

# Human Resource Strategies and Practices: An Applied Study on Some Organisations in the Egyptian Context.

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The researchers discuss the finding of a survey of human resource management structure, strategy and practices in some organisations in Egypt. Findings referred to the integration in making the decision related to the human resource functions between HRM department and the line management in majority of the cases. The Findings did not support the differences in implementing the HRM practices with a written or unwritten HRM strategy. The paper shed the light on the important role of the HRM in the organisations and the need for a written HRM strategy especially that most of the organisations implemented the new technology and have HRIS for their organisations.

### المخلص

هدفت الدراسة الي التعرف علي وضع ادارة الموارد البشرية من خلال التعرف علي هيكل واستراتيجية، وأنشطة ادارة الموارد البشرية في بعض الشركات في مصر. أشارت نتائج الدراسة الي ان القرارات المتعلقة بالموارد البشرية يتم اتخاذها من قبل الادارات التنفيذية بالتعاون مع ادارة الموارد البشرية. نتائج الدراسة لم تشير الي وجود أي اختلافات في تطبيق أنشطة لموارد البشرية في الشركات محل الدراسة عند وجود استراتيجية للموارد البشرية واضحة ومكتوبة عنه في حال وجود استراتيجية ليست مكتوبة، وهذا لم يكن متوقعا. أوضحت ايضا نتائج الدراسة أن غالبية الشركات محل الدراسة تطبق ايسمي بنظام معلومات الموارد البشرية، مما يعد مؤشرا ايجابيا في البيئة المصرية.

## Introduction

Brewster and Hegewisch (1994) argued that Human Resource Management (HRM) had received and achieved significant importance in this decade among academics and practitioners, the focus not only on the local level but also on the international level. Hsu and Leat (2000) and Quintanilla and Ferner (2003) noted that the globalization of the global markets and the increased use of the multinational corporations (MNCs) in the world have encouraged a greater degree of interest in human resource management practices and its effects on the organisations' performance and growth. It is argued by them that there is a direct correlation between strategic HRM and economic success. In the same direction, Baddar (2000) referred to the importance of the HRM strategies of multinational corporations, and argued for the importance of the host country effect (culture, legal, social, economic and political environment) on the management practices of the MNCs in any country.

Brewster (1994) argued that the concept of human resource management and the associated concepts of strategic human resource management and the international human resource management are achieving greater importance. In the same direction, Hendry and Pettigrew (1986) focused on the match between HRM activities and policies to some explicit business strategy and also considering the people in the organisations as strategic resources to be able to achieve the competitive advantages. Brewster (1994) argued that there is a closely integration between HRM and organisational strategies and objectives.

Different authors argued for the importance of the integration of business strategy and HRM policies and practices that help achieve many issues such as; increasing competitive advantage (Porter, 1985); greater profitability (Schuler and Macmillan, 1984); improving productivity and assuring workforce flexibility (Schuler and Huber, 1993); enhancing employees' performance (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988) and having positive effects on organisational success that would lead to nation's success (Porter, 1991). Camelo, Martin, Romero and Valle (2004) argued for the important role of human resources in the organisational competitiveness. They noted that the impact of the HRM on the nature and the results of the organisations had been embodied in strategic human resource management; which should be related to the organisation strategy. To ensure effective organisations, HR

effectiveness of the currently HR functions in use and redesign HRM process to improve the HRM effectiveness in the organisations. Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2003) noted that HRM has been seen as a strategic partner that has input into the formulation of the organisation strategy and there is a need to develop a HRM system to help implement such strategy. For the HRM functions to become strategic in its orientation, HR department must be viewed by the organisation as an effective entity involved in the strategic management level. This might be achieved by measure HRM effectiveness to make them more efficient to achieve the organisational goals. Noe *et al.* (2003) argued for the importance of understanding HRM activities in terms of their strategic value to the organisations. They added that some of the HRM functions have moderate strategic value; which are the “traditional HR activities”, such as performance appraisal, training, recruitment, selection and compensation. While there are other HRM activities such as culture change, strategic direction and knowledge management are called “transformational activities” with a high strategic value to the organisations.

Different authors argued that Western approaches in management in general and in HRM specifically were implemented everywhere without critical evaluation of their transferability to the other contexts (e.g.; Hofstede, 1984; 1998; Atiyah, 1993; Nydell, 1996 and Hsu and Leat, 2000). While Huang 2000 in his study of some HRM practices in both foreign and locally owned companies in Taiwan generally adopts a cultural perspective but also acknowledges the influence of the local regulatory regime in Taiwan as one of the factors that may explain what he concludes appears to be a remarkable blending of oriental and occidental practices. Differences remain but they are differences of degree rather than direction. In the same direction, Camelo, Martin, Romero and Valle (2004) found three distinct models of human resource management in Spain among some industrial companies but with behaviours independent of the strategies followed by the companies. More studies are needed to investigate the human resource management in each country, as Brewster and Hegewisch (1994) noted that the human resource management required not only emphasises but also re-emphasises the influence of some factors such as culture and ownership structure.

## Egyptian Context

In a regional context, Egypt is especially important; it has a leadership role among the Arab countries and is of strategic importance as it borders Africa, Europe and Asia. Egypt is one of the attracting countries for investors in different fields. Oxford Business Group (2004) analyzed all aspects of the Egyptian economy via hundreds of interviews with leading political and economic figures to describe the comprehensive overviews of Egypt's political and economic situation. They provided a more light-hearted look at Egypt's regions and culture to any investor in Egypt. They reviewed trends in all the major economic sectors, including: banking, capital markets, insurance, IT and telecom industries, real estate and construction, tourism and agriculture.

In the Egyptian context, there are some changes in the labour demand and in the occupational distribution of employment. The findings of the human resources development survey, conducted by the International Labour Office (I.L.O) in 1998, referred to some of the challenges to human resources development in Egypt such as employment challenge, external competition challenge, the challenge of the new technology, the challenge of privatization, the challenge of vulnerable groups (child labour and gender discrimination) and the training challenge. These challenges would have some effects on the kind of jobs that would be created in the Egyptian context and raises the issue of the importance of the human resource management policies that should be implemented. In the ILO report, authors identify human resource development as a critical factor in determining the ability of Egyptian firms to effectively confront external competition and make best use of these new technologies. At the time of the survey firms facing import and export competition were experiencing difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel but nevertheless expressed a preference for recruiting already skilled workers rather than train their own, this was the case even in the larger organisations.

Based on the report presented by American Chamber of Congress to present the human resources in Egypt in 2004, The Human Resource Profile of Egypt is described as follows: "*With a population of over 60 million, Egypt has the largest single market in the region. It is rich in human resources; its businessmen are experienced in the markets of its neighbour countries, and it possesses a good mix of semi-skilled, skilled and highly qualified labour*

*productive inexpensive labour. The growth of Egypt's labour force has averaged about 2.7% annually in recent years. The number of employees is 17,434 thousand employees with an annual growth rate of 3.3%. Low prevailing wages have encouraged the use of labour-intensive technologies. Foreign companies frequently pay higher wages and attract workers with higher than average skills; however, many foreign companies have expressed the need for skilled managers in Egypt. Unemployment remains a significant problem, as Egypt has a surplus of both skilled and unskilled labour”.*

Butter (1999) argued that Egyptian organisations need to be internationally competitive and able to respond to the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly international and turbulent business environment. Hatem (1994) also noted that as a result of the foreign investment and joint ventures human resources and their management had become critical issues for Egyptian companies. Parnell and Hatem (1999) noted that improving and measuring the organisations' effectiveness had become a major concern for many Egyptian organisations as they seek to increase productivity, reduce costs and to compete globally. Effective human resource management has become of critical importance, appropriate staffs need to be recruited, they need to be trained and developed to implement new technologies, practices and ideas and enable Egyptian firms to compete internationally.

Some implications for certain HRM practices in Egypt based on the examination of the Egyptian context; which enables us to draw a number of tentative conclusions about the nature of HRM practices to be expected or which might be appropriate in Egyptian organisations. Given the influence of culture and Islam we might reasonably expect an Egyptian model or system of HRM to emphasise on job descriptions which are implicit rather than explicit with long term employment and employee security and utilisation of the internal labour market for filling vacancies. We might expect training to emphasise skills rather than general development, team working and a group or team focus to the organisation of work and training and development according to I.L.O survey. We might also expect that compensation; pay advancement being based on seniority and an emphasis upon behaviour and relationships rather than task and individual performance, and perhaps skill acquisition rather than upon aspects of individual performance or outcome.

is also expected that the organisations with a human resource strategy would have effects on implementing HRM practices.

## Methodology

### Aim

Previous studies in Arab countries did not refer to any investigation to HRM department structure, HRM strategies and HRM practices in Egypt. Investigating the number of organization in Egypt from Compass catalogue indicated that there are public, private and multinational organizations in Egypt with a human resource department; however, no details are documented. De Kok, Uhlaner and Thurik (2003) argued the available literature in the HRM practices limited in testing HRM empirically. One of the research aims is to examine the human resources management in the Egyptian context by investigating the human resource department structure and strategies and practices. Second aim is after exploring such strategies and practices, managers might use it to improve their work at their human resources department in their organizations. Such investigation would help facilitating the managers' roles in dealing with its human resources in the way that can guarantee effectiveness at work. Third aim from this study is adding knowledge to the Egyptian context in particular. Fourth aim related to establishing trends in the development of human resource policies through the opinion of the personnel/ human resource specialists at some organisations in Egypt. To achieve the research aims; the research is divided into two main points (i) to investigate the human resources management structure, and if there is a human resources department with a HRM strategy and also (ii) to investigate the application of the HRM practices in some Egyptian organizations.

**Investigate the HRM department structure, strategies and practices in the Egyptian context.**

### Samples and Procedures

The current manufacturing and service organizations in the Egyptian context are considered as the population of this research. Convenience sampling was used in this research to provide the useful information needed to run the

(such as Compass) and visited some organization to investigate if there a human resource department or personnel department before choosing the sample for this research. Choosing the sample was difficult as the researchers would like to investigate the HRM departments in the organizations in Egypt. Therefore, prior to choose the sample, a pilot investigation was made to determine two things; first if there is a HRM department in the organization and if the organization will allow time for the researchers to collect the data. Based on the findings from the pilot survey, there is no HR department in some organizations and the general manager can do the HRM practices, in other cases, one of the executive managers such as production manager can do all the HRM functions to the organization. Therefore, the researchers focused only on the organizations that have human resource department or equivalent to collect the data needed for this research. Therefore, human resource managers and/or human resource specialists who are working in human resource department in different organizations (40 manufacturing and 16 Service) in Egypt (43 Egyptian organizations and 13 multinationals) were used in this study. A questionnaire was used as a data collection method in this research. The sample employed in this research comprised 56 usable questionnaires focused on investigating the human resource management department structure and the human resource management strategy and also on investigating the human resource management practices. The used questionnaire was distributed by one of the researchers with no time constrain to the respondents in their work place (April, 2004 - November, 2004) and collected back from them by the researcher.

**Measure:** Two measures were used in this investigation:

(1) **An international comparative survey of organizational policies and practices in human resource management** by Brewster and Hegewisch that was employed in The Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project (1992) used in this research. The questionnaire consists of eight section, which is designed to investigate the HRM practices in Europe and to establish how far there has been a shift in the personnel policies towards strategic human resource management, how far personnel policies are planned, how coherent and interactive with corporate strategies, how development are taking place in areas such as training and development and recruitment. Only two sections of the questionnaire employed in this research; which are needed for the aim of this research. The used scale comprises 27 questions. The used questionnaire



divided into the following sections; *Section (1)* Human resources department structure (includes 12 questions) and *Section (2)* Human resource strategy (includes 15 questions). Respondents were asked to read the scale and express their opinions by checking the choices indicating the type of practice which is implemented by their organization.

**(2) Human Resource Management Practices:** In this research Huang's questionnaire (2000) was utilized to measure HRM practices in some Egyptian organizations. The scale comprises 11 items, item 1 measures job description, item 2 measures recruitment, item 3 measures selection, items 4, 5, 6 measure training and development and item 7 measures career paths, items 8 and 9 measures compensation decisions, item 10 measures employment security and item 11 measures performance appraisal. Respondents were asked to read the scale and express their opinions on a continuum (1-5) by checking the rating scale indicating the type of practice which is implemented by their organization.

## Results and discussion

### 1) Human resources department structure and strategy:

The findings from the chosen organizations indicated some similarities and some differences related to the HRM structure and the HRM strategy implemented in their organization according to the personnel / or human resources specialists. These findings explained in two main sections; the first section focused on Human resources department structure and the second focused on the Human resource strategy as follows:

#### a) HRM Department Structure:

The human resource department findings based on the data collected from the chosen organisations are shown in Appendix (1). The findings based on the chosen Sample ( $N= 56$ ) indicated that there is a manager for the human resource department with different job titles as mentioned by the human resources representative in the chosen organisations; such as personnel director (12.5%), human resource director (28.6%), personnel manager (12.5%), human resource manager (35.7%) and some mentioned that the title in their organisations is a human resource coordinator (10.7%). Less than 10% of the respondents in the sample are not senior in their jobs as human

resource managers, however, the majority worked with specialist personnel and training responsibility for more than five years (42.9% and between one to five years 41.1% ). Majority of them with a first degree (62.5%) with business studies as academic field of study (53.6%). Around 40% obtained a human resource diploma as a professional qualification; some of them mentioned that it was one of the job requirements in their organisations. There are different training methods implemented in the organisations that we study in this research. Some of them mentioned short courses and seminars (17.9 %), Job related projects (30.4%), Job rotation (17.9%), Formal coaching by the line manager (21.4%), Formal monitoring outside work area (5.4%), while there are some without any training received in their current jobs (7.1%). The interesting point is in the majority of the cases, the head of the personnel or the human resources function have a place in the main board of directors in their organisations or equivalent (64.3%). The findings also indicated that in some organisations the human resource manager or the senior personnel recruited from within the personnel department (41.1%), while 26.8% of the organisations recruited their human resource manager from non personnel specialists within the organisation (26.8%), and from former personnel specialists outside the organisation (21.4%) and from non personnel specialists outside the organisation (8.9%), while only 1.8% do not know.

Some of the factors involved in investigating the human resource are related together, for example the educational level, the amount of training received in HR issues, the tenure at human resource position or department. Table 1 shows the correlation between these factors as used in the questionnaire in this research. The findings referred that education level is positively and significantly related to the amount of training received by HR specialists and the period that HR manager spent as a human resource specialist in his/or her organisation is positively and significantly related to educational level. The educational level and the academic field of study are positively and significantly related to the training received.

Table1 shows the correlation for some of the HRM structure items used in this research. Note: Zeros are omitted from the correlations, \*  $p<0.05$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p<0.001$

HRM structure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Seniority in HR	-	-.25	-.028*	.09	.06	-.16	.23	-.16
2. Training specialist for how long		--	.49**	-.17	.29*	.12	.30*	.09
3. Educational level			--	.15	.18	.39**	-.11	.16
4. Academic field				--	.02	.34*	-.17	-.10
5. Professional qualification					--	.21	-.14	-.03
6. Training received						--	-.22	.07
7. HR manager = any member at board of directors							--	-.12
8. Number of employees in HRD								--

## b) Human resource strategy:

The human resource management strategy based on the data collected from the chosen organisations is shown in appendix (2). The findings based on the chosen Sample ( $N= 56$ ) indicated that the majority of the organisations that take part of this research have a mission statement (89.3%; 58.9% with a written mission statement and 30.4% with unwritten mission statement), only 3.6% of the organisation do not have a mission statement while, 7.1% have no idea if there is any mission statement in their organisations. Concerning the human resource strategy; (80.4%; 51.8% with a written human resource strategy and 28.6 % with unwritten human resource strategy), only 14.3% of the organisation do not have a human resource strategy while, 5.4% have no idea if there is any human resource strategy in their organisations. In the chosen organisations; some human resource functions such as pay and benefits, recruitment and selection are much more determined by either national or international HQ (this is if the organisations as part of a larger group of cooperation's). The responsibility for the human resource functions are varied in the chosen organisations. For pay and benefit; the majority noted that line management is responsible for it in consultation with human

responsibility if for the human resource department in consultation with line management (21.4%), only 14.3% found that only human resource department is only responsible and 21.4% noted that line management is the responsible for it, only 7.1% with no answer to determine such responsibility in their organisations. For recruitment and selection; the majority noted that the human resource department in consultation with line management has the primary responsibility (48.2%) and the line management in consultation with human resource department is responsible for some other organisations (30.4%), and others referred that only human resource department is only responsible (10.7%) and others argued that line management is the only responsible for recruitment and selection in their organisations (7.1%), only 3.6% of the sample did not know the information to determine such responsibility in their organisations.

For training and development; again the majority noted that human resource department in consultation with line management is responsible for it (46.4%), and others referred that the primary responsibility is among the same departments but in a different weight; which means the line management is responsible for training and development in consultation with human resource department (19.6%), others referred to this responsibility as related only to the human resource department (21.4%), only few cases referred to the line management only for such responsibility (5.4%), finally some managers have no idea of such information in their organisations (7.1%). Concerning who has the primary responsibility in the organisations for the industrial relations; the majority noted that line management is the responsible department (35.7%), while only 19.6% of the sample argued for the line management in consultation with the human resource department, and another 12.5% referred to the human resource department in consultation with line management, few cases found referred to the human resource department is only responsible for such function in the chosen organisations (8.9%).

For health and safety, human resource department found to be the responsible for such job in majority of the cases (32.1%), and in the second place was the focus on human resource department in consultation with line management (28.6%). Only few cases referred to line management only (12.5%) and few others referred to the responsibility shared between line management in consultation with human resource department (7.1%). The

primary responsibility for workforce expansion and /or reduction is found in the chosen organization in line management in consultation with human resource department (37.5%), 23.2% also referred to the human resource department in consultation with line management, similar number of organisation referred that line management is the only responsible for such work (21.4%), others noted that human resource department in the only responsible in their organisation for the expansion and/or reduction of the workforce (8.9%).

When investigation any changes in the line management responsibility over the last three years in the selected organisation to indicate if it is still playing the same role or its responsibility increased or decreased; the findings refereed that in most of the cases the responsibility is the same or increased in some functions. For example; the responsibility of line management for pay and benefit, recruitment and selection, training and development, industrial relations, health and safety and workforce expansion and /or reduction increased as noted by the managers in the chosen sample of the selected organisations (60.7%, 46.4%, 57.1%, 23.2%, 30.4% and 33.9% respectively). To investigate the human resource strategy; another part focused on the evaluation of the human resource performance in the organizations; which found that in majority of the organizations the performance of the human resource department is systematically evaluated (67.9%), only 26.8% is divided between some managers do not know (12.5% and others have not got a systematically performance evaluation to their human resource department; 14.3%). For the organizations that have a systematically performance evaluation for the human resource department; the majority focused on some criteria in such evaluation such as; number of recruited employees (55.4%), number of trained employees (50%), performance against objectives (53.6) and feedback from line management (53.6%).

Majority of the selected organizations prefer to carry out manpower planning for their organizations (71.4%). Forecasting the future skill requirement was the most preferable method among managers (58.9%) that considered as one of the most commonly used methods for the manpower planning in the organizations. Staff turnover, age profile, qualification and training and absence level are the collected data on the workforce for manpower planning

organizations (60.7%, 57.1%, 71.4% and 51.8% respectively). Managers in the selected organizations plan for their staffing requirements for different period of time; majority focused on one year or less (50%), others between one and two years (21.4%), 12.5% with a plan for more than two years and only 16.1% of the selected sample has no plan for their staffing requirements. To investigate the human resource information system in the selected organizations; only 17.9% of the organizations are not integrated with the human resource information system, while 42.9% were fully integrated and 39.3% were partially integrated.

**2) HRM practices:** Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations for the HRM practices used in this research.

**Table 2: The means and standard deviations for the HRM practices (N=56).**

HRM Practices	M (N=56)	S D
1. job description	2.63	1.36
2. Filling of job vacancies	3.21	1.23
3. Selection Criterion	2.46	1.04
4. Training content	2.32	1.16
5. Training and development focus	3.54	1.28
6. Acquisition of needed skills and talents	3.29	1.09
7. Career path	2.80	1.27
8. Wage-structure decisions	2.66	1.24
9. Criterion of pay increase	2.16	1.17
10. Employment security	3.96	1.15
11. Criterion of Performance appraisal	2.54	1.01

**Recruitment and Selection:** Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) results for the HRM practices currently in use in some organizations in an Egyptian context. At the beginning the job definition is examined by focusing on the job description; which could be very flexible and implicit or static and explicit (Huang, 2000). The result from this research show that in the Egyptian context the organizations tend towards preferring implicit job descriptions (M = 2.63); in which defined job responsibilities and duties might be flexible (this might be as a result of the Culture; that give the managers in Egypt the right to give their employees the orders and adding more responsibilities as they like: it is like one man show organizations). In the Egyptian context, the results from the chosen sample

show that with the vacancy-filling scores of 3.21 the chosen organizations in the Egyptian context are more likely to recruit high level job vacancies internally than externally. (This finding is similar to what found in US and German subsidiaries in Taiwan). The findings also show that organization in Egypt consider both dimensions in the selection criteria; as the focus was in the compatibility of a job applicants' characteristics matches with the organizational needs and also with the applicants qualification to be able to do the job tasks, duties and responsibilities. In the Egyptian context, the job skills seem to be more important than fitting into an organizational culture ( $M=2.46$ ). This is similar to what found in Taiwan context too.

**Training and Career development:** The data from the Egyptian context for training and development practices show that organizations in Egypt prefer job specific training to general training ( $M=2.32$ ). However, there is a trend towards group orientation and team focus training than individual orientation ( $M=3.54$ ); this may be the product of the national context that may reflect the apparent global emphasis upon team working as a source of efficiency and effectiveness (which is some how similar to the Taiwan's organizations. The chosen organizations in the Egyptian context are more likely to 'make' the needed skills and talents through training ( $M=3.29$ ). As noted by Huang (2000) that an organization can choose to establish a board or a narrow career path for its employees. The data from the organizations in the Egyptian context show that there is move towards narrow career path ( $M=2.80$ ).

**Compensation:** Job analysis and evaluation for organizations in the Egyptian context show that in Egypt the organizations see to rely more on job evaluation than using skills level to assess wages ( $M=2.66$ ). Incentives and criterion for pay increase are oriented toward performance and mission achievement (this result is not excepted as in Egypt seniority and the length of service seems to be very important criterion in evaluating and determining wages and wage increases). The data from the organizations in the Egyptian context seem to have a high score of life time employment and employment security for its employees ( $M=3.96$ ); which might be as a result of the high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance in the Egyptian culture Hofstede, 1980; 1984 and El-Kot and Leat, 2002). For the employees even if they do not like the job they have to stay as there is a high rate of unemployment in Egypt

*Performance Appraisal:* As for the performance appraisal, the data show that there is a focus towards outcome as performance appraisal criterion (M= 2.54).

## **Investigate the differences in HRM practices based on HRM strategy in the chosen organisations**

The above findings gave some indication on the human resource practices and human resource strategy in the Egyptian context, however, it is still not clear yet the link between HRM strategy and HRM practices in the Egyptian context?. To examine the effects (if any) of the HRM strategies on the HRM practices in the chosen organizations, two hypotheses will be tested by concentrated upon investigating the differences, if any, between the HRM practices in Egyptian organizations based on having human resource strategy (Written and unwritten) and also when there is no human resource strategy in some organisations.

### **Hypotheses:**

*H1: There are some differences in implementing the human resource practices between the organisations that have written HRM strategy and the organisations that have unwritten HRM strategy.*

*H2: There are some differences in implementing the human resource management practices in the organisation with a HRM strategy and the organisations that working without a HRM strategy.*

The idea behind this comparison is to investigate the effect (if any) of having human resource strategy based on the organisational mission and the corporate strategy on the implementation of the human resource practices in Egypt. To test the research hypotheses, *t*-test will be run twice; first investigating the differences in implementing the human resource practice between the organisation that have HRM strategy (written and unwritten) and second to investigate the differences in implementing the huma



resource management practices in the organisation with a HRM strategy and the organisations that working without a HRM strategy. Tables 3 and 4 show the *t*-test comparison.

Table 3 shows: *t*-test comparison between HRM practices with HRM strategy (written and unwritten).

	Written HR Strategy (N=29) M (SD)	Unwritten HR Strategy (N=16) M (SD)	t	p
1. job description	2.86 (1.27)	3.00 (1.41)	0.33	0.740
2. Filling of job vacancies	3.14 (1.32)	3.12 (1.25)	0.03	0.974
3. Selection Criterion	2.65 (1.07)	1.62 (0.88)	3.25	0.000
4. Training content	2.31 (1.07)	2.06 (1.34)	0.67	0.501
5. Training and development focus	3.37 (1.26)	3.43 (1.50)	0.13	0.891
6. Acquisition of needed skills and talents	3.13 (1.27)	3.18 (1.37)	0.12	0.904
7. Career path	2.62 (1.44)	3.00 (1.26)	0.87	0.385
8. Wage-structure decisions	2.58 (1.21)	2.81 (1.47)	0.55	0.581
9. Criterion of pay increase	2.13 (1.24)	2.25 (1.29)	2.28	0.777
10. Employment security	3.86 (1.43)	4.00 (1.31)	3.1	0.752
11. Criterion of Performance appraisal	2.51 (1.02)	2.43 (1.20)	0.23	0.82

**Table 4 shows: *t*-test comparison between HRM practices with HRM strategy and with no HRM strategy.**

	Written HR Strategy (N=29) M (SD)	No HR Strategy (N=6) M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1. job description	2.86 (1.27)	2.75 (1.48)	0. 21	0.833
2. Filling of job vacancies	3.14 (1.32)	3.25 (0.88)	0. 22	0.824
3. Selection Criterion	2.65 (1.07)	2.62 (1.30)	0. 06	0.947
4. Training content	2.31 (1.07)	3.00 (1.06)	1. 61	0.116
5. Training and development focus	3.37 (1.26)	3.62 (0.74)	0. 52	0.605
6. Acquisition of needed skills and talents	3.13 (1.27)	2.75 (1.28)	0. 76	0.387
7. Career path	2.62 (1.44)	2.3750 (0.74)	0. 46	0.245
8. Wage-structure decisions	2.58 (1.21)	2.87 (1.55)	0. 56	0.288
9. Criterion of pay increase	2.13 (1.24)	2.00 (1.41)	0. 27	0.137
10. Employment security	3.86 (1.43)	2.00 (1.12)	0. 47	0.635
11. Criterion of Performance appraisal	2.51 (1.02)	3.00 (1.19)	1. 14	0.261

The findings from Table 3 and 4 indicated that there is no difference found in implementing the human resource practices in the chosen organisations that have or have not a human resource strategy; which is not expected. The only significant difference found when implementing the selection criteria in the organisation with written HRM strategy compared with unwritten HRM strategy (see Table 3). There is an explanation of this that people in Egypt sometimes prefer to work without documented papers, the employees should listen to the managers' orders and comments. Even in the job description, in some organisations in Egypt, there is no clear job description distributed among employees, however, the employees know their job and know exactly

what they suppose to do as a tradition. Therefore, the research hypotheses were rejected. It was expected to have differences in the HRM practices or at least in majority of them not just in one practice.

## Conclusion

Effective human resources are the key of success in this century for the organisations that searching for growth and achieve global success. Different authors argued for the vital role of the HRM in organisations (for example; Brewster and Hegewisch, 1994; Hsu and Leat, 2000; Baddar, 2000 and Quintanilla and Ferner, 2003). Investigating the HRM practices in the Egyptian context would help investors and managers to achieve their goals effectively. Investigating and understanding the HRM functions would help organisations to move from just implementing traditional HR to start thinking of the HRM functions that focus upon cultural changes and strategic direction with a strategic value to the organisations and to the society.

Drawing on a sample of 56 different organisations in the Egyptian context, in general, the findings indicated some evidence supporting the exists of the HRM department in the Egyptian context with a HRM strategy in 45 organisations out of 56 employed in this research (written in some organisations; 29 organisations and unwritten in others; 16 organisations). The HRM practices seem to be implemented the same way in the organisation with or without a HRM strategy; which is unexpected. The research findings showed that all chosen organisations have a HR department to handle the HR functions and activities. However, only 52 per cent of the responding organisations have a written HRM strategy, with 27 per cent of organisations claiming to have an unwritten HRM strategy, and 14 per cent have no HRM strategy at all, and 54 per cent do not know even if there is an HRM strategy or not in their organisations. This might emphasize the need to develop a written HRM strategy in the organisations and to integrate it with the corporate strategy at the organisations and also with the mission statement which is well defined in around 60 per cent of the chosen organisations. In the Egyptian context, may be according to the organisational size, managers prefer to go for unwritten policies according to the simplicity of the tasks and duties compared with large organisations with a high level of formalization.

Different titles found for the department that are responsible of the HRM work in the chosen organisations, however, they perform the same HRM functions in their organisations. Majority of the HR managers are not senior in their jobs, however, they are effective in their jobs, and this may be explained as the majority have business studies as their first degree which added value to their experience. The findings also referred that some of the HRM managers or equivalent have a post graduate degree; which could be the reason behind the success of the HRM managers in doing their jobs. Another reason is the attended training methods and techniques that had positive effects on the HRM managers and their equivalents as the findings referred to different training methods implemented via different organisations. The findings also supported the relationship between the educational level, the amount of training received in HR issues, the tenure at human resource position or department. The findings referred that education level is positively and significantly related to the amount of training received by HR specialists and the period that HR manager spent as a human resource specialist in his/or her organisation is positively and significantly related to educational level. The educational level and the academic field of study are positively and significantly related to the training received. This might help managers to choose the HRM specialists who are achieving a certain level of related education field and to focus on sending them to attend training programs in related issues.

Concerning investigating the human resource practices in the Egyptian context and the link with the HRM strategy in the organisations; the findings referred to the use of implicit job descriptions that means the degree of flexibility in determining the tasks and duties assigned to employees by their supervisor. This could be explained according to the high power distance that describes Egypt case that encourages the use of one man show at work. When investigating the responsibility for human resource practices in the chosen organisation; (concerning recruiting, selecting, training and development, compensation, performance evaluation, industrial relations, health and safety and work force expansion decision), the findings support the integration work and sharing responsibility between the human resource department and the line management. According to the HR practices covered in the research, the HR managers noted that decision making are shared in consultation between the HR department and line management. However, in some cases the responsibility was solely with either the HR or the line

management. HR department appeared to have more responsibility in areas of recruiting and selecting, training and development, health and safety. Line management appeared to have more responsibility in areas of Pay and benefit, workforce expansion /reduction. HR department appeared to have least responsibility in areas of decisions concerning industrial relations. In some cases the line management have the sole responsibility especially for the industrial relation. This could be explained as the HR managers and line managers like to be involved in such decisions. These findings are similar to an extent with the findings found by Hsu and Leat (2000) concerning the involvement in making HR functions among HR department and line management in Taiwan's organisations. Surprisingly, the findings from this research referred to increasing the role of line management in making or taking the responsibility of the human resource practices in some organisations this year compared with previous three years at work.

Reducing the responsibility that HRM department could be an indicator of unclear vision of the important of the HR role in the organisation, or may be this is an indicator of contradiction of roles between the line management and the HR department. This is not associated with the implicit job description that found in majority of the organisations, which should allow the department to have a clear and separate role in implementing their jobs. Another explanation for this point could be that there is no support from the top management level for the HR Department effective role in the organisations. There is evidence supporting the important of the performance appraisal in the chosen organisations as found to be evaluated systematically using outcomes measures in majority of the cases.

According to high degree of uncertainty in Egypt (El-Kot and Leat, 2002), managers prefer to predict the staff requirements for one year or less in half of the chosen organisations. This might be explained as the prediction is not that clear according to the rapid changes in the external environment and also according to the strong competition that we are facing these days. Coping with the advanced technology were found as majority of the organisations have human resource information system; some of them are fully integrated with it. This could be seen as a good sign in the Egyptian context as the managers start to understand the importance of having electronic environment and the starting point is develop the human resource

information system which would facilitate the use and the implementation of the human resource management practices in their organisations.

Based upon the comparison between implementing the HRM practices in the organisations that have a written HRM strategy and the organisations with unwritten HRM strategy, there is no differences in implementing the HR functions. This might be explained because of the involvement of the line management in making the decisions in HRM activities, so the role of the written or unwritten HRM strategy is not clear in such organisations. Finally there is massive scope for further research on this subject; we need more studies, more comprehensive coverage of HRM strategies and practices in the Egyptian context and research which explores motives and perceptions as well as simply looking at which practices are being used and its effect on organisational performance.

### **Research Implications:**

Investigating the HRM department structure, HRM strategies and HRM practices in some organizations in Egypt shed the light on the importance of the HRM in business organization in the Egyptian context and suggests some main issues to improve the HRM at work as follows:

- This investigation would help HR managers to reach their goals by employing the skills human resources efficiently.
- The practical findings from this study would add clear understanding to the HRM policies and strategies implemented in other organizations, therefore, managers might use similar strategies and practices in their organizations.
- HRM managers should give much more concern to formulate well written HRM strategies in their organizations; Ivancevich (2004) argued for the important of a written formulated HRM strategy that will help aggregate and allocate organization's resources into a unique entity on the basis of its internal strengths and weakness and also on the changes in the environment that includes competitors.
- Using the human resource information system in some organizations described as a good sign in the Egyptian context, which should be used in all organizations to facilitate the use and the implementation of the human resource management practices in their organisations.

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## Appendix 1



<p><b>1. Does your organization have a personnel or human resource management/manager?</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>yes</td> <td>56</td> <td>100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Frequency	Percent	yes	56	100	<p><b>7. What professional qualification have you obtained?</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>.00</td> <td>10</td> <td>17.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>diploma</td> <td>22</td> <td>39.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>other qualifications</td> <td>24</td> <td>42.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>56</b></td> <td><b>100.0</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Frequency	Percent	.00	10	17.9	diploma	22	39.3	other qualifications	24	42.9	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>																								
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**4. How long you worked in a role with specialist personnel and /or training responsibility?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	3	5.4
less than 1 year	5	8.9
1-5 years	23	41.1
more than 5 years	24	42.9
6.00	1	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**10. If no, who on the board or equivalent has responsibility for personnel issues?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	39	69.6
Manager	10	17.9
Director		
Administrative director	4	7.1
Finance director	1	1.8
Company secretary	0	0
Production director	0	0
Worker director	1	1.8
<b>Other</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.8</b>

**5. What is your Educational Level?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	5	8.9
O level	1	1.8
A level	2	3.6
First degree	35	62.5
Master degree	4	7.1
MBA	6	10.7
Ph.D.	3	5.4

**11. How many people are employed in the personnel function? (in total including wage administration and training)?**

Ranged from only one employee to 3500 employees)

**6. What is the Academic field did you study?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	5	8.9
business studies	30	53.6
economics	2	3.6
social & behavioural science	5	8.9
Humanities/ languages	2	3.6
law	1	1.8

**12. From where was the most senior personnel or human resources manager recruited?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	1	1.8
From within the personnel Department	23	41.1
From non personnel specialists in your	15	26.8

engineering	3	5.4	organization		
natural sciences	2	3.6	From	12	21.4
other	6	10.7	personnel		
Total	56	100.0	specialists		
			outside the		
			organisation		
			From non	5	8.9
			personnel		
			specialists		
			outside of the		
			organization		

## Appendix 2

<p><b>1. Does the org. have a mission statement?</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>YES, written</td> <td>33</td> <td>58.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes, unwritten</td> <td>17</td> <td>30.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no</td> <td>2</td> <td>3.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Don't know</td> <td>4</td> <td>7.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>56</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Frequency	Percent	YES, written	33	58.9	Yes, unwritten	17	30.4	no	2	3.6	Don't know	4	7.1	Total	56	100.0	<p><b>8. HR performance systematically evaluated?</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>yes</td> <td>38</td> <td>67.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no</td> <td>8</td> <td>14.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>don't know</td> <td>7</td> <td>12.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no personnel</td> <td>3</td> <td>5.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>department</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>56</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Frequency	Percent	yes	38	67.9	no	8	14.3	don't know	7	12.5	no personnel	3	5.4	department			Total	56	100.0
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**Primary responsibility for Training & development**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	4	7.1
Line management	3	5.4
Line management in consultation with HR dept.	11	19.6
HR dept. in consultation with line management	26	46.4
HR department	12	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Analysis of labour markets**

	Frequency	Percent
yes	14	25.0
no	42	75.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Other**

	Frequency	Percent
yes	7	12.5
no	49	87.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Primary responsibility for Industrial relations**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	13	23.2
Line management	20	35.7
Line management in consultation with HR dept.	11	19.6
HR dept. in consultation with line management	7	12.5
HR department	5	8.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**12. Data collected on the workforce for the manpower planning:**

**Staff turnover**

	Frequency	Percent
yes	34	60.7
no	22	39.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Primary responsibility for health and safety**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	11	19.6
Line management	7	12.5
Line management in consultation with HR dept.	4	7.1
HR dept. in consultation with line management	16	28.6
HR department	18	32.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Age profile**

	Frequency	Percent
yes	32	57.1
no	24	42.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Primary responsibility for workforce expansion /reduction			Qualifications and Training		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
.00	5	8.9	yes	40	71.4
Line management	12	21.4	no	16	28.6
Line management in consultation with HR dept.	21	37.5	Total	56	100.0
HR dept. in consultation with line management	13	23.2			
HR department	5	8.9			
7. Responsibility of line management for Pay & benefit changed over the last 3 years?			Absence levels		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
increased	34	60.7	yes	29	51.8
same	20	35.7	no	27	48.2
decreased	2	3.6	Total	56	100.0
Responsibility of line management for Recruitment & selection changed over the last 3 years?			13. In response to skill shortage, demographic changes or equal opportunities issues, do you monitor the number of the following in your workforce with regard to recruitment, training and /or promotion? People with disabilities		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
increased	26	46.4	.00	2	3.6
same	26	46.4	recruitment	8	14.3
decreased	4	7.1	training	10	17.9
Responsibility of line management for T &D changed over the last 3 years?			promotion	5	8.9
	Frequency	Percent	Don't know	31	55.4
.00	1	1.8			
increased	32	57.1			
same	20	35.7			
decreased	3	5.4			
Responsibility of line management for Industrial R. changed over the last 3 years?			Women		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
.00	9	16.1	.00	2	3.6
increased	13	23.2	recruitment	9	16.1
same	30	53.6	training	6	10.7
decreased	4	7.1	promotion	12	21.4
			Don't know	27	48.2

**Responsibility of line management for Health & safety changed over the last 3 years?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	6	10.7
increased	17	30.4
same	31	55.4
decreased	2	3.6

**People from ethnic minorities**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	3	5.4
recruitment	7	12.5
training	4	7.1
promotion	4	7.1
Don't know	38	67.9

**Responsibility of line management for Workforce exp/red. Changed over the last 3 years?**

	Frequency	Percent
.00	2	3.6
increased	19	33.9
same	33	58.9
decreased	2	3.6

**13. How far ahead do U plan your staffing requirements?**

	Frequency	Percent
one year or less	28	50.0
more than 1 to 2 years	12	21.4
more than 2 years	7	12.5
no planning	9	16.1

**15. HR functions are aided by computerised information system**

	Frequency	Percent
fully integrated	24	42.9
partially integrated	22	39.3
not integrated	10	17.9