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Editorial: Electronic Human Resource Management: Transformation of HRM?

Transformation of HRM? Is it ever possible? When we initiated this Special Issue, we were expecting manuscripts that would bring evidence about the transformation of Human Resource Management as enabled by information technology (electronization of HRM). There were enough grounds to put such expectations through. Indeed, since the 1970s, personnel management was seen as an early candidate for office automation (in payroll and benefits administration and for keeping employee records) (Hennessey, 1979; Tomeski & Lazarus, 1974). Typically, this information was stored in flat databases and interrogated using simple key word searching. However, early studies into e-HRM found 'hesitant' use of it by HR practitioners who perceived IT as 'workhorses' of the personnel function (DeSanctis, 1986). Moving towards 1990s, the majority of the organizations were convinced about the necessity of reducing labor intensive administration by automating personnel affairs. In general, positive consequences developed at the everyday operational level were increased accuracy of data, time and cost savings. Organizations also began to have a growing awareness and appreciation of the broader possible benefits of computer systems in performing HR duties. Recent developments in the e-HRM area are driven by rapid technological changes: ERP-based e-HRM applications (Enterprise Resource Planning) are now able to integrate a broad range of various HRM modules together as well as with numerous modules from other business areas such as sales, production, and finance, thereby providing a fully integrated HRM infrastructure. Empirical reports since 2000 have indicated an increase in confidence in using e-HRM, albeit still mainly for administrative purposes, and that e-HRM projects have largely remained focused on the growing sophistication of information technology.

Recent studies on e-HRM applications suggest that these are now pushing HRM into a more strategic transformation, by supporting HR decisions with adequate descriptive and prognostic information. Electronic recruiting, training, compensation and many other HRM areas have unlocked a world of possibilities: by introducing new actors to HRM, by involving line managers in people management, by supporting a

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range of sourcing arrangements, by offering greater flexibility in HRM, and hence by generally inaugurating the 'era of e-HRM'.

Conceptually, there is a sound basis for believing that e-HRM should facilitate the transformation of HRM (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009; Ruël et al., 2004). For example, Lawler and Mohrman (2003) argue that, with e-HRM, line managers would become involved in personnel issues more actively, and perform many tasks without needing to consult HR professionals, such as accessing relevant information, conducting overviews and analysis of personnel data, making decisions, and communicating with employees. Further, they claim that employees would become a part of the HRM function and benefit from using e-HRM: by controlling their own personnel information, updating records, making decisions, and participating in on-line training.

It is, however, unclear whether organizational members really grasp these opportunities, and whether the HRM function is being transformed. In order to reduce the uncertainty to some extent, our special issue presents the results of three research contributions and a review of recent books on e-HRM:

The paper of Sven Laumer, Andreas Eckart, and Tim Weitzel on *"Online gaming to find a new job – Examining job seekers' intention to use serious games as a self-assessment tool"* is an excellent example of how "electronization" changes processes, methods and actors of HR. Basically, serious games are introduced as an innovative method of assessing the job-person fit. Applied as self-assessment, such games constitute a particular example of an "applicant self service" application, which aims at offering realistic previews of jobs offered and the suitability of an interested person and, therewith, at reducing the number of unsuitable applications. Based on organizational justice and technology acceptance literature a large scale survey is conducted. The author use the respective empirical results to discuss how major predictors of the intention to use serious games, i.e., perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, and selection fairness, can be assured in order to realize the potentials of serious games in self-assessment.

Moreover, also the qualitative study of Anna Holm refers to the transformation of HR due to "electronization". Concretely, her paper on *"E-recruitment: Towards an ubiquitous recruitment process and candidate relationship management"* investigates whether and how the introduction of recruiting systems changes the process of recruiting. Based on three explorative case studies the author meticulously traces actual changes of tasks and tasks sequences in recruiting. The study uncovers that beyond the emergence of new tasks such as maintaining a corporate web career site and the space- and time independence of performing recruiting tasks, also the previous sequence and divisibility of recruiting tasks changes, while communication is yielded as new focus of human recruiting tasks. Therewith, an interesting and instructive example of how "electronization" actually changes HR tasks is offered.

Thirdly, the study of Huub Ruël and Harry van der Kaap deals with the actual outcomes of e-HRM. In particular, it is investigate whether e-HRM actually contributes to value creation in HRM, and, whether this is dependent on certain contextual factors. Given the previous lack of such studies, the paper fills a lasting gap of empirical e-HRM research. Based on a literature review and a respective theoretical research model, the study conducts a quantitative study in three large international companies.

The results of the authors add evidence on the debate on e-HRM and value creation and substantiate contributions to efficiency, effectiveness and service quality of HRM. Moreover, also direct and moderating influences of facilitating contextual factors such as data quality or HR technology competences could be found. In this way, the authors offer a first empirical study, which tackles the complex relationships of e-HRM and value creation and offers pending insights on this topic.

Therewith, these research papers demonstrate whether and how the HRM function is experiencing the transformation processes.

A final paper of Stefan Strohmeier aims at a review of recent books on e-HRM. As a consequence of the ongoing practical adoption of e-HRM academic interest in the topic of e-HRM set in about a decade ago. In the interim, a considerable number of academic papers and a smaller number of academic books indicate an increasing academic interest in e-HRM. Still, however, even basic aspects of e-HRM seem to be unclear to many HR academics. Complementing existing reviews of academic papers the paper therefore reviews recent academic books on e-HRM. Mapping major academic functions, books on researching, teaching, and practicing e-HRM are considered. To this end brief outlines of the current states of researching, teaching, and practicing e-HRM are elaborated, and, based on this, books of each category are reviewed referring to their contributions to the respective state of knowledge. The review uncovers that the considered books offer a heterogeneous plethora of insights into researching, teaching and practicing e-HRM. Still, however, it is not easy to get the "big picture" of e-HRM and further contributions to the respective categories are both possible and necessary.

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