

# Evolving Management Practices in TURKEY

Muhtesem Baran<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Management and Organization  
Istanbul University, School of Business Administration  
Istanbul, Turkey  
muhtesem@istanbul.edu.tr*

**Abstract** — This paper is about the changing role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Turkey considering its' status as a European Union candidate. It will also try to explore the foundations of business system, and business culture in Turkey from the perspective of foreign companies. Understanding increased competition and evolving employment practices as well as trends in empowerment, flexibility, downsizing, outsourcing and rewards are some of the challenges facing HRMs in Turkey. Relating these criteria to performance and benchmarking procedures are seen as tools for HRM practitioners. Still there is concern that “traditional personnel management” is resistant to change. In addition, HRM practices in small and medium-sized enterprises in Turkey, leadership and culture, corporate governance in Turkey, family owned businesses and doing business in Turkey will be covered.

**Keywords** — *Human Resource Management (HRM); HRM Practices; Management Practices, Strategic HRM; Turkey.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalized competition and knowledge, it is recognized by both businessman and academics that human resource management needs to be recognized not as a cost component but as a component tool. Nowadays, the human factor is one of the most critical factors in companies' strategic success. Due to this, both in universities and companies, there is a growing interest in human resource management. We have reviewed the literature and coupled it with our experience. Factors such as globalization, technological change and trends in the nature of work which affect HR functions will also be covered. Following section offers the change of HR in the world and also how they affect on Turkish companies from a traditional to modernized profile.

There has been a big change in the nature of work since the start of the Industrial Revolution in England towards the end of the 18th century. Steam power and machines replaced as it augmented labor. Factory production distinguished the era. This transformation of production created boredom for the employee, low productivity, low incomes, high labor turnover and conflicts with management. Even though by the end of 19th century personnel management had developed into an independent profession, its' main function was perceived as management. Passage from Industrial Relations (IR) and Personnel Management (PM) to the understanding of HRM is

an important sign of major transformations in the world of work. That is, this passage dating back to 1970s has not happened at once. Among the reasons behind this transformation, there are important factors such as globalization, liberalization, open competition, social responsibility, social democracy, and hence HRM becomes the appropriate term for these post-modern times. The value of human has increased, and human abilities and skills have become the most important competitive advantage for organizations all over the world. In the 1900s' HRM had an operational role and in the 1960s' a managerial role but has since gained a strategic role since the 1980s'. While in the beginning the practice and function of human resources was decided by top management. It later began to decide its' own policies and strategies. Besides its own duties, it now acts in tandem with the chain of command to promote the main strategies of the business. Competition, globalization, the constant changes in markets and technology are the main reasons for the development of HRM.

Globalization brought the most important changes to multinational corporations which subsidiaries as they globalized. Competition increased. This was the beginning of HR's changing functions and the evolving of a long-term decision capacity. Globalization's essential characteristic is this: more globalization means more competition, and more competition means more pressure to be “world-class” to lower costs, to make employees more productive, and to do things better and less expensively. HR's functions and responsibilities were augmented by globalized. International human resource planning, international human resource staffing, international human resource training, etc. New knowledge economy increased competition throughout the world and living in age of massive technological evolution is changing the nature of business (especially e-business). Consequently, academic interest in e-HRM has increased, as companies adopt e-HRM strategies to purpose of increase their efficiency and effectiveness. The literature on E-HRM suggests that the three goals of e-HRM are cost reduction, improving HR services and improving strategic orientation. Furthermore E-HRM is seen as a driving force for companies growing both regionally and in labor force. It is becoming a prerequisite for the internalization process of any firm. Using the internet theoretically makes your labor pool global rather

than local. You can use information technology to do all the routine HR administrative work automatically without having to stay in the office.

Business organizations are coming to view knowledge as their most valuable and strategic resource. The knowledge resource is becoming increasingly more important as a vital strategic tool to improve organizational decision-making and problem-solving capabilities. Knowledge Management is the new industry buzzword. "Intellectual Capital Management", "Organizational Knowledge Management" and "Intellectual Asset Management". Human capital is an important element of the intangible assets of an organization. It refers to the knowledge, education, training, skills, and expertise of a firm's workers. Today, as management guru Peter Drucker predicted several years ago, "the center of gravity in employment is moving fast from manual and clerical workers to knowledge workers..." New developments in measuring and reporting human capital had a huge impact on HR's accounting procedures. In order to get more productivity from human capital; it's necessary to invest in workers, build their competencies, and store and share their experience within the organizations. This is the long-term view of HR.

An organization's external or internal environment affects the organization's HRM strategies. Factors such as globalization, technological change and trends in the nature of work require a long-term strategy. If an organization is to grow and remain competitive, its objectives must achieve the best fit between external opportunities and its' threats and the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Alternative strategies generated by a SWOT analysis identify which ones will best achieve a company's objectives. HR managers must ask: Which strategy creates a competitive advantage?. HR needs to have a written business mission besides a HR strategy. Drucker says that the most important component of a business strategy is mission statement. Drucker also says that asking the question "What is our business?" is synonymous with asking the question "What is our mission?". A clear mission statement is essential for effectively establishing objectives and formulating strategies.

As HRM becomes more business oriented and strategically focused, four key roles for the HR manager can be identified:

- 1- Strategic partner
- 2- Administrative expert
- 3- Employee champion
- 4- Change agent

According to Ulrich (2007), "HR professionals play a strategic partner role when they have the ability to translate business strategy into action", to become administrative experts refers to the efficiency of HR managers and the effective management of HR activities (such as selection, etc.) so that they create value, employee champion requires the HR manager to be the employee' voice in management decision, as a change agent serving as a catalyst for change within the organization. Strategic human resource management means formulating and executing human resource policies and

practices that produce the employee competencies and behaviors the company needs to achieve its strategic aims. In practice, human resource management's strategic role means several things. Today's focus on competitiveness and operational improvements also means that human resource managers must express their departmental plans and accomplishments in measurable terms. Strategic human resource management is also focus on productivity and performance.

The evolution of HRM in Turkey is a process influenced by applications in the U.S. context. Although earlier works (in 1930s and 1940s) exist on such matters as personnel selection, compensation, promotion, and the like, the field of personnel management as an academic discipline is established in 1960s and 1970s. Examining academic studies conducted in Turkey in the years 1972-1999, Usdiken & Wasti (2002) claim that interest in personnel related issues in Turkey began at around 1950s, through increased contact with U.S. academia. HRM has inherited its subject matter from Personnel Management. That is, the areas of interest in HRM studies are very similar in essence. However, a general criticism is that issues in HRM remain fragmented, without an underlying theory This is because the field has primarily developed out of practice, and its topics seem not to have conceptual bond with each other. In Turkey, it is seen both in the literature and practice that the term human resource management has been used in place of the term "personnel management" and the use of the human resources terms has increased considerably Because of Turkey's efforts to join the EU, it is more coming more and more important for HRM to have a strategic role in companies in Turkey. New regulations based on the harmonization with EU norms are closely related to HRM and are aimed at improving the Turkish work environment. Labor act Number 4857, which has been affected in Turkey, since 2003, is the result of the harmonization attempts of national labor law and international label standards such as the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Termination of Employment Convention No.15. Labor Act Number 4857 replaced Labor Act number 1475 which after more than 30 years had become inefficient with respect to the needs of workers. Human Resource Management (HRM) had to recognize a change in principles and new subtleties in "employment security", "flexibility" and "other arrangements. For example, performance management had to account for new understandings of "employment security" and "discrimination". A management system which adheres the scientific method tends to respect justice and fair procedure. Companies must now evaluate all employees blue collar as well as white. Before the new law in Turkey some companies only evaluated white collars. With this new evaluation system, companies have to indicate clearly, job rotation, training needs, salary and redundancies. Training and career planning are now tied to employee performance. "Flexibility" with respect of job creation and the encouragement of minority groups like, the elderly, women and the handicapped. This flexibility extends to office hours-not necessity 9 to 5, but 40 hours any which way you can. According to the OECD 2004 report, Turkish as well as Portuguese, companies are still decidedly rigid.

Cranfield, an International Strategic HRM, Research Group has published many reports on giving priority to contain HR practices that have a strategic character. According to a report 2005, 44% of business in Turkey in 1995 had written HR strategies and this ratio increased to 58% by the year 2000 and to 57% by 2005. Due to the economic crisis of 2001 HRs' popularity in Turkey, somewhat cooled, but practitioners increased their knowledge and experience, made themselves valuable, and HR remained a serious factor in any business equation.

## II - HRM PRACTICES in SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES) in TURKEY

SMEs play a very important role in the Turkish economy owing to their large share in the total number of enterprises and in total employment. In 2008, it is estimated that 99.9 percent of all firms were small or medium sized, and the employment rate was 78.0 percent in Turkey. In the same year the contribution of SMEs to the GDP was 55.1 percent. SMEs are major employment generators, and face important challenges at human resource management and practices (e.g. managerial skills, prioritizing investments for human resource development and training, performance appraisal) in Turkey. Turkey is one of the countries benefiting from globalization. It is regarded as one of the world's top emerging economies, Turkey sits on the "cusp of East and West, culturally and geographically". As it is situated on the gateway between Europe and Asia, Turkey is a dynamic, developing market economy bordering the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Seas. Also being near to the new emerging markets in Middle East and Central Asia creates unique business opportunities.

In Turkey HRM practices are seen to be critical since they represent the business-centered dimension of small businesses. Schuler and Jackson regard human planning choices, staffing choices, appraisal choices, compensation choices, and training and development as the five major dimensions linked with competitive strategies. Gupt and Singhal (1993) conceptualize HRM practices along four dimensions, consisting of human resource planning, performance appraisal, reward systems and career management. Gomez-Mejia et al. (1998) label, in detail, the functions of HRM into nine dimensions which involve workflow, staffing, lay-off management, performance evaluation, training and development, reward management, relationships among employees, empowerment and globalization. In general, the HRM practices used by organizations are staffing i.e. HR planning, recruitment and selection; HR development i.e. training, development and career planning and development; compensation i.e. direct and indirect financial compensation and nonfinancial compensation; safety and health; and employee and labor relations.

The effort of the organizations' explanations of their behaviors with reference to the strategy choice and organizational description will produce different results not only in the organizational context but also at the analysis level.

Especially in Turkey's context, it is different from USA and European countries where such research is produced, so that the question which HRM practice the organizations chose and the reason for this choice requires the studies which use both organizational initiatives together. In this respect some information will be given about the organizations' behaviors in the decision process of HRM practices in Turkey's unique context. HR practices are widespread in Turkey but when you question to what extent it is implemented, it is found out that it is not sufficient. The most important reason for the deficiency of the level of HR practices is "oblivion". Necessary measures should be taken to deal with this oblivion. The universities should take the responsibility of this issue. In an environment created by the notion of university- industry cooperation, scholars should inform the managers (especially owner managers) Some of the issues which are the responsibilities of HR department develop as the organizations grow; but the issues such as recruiting and employing, career planning and developing and pay do not change with the size of the organizations. However, as the company gets bigger, the issues such as performance evaluation and training become the responsibilities of the HR department. Turkey is in a state of transition. The demand for competent employees is very high and employees are currently the beneficiaries of this demand. The continued growth of this sector over the next decade should evidence an increase of employees in upper level positions. With a view to the roles of the HR managers, we realize that they do not have strategic behaviors and as they focus on daily activities of the organizations, they do not focus on the organizational goals. In understanding the importance of the issue, the role of HR managers is effective. HR managers should have following qualities to have an active role in developing strategies and implementing them: 1. *The ability of defining prospective leaders of the firm, recruiting and developing them;* 2. *The ability of understanding business strategies and implementing them, thinking tactically and behaving strategically;* 3. *Defining possible problems and finding solutions to adapt to the changing market conditions;* 4. *Being known by the top executives as an essential active cooperative employee;* 5. *The ability of understanding the organization's culture, plan and policies;* 6. *The ability of working in a global market;* 7. *Dealing with every types of people;* 8. *Having good communication skills.*

## III – LEADERSHIP and CULTURE in TURKEY

Turkey has absolute and relative high scores in terms of In-Group Collectivism, Power Distance, and Assertiveness, whereas it has lower scores in Gender Egalitarianism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, and Future Orientation. On the other hand, Turkey is found to have high absolute and relative scores in Future Orientation, Institutional and In-Group Collectivism, Humane Orientation, and Uncertainty Avoidance, and has lower scores in Performance Orientation, Assertiveness, Power Distance,

and Gender Egalitarianism. Turkish society is indeed high in In-Group Collectivism, where group solidarity among members is both valued and practiced. Part of this solidarity stems from the role family plays in people's lives. Strong ties among the family members create a nurturing and trustworthy environment for the individuals. Islamic ideology and verses of the Koran reinforce the importance of family and patriarchal relationships inside. Family is always available to give support, advice, and direction whenever members face important personal problems. Another manifestation of In-Group Collectivism is observed when people migrate from rural to urban areas. Coming from the same region or kinship ties create a strong interdependent network of relationships, where migrants are drawn into a nucleus of close ties and are given a hand in finding jobs and dwellings. The strong network of interdependent relationships in Turkish society reduces the importance attributed to Future Orientation as individuals feel secure about their futures because the network would always provide the assistance and help that may be needed in the future. Turkish organizations, similar to society, are workplaces where in-group ties and network of interdependent relationships are both practiced and valued. Although at the organizational setting Turkish managers aspire for more performance orientation and planning, collectivism at institutional and in-group dimensions receive higher standings. As a manifestation of in-group collectivism, family members usually constitute the top-management team and board of directors in companies. Family members are trusted more than professionals in running the business and with the relations with state officials in the state-interdependent context of Turkey. In addition to family members, other in-groups, including the same school or region, serve as a basis of trust in organizations and business relationships.

Leadership in Turkish society is a multifaceted phenomenon. A societal culture that is characterized with high In-Group Collectivism, Power Distance, and Assertiveness expects its leaders to enhance team integration and inspire togetherness in unique ways. Kozan and Ergin point to the importance of the mediation role that leaders and managers play in Turkish society, where leaders are expected to intrude into conflict resolutions in order to preserve peace and group solidarity. Thus, effective Turkish leaders develop mediation skills that "give face" to both parties and keep the group together at peace. The integrity of the leaders enables them to exercise power, which further builds on their symbolic and supreme roles. Assertiveness as a cultural trait implies that leaders who are decisive and hands-on, who can offer solutions to problems with new ideas, and who satisfy their followers' needs in a paternalistic way are the ones who can maintain their status. Leadership in Turkish society is a paradoxical concept. Leaders on the one hand are granted with supreme status and power, and on the other, there is great skepticism and suspicion about them. This duality about the position of leaders stems from the competing values and practices that are simultaneously present in Turkish society.

Turkey carries Eastern and Western values, traditional and modern practices, religious and secular ideologies at the same time, which create conflicting expectations from leaders. Leaders are expected to maintain in-group solidarity and behave in a paternalistic style, yet at the same time encourage performance and improvement in their organizations. There is a push in Turkey away from paternalism with the criticism of leading to nepotism and inefficiencies. Leaders in Turkish society and organizations face the dilemma of managing this duality between expectations of efficiency and performance and the more traditional hierarchical, assertive, and paternalistic values. Because Turkish society values performance, planning, and more egalitarian distribution of authority and resources, together with collectivistic tendencies, the ideal leader will be a person who is able to initiate change and provide vision and performance excellence by keeping group solidarity and at the same time avoiding nepotism.

#### IV – EVOLUTION of REPORTING ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY and CORPORATE GOVERNANCE in TURKEY

Corporate social responsibility is an issue currently actively pursued by governments, regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations in developed and developing countries. Since this concept is crucial for Turkey as an emerging market, the motivation of this study is to demonstrate the evolution of reporting on this matter for Turkey. It is determined whether the companies disclose the information a socially-conscious stakeholder needs when evaluating the company in terms of corporate social responsibility. A field study has been composed of three categories; corporate governance structure, environmental policy and social policy. The reporting on these categories has increased significantly from 2003 to 2005. The study clearly demonstrates that the Corporate Governance Principles of 2003 positively affected the corporate governance climate. The study highlights that the companies' attitude towards corporate social responsibility is encouraging and they try to fulfill their duties as a corporate citizen regarding the social responsibility. The results also reveal that the majority of the companies in Borsa Istanbul 30 Index positively commit themselves to adhering to the Corporate Governance Principles. Although corporate social responsibility in Turkey achieved an improvement during the past three years, the listed companies' disclosures on corporate social responsibility are not at a desirable level in respect of the best practices.

On the other hand, it may be argued that top management teams, and especially the CEO, have the chance of countervailing or dominating family members in managerial practices. This argument on CEO dominance in Turkish corporations is accentuated by the alliance of these groups in joint interest articulation at a more macro level through joining the same voluntary organizations. For example, although the

Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (TUSIAD) was founded to protect the interests of owners, professional managers are also members of this organization (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association, 2008). The primary sources of corporate governance in Turkish legislation are: 1-Turkish Commercial Code; 2- The Capital Market Law; and 3- other regulations by Turkish Capital Market Board (CMB) and Borsa Istanbul. However these regulations were not sufficient to meet the international corporate governance requirements. The year 2003 was a turning point for corporate governance regulations in Turkey. In July 2003 the CMB issued corporate governance principles with the aim of enhancing the corporate governance regulations in Turkish listed companies. By recognizing the fact that no single model is valid for every country, the CMB examined the regulations of many countries and generally accepted and recommended corporate governance principles, primarily the OECD Principles of 1999 and revision drafts have been taken into consideration during the preparation of these principles. Corporate Governance Principles of the CMB were revised in 2005 to become compatible with revised OECD principles. The evolution of the codes of corporate governance in Turkey have paralleled the evolution of similar codes in the UK. It is undeniable that the codes are similar in each country and have similarly undergone a number of iterative stages of development – which may well continue into the future. This is not really surprising of course as the increasingly global field of capital would tend to disadvantage any country which deviated from the norm. Thus convergence of codes of governance must be expected to be a feature of globalisation. Although the codes are similar it is when we consider the extent of compliance that any deviation becomes apparent. It might be thought that this is due to a lag of compliance in a developing country such as Turkey but Aras and Crowther show that levels of compliance varies among developing countries as well as between developed and developing. They therefore argue that there is a significant cultural component affecting the application of codes of corporate governance in every country. Although reforms, in an era of globalisation, will tend towards convergence throughout the world, cultural differences will limit the extent of convergence in application of those codes.

#### V - FAMILY OWNED BUSINESSES and DOING BUSINESS in TURKEY

Turkey, which has the typical institutional challenges of developing countries, such as economic and political instability, less structured and less formalized organizational systems, and inconsistencies in legal frameworks and practice. Incorporation of orderly, stable, and socially integrated systems is of great importance for firms in countries like Turkey. The fact that Turkey has recently began accession talks with the EU further underscores the critical importance of institutionalization processes. Furthermore, business culture

in Turkey is characterized by patriarchal relationships dominated by high in-group collectivism (i.e., kinship), high uncertainty avoidance, centralized decision-making, and high power distance. Family firms in Turkey are more traditional and are strongly attached to their founders' values than non-family businesses. Therefore, the challenges faced by Turkish firms in integrating new institutional arrangements are substantial. Improving performance through institutionalization requires an emphasis on adaptive capabilities, defined as the ability to identify and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Adaptability, which involves creating change, customer focus, and organizational, is fundamentally related to institutionalization, facilitating and complementing it. First, as Selznick proposes, institutionalization is essentially an adaptation process. Second, and especially pertinent to developing markets, the long-term perspective required for institutionalization should be complemented by flexibility necessary to handle dynamic dependencies and to capitalize on market opportunities. Attempts to measure institutionalization at the firm level are rare. Analyzing the consequences of institutionalization, such as survival, stability, and isomorphism is usually preferred. Institutionalization and adaptability are significant advantages for effective performance in the global arena. It can be suggested that family firms in emerging markets can progress towards a more institutionalized and adaptive stance by cultivating harmonious intra-family relationships and employing democratic and participative decision-making methods. Noting that the traditional Turkish culture is characterized by patriarchal relationships, through the democratic decision-making and adaptability path, family firms in Turkey can adopt contemporary business practices such as empowerment, team orientation, smooth successions across generations, and a transformation from inward to outward orientation. Through the harmonious family relationships and institutionalization path, firms can gain acceptance and favorable treatment in the global markets.

Similar to people in other Mediterranean cultures, Turks are quite emotional. Pride is an important aspect of life, and saving face is an important issue in both business and personal life. Personal relationships are of major importance and must be handled with extra care. Once damaged, they may destroy a business association regardless of its benefits. In Turkish society, verbal communication has dominance over written expression, and communication style is indirect and subtle rather than direct. Although business discussions may begin with warm hospitality or politeness and such topics as soccer, fashion, food, the economy, and politics, they can become quite specific and dynamic. Visitors to a company or government Office may get the impression of a chaotic workplace. A scheduled meeting may be interrupted by frequent telephone calls, staff members, and a constant stream of visitors. It may appear that a private discussion cannot be maintained. This occurs partly because the host finds it difficult to offend a visitor or caller by not tending to their

issue immediately. Furthermore, Turks are accustomed to handling multiple matters and carrying on several conversations simultaneously (a polychronic culture). This characteristic provides foreigners with surprising flexibility, however, since they can simply drop in without an appointment and visit a business partner. Turks are known as good negotiators. The *negotiation* is the act of engaging in a heated (and often animated) haggling process in the marketplace. Most Turks love to debate and argue, and bargaining is considered a national hobby. Whereas other people may focus more on the end result, Turks enjoy negotiation as a process. Traditionally, verbal agreements, sealed by a handshake, prevailed. With rapid modernization and development of detailed contract laws, written agreements have become the rule, especially among large companies. In the work environment, the boss is seen as a superior with ultimate decision-making power. He or she is also perceived as a father or mother figure who should be concerned about the well-being of employees and their family, to whom a social obligation is owed. There is much respect for rank, education, and authority. Age is a sign of wisdom, and older persons are much respected within the family and the larger society. Business lunches and dinners are common, as Turks are generous hosts, and it is important to reciprocate. These gatherings may seem to go on forever, but they create the opportunity to get to know partners and foster a relationship. During almost every encounter, black tea, a local product and a favorite drink, is served in small glass cups, and strong Turkish coffee is offered in a small porcelain cup. Turkey has a dynamic economy that is a complex mix of modern industry and commerce along with traditional village agriculture and crafts. Although the private sector is vibrant and rapidly growing, the state still plays a major role in basic industry, banking, transport, and communication. The most important industry and largest export is textiles and clothing, a sector almost entirely in private hands. A large and growing middle class, the prevalence of Western values, and a highly educated and trained work force are just some of the reasons Turkey will remain a key market for Western companies. It is important to note that among the companies who have invested in Turkey, very few have left the country.

*Conclusion:* Government policies and initiatives that encourage innovation and improve the educational standards of the labour force would enable this type of firms survive and compete successfully in national and international markets. A growing and successful SME sector would have direct and positive impact on employment in Turkey as well as on its economic growth and stability. In a fast-changing world, human resources provide the competitive edge. In today's business climate, HR must shed its gatekeeper image and evolve into an innovator that can continually create value for the organization it serves. Human resources should focus on aligning itself with the business, think about key challenges and design a plan to respond. HR metrics is about measuring

and managing the linkages between initiatives and challenges. Alignment with the business is crucial the implementation of a competitive strategy. HR in the twenty-first century envisions specific political venues with strategic re-amplifications. These venues of the symbolic political power of HR provide various opportunities for itself to socially construct its global strategic relevance as a resource. In the use of the venues of its influence, HR struggles to achieve its ultimate goal to complement the corporate efforts to obtain homogenization of best practices in the organization while preserving the specific capabilities and responsiveness of individual companies. With Turkey's plans to integrate with the EU it is necessary to catch up to a changing world. During the past decade as a result of competition, globalization, institutionalization, Total Quality Management (TQM) and such, there has been an increase of interest in HR. In Europe, the US and Turkey HR has gained in strategic volume. HR managers play an important role in implementing corporate culture and strategy within the organization. HRM is a developing, promising and exciting field in Turkey which is in high demand. However, unless we take measures to base practices on sound scientific knowledge and local values, the field is at risk of losing its credibility, attractiveness and resources.

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