so recent) developments in the HR field, including knowledge management, technology, diversity, ethics and the law and global HR. The final five chapters relate to the implementation of HR strategy, incorporating the functional areas of staffing, training, performance management, remuneration and effective HRM. Each chapter is supported by review questions, exercises and a short case study from Australian business most of which could be easily adapted to facilitate tutorial discussion. The "manager's challenge" a snapshot of a challenge or issue facing an Australian organisation is less effectively incorporated into each of the chapters. A comprehensive reference list is appended to each chapter, including some classics as well as recent articles selected from a wide scope of journals.

The structure is a useful one for tertiary teaching purposes; although there may be an argument for more effectively incorporating HR functions with current issues, rather than separating the two as has been done in this text. The inclusion of illustrations often provides an effective break in the text but care needs to be taken when the inclusion is at odds with the text – for example the amusing but ultimately cynical Dilbert critique in which a moron is relabelled a Knowledge Management expert is placed in the middle of a discussion of the importance of Knowledge Management. This unfortunate placement clearly undermines the text.

Some reservations need to be expressed about the repeated use of a linear problem-solving model, labelled the "SHRM Application Tool". Described in some detail in the preface, the Tool is used to define a case which illustrates the resolution of a problem related to each chapter. The lack of contextual data with which to interpret the information contained in the Tool results in an artificial, somewhat deterministic construct. The singular focus on the model as the 'definer' of the problem appears to reduce the reference to the ongoing practice of HR systems and processes.

An introductory text should not be expected to provide exhaustive coverage of every HR issue; however it is surprising to note that only passing reference is made to job design, a key issue for the current Gen Y workforce. The important topic of HR in a globalised workforce is one of the less effective chapters, and the evaluation of the Human Resource Management function receives relatively little attention, despite the challenges faced by the discipline.

The book is presented in a user-friendly way, and effectively offers a basic introduction to HR theory and practice for an undergraduate Australian market.

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