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Book Review

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A. H. I. Chandradasa^a✉

^a*Department of Human Resources Management, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

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✉ isuru@hrm.cmb.ac.lk

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0236-2094>

Introduction

Technology has fundamentally reconstituted the manner in which organisations manage their human capital, transforming Human Resource Management (HRM) from a predominantly administrative function into a strategic force with measurable consequences for organisational performance. The proliferation of digital technologies across all domains of an organisation has rendered this transformation both inevitable and, in many respects, irreversible (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009). *e-HRM: Digital approaches, directions and applications*, edited by Mohan Thite and published by Routledge in 2018, is one of the first dedicated textbooks to address this transformation in a comprehensive and academically rigorous manner. The volume assembles contributions from leading scholars and practitioners from

across the globe, organised across sixteen chapters into four thematic parts: key approaches to e-HRM, key directions in e-HRM, e-HRM applications, and a closing section on problems and prospects. The key factor that distinguishes the book from comparable texts is its insistence on examining the underlying processes and strategic dimensions of e-HRM rather than merely cataloguing functional HR applications. All chapters adhere to a uniform structure that balances theoretical grounding with practical application, accompanying pedagogical resources, case studies, debates on contemporary issues, and reference websites, rendering the volume well-suited for deployment in both classroom and professional settings. This review evaluates each part of the volume with special attention to its scholarly contributions and its value for students, practitioners, and researchers alike.

Part I: Key Approaches to e-HRM

The first part of the book comprises three chapters addressing the strategic management approach to technology-enabled HRM, the soft systems thinking approach to e-HRM project management, and the agile approach to e-HRM project management, respectively. The opening chapter on the strategic management approach advances a compelling argument that digital HR systems are not neutral instruments but strategic assets whose value is contingent upon the degree to which they are aligned with broader organisational goals. Drawing upon resource-based theory and the concept of dynamic capabilities, the chapter situates e-HRM firmly within the tradition of strategic HR scholarship, contending that technology investments must be appraised against the organisation's capacity to compete, adapt, and sustain itself over time (Barney, 1991). It further illuminates how the digital environment increasingly dominates the contemporary technology landscape and exerts a pervasive influence upon the workforce while providing important contextual grounding for the chapters that follow.

The chapter on soft systems thinking addresses one of the most practically consequential challenges in the field- why failure rates among technology implementation projects remain persistently high? - and argues persuasively that the principal determinants of success lie in people and processes rather than in technology alone. Drawing on the principles of soft systems methodology, the chapter outlines the key phases of the system development life cycle and examines the People Capability Maturity Model (P-CMM) in considerable depth, identifying the human resource considerations relevant to each level of organisational maturity. Scholars and

practitioners who have witnessed a well-resourced HR technology project collapse under the weight of inadequate stakeholder engagement and ill-defined objectives will find this chapter both intellectually familiar and practically instructive.

The chapter on the Agile Approach offers a genuinely novel perspective within the HR context. It presents the Agile framework and its defining characteristics and principles with admirable clarity, maps out the process and key terminology of the Agile Scrum method, and advances a convincing case for the transformative role that HR can assume in implementing agile methodologies, with particular reference to organisational culture, recruitment and selection, and performance and reward management. The HR-T Talent Management Model introduced in this chapter constitutes a notable scholarly contribution, and the balanced appraisal of the principal implementation challenges associated with agile adoption which prevents the discussion from resolving into uncritical advocacy. Taken together, these three chapters furnish a conceptually rich and practically grounded foundation that distinguishes this volume from more technically oriented treatments of e-HRM.

Part II: Key Directions in e-HRM

The second part of the book examines five of the most emerging directions in the field: big data, HR metrics and analytics, cloud computing, social media, and gamification. The chapters collectively offer both breadth and genuine intellectual depth.

The chapter on big data and e-HRM ranks amongst the volume's most intellectually ambitious contributions. It moves beyond the cataloguing of data applications in HR to advance a compelling case for big data literacy, encompassing computational, statistical, and sceptical thinking, as an essential competency for the contemporary HR professional. This emphasis on analytical capability aligns with broader scholarly arguments that HR functions must develop robust data literacy if they are to occupy a credible strategic position within organisations (Marler & Boudreau, 2017). The discussion of big data's role in e-recruitment and selection, performance management, and human capital management is both specific and practically illuminating.

The chapter on HR metrics and analytics draws a careful and theoretically important distinction between metric-based reporting and analytical reasoning, a distinction that is frequently omitted in practice. The range of HR metrics introduced is helpfully precise, and the chapter is commendably honest regarding the analytical

capability gap that many HR functions currently face as data-driven expectations continue to intensify. The chapter on social media covers both the opportunities and the legal and ethical complexities associated with the deployment of digital platforms within HR contexts, including the considerable challenge of drafting organisational policies that are both effective and legally defensible. The gamification chapter is particularly thought-provoking, pushing back against the uncritical enthusiasm characteristic of much popular writing on the subject. It acknowledges that game mechanics may be genuinely motivating or subtly manipulative, depending upon the manner in which they are designed and deployed. The operational and strategic dimensions of gamification are examined through a substantive case study of HR service delivery, on grounds that might otherwise remain an abstract discussion in recognisable organisational experience. The cloud computing chapter covers the essential infrastructural concepts with laudable clarity and situates them usefully within the broader e-HRM landscape. Together, these five chapters constitute a genuinely valuable contribution to scholarly and professional understanding of the current and emerging digital environment within which HR practitioners must operate.

Part III: e-HRM Applications

The third part of the book turns to the functional applications of e-HRM, covering e-talent management, e-recruitment and selection, e-performance and reward management, and e-learning and development. It is in this section that the volume's value as a teaching and reference resource is most immediately apparent.

The chapter on e-talent management is the most theoretically sophisticated contribution in the volume. Its central argument: talent is not an objective property awaiting discovery by sufficiently powerful software, but rather a category that organisations actively construct through their own assumptions, priorities, and institutional logics- carries significant implications for the design of digital talent systems. This constructivist position resonates with critical perspectives on talent management that have gained prominence in the recent literature (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). The discussion navigates the full talent lifecycle, from attraction and identification - to development and retention, while sustained engagement with both the strategic possibilities and the genuine limitations of e-talent tools reflects - the critical balance required in the field.

The chapter on e-recruitment and e-selection examines technology's role at every stage of the hiring process with a clarity and meticulousness that serves both students and practitioners alike. It attends with appropriate care to the efficiency gains that digital platforms make possible, without losing sight of the risks to candidate experience and procedural fairness that poorly designed systems are liable to produce.

The chapter on e-performance and reward management provides a detailed account of the purposes, attributes, and design principles of digital performance systems, and its treatment of adoption factors and critical success factors is sufficiently grounded in organisational reality to resonate with practitioners who have navigated the complexities of implementing such systems. The chapter on e-learning and development is perhaps the most immediately useful for educators, tracing the evolution from traditional training paradigms through to online learning, social media-enabled development, MOOCs, e-mentoring, mobile learning, and wearable technologies with commendable clarity. The identification of key success factors through a structured case discussion is a particularly thoughtfully conceived pedagogical feature. Taken as a whole, this section reviews the applications landscape of e-HRM with a thoroughness and critical engagement that few comparable volumes have achieved. Readers less familiar with the field may find some chapters dated. Areas such as talent analytics and digital learning have evolved rapidly since the volume was published. Pairing these chapters with more recent empirical research on e-HRM tools and systems would therefore be beneficial.

Part IV: Problems and Prospects

The final part of the book is its most reflective section, which provides a necessary and welcome balance to the forward momentum that characterises the preceding chapters. It addresses the strategic evaluation of e-HRM, information security, and privacy, and the future directions of digital HRM in turn.

The chapter on strategic evaluation is among the volume's most distinguished contributions. Its insistence that e-HRM cannot be assessed solely through operational or efficiency metrics but must be evaluated across operational, relational, global, and transformational dimensions offers researchers and practitioners a genuinely serviceable analytical framework. The careful distinctions it draws between intended and unintended e-HRM outcomes, and the avenues it identifies for strategic assessment, furnish HR leaders with a vocabulary and a set of diagnostic instruments that can be applied meaningfully within their own organisational contexts.

The chapter on information security and privacy in this reviewer's assessment is the most significant contribution in the entire volume. It sets out the critical steps of information security management systems with precision, articulating privacy principles and their associated statutory requirements, advancing a vision of HR's role in information security that extends well beyond mere policy compliance. The chapter makes clear that HR professionals have a strategic part to play in cultivating a pervasive organisational culture of data protection and security across the full employment lifecycle, from recruitment through to post-employment obligations. This is a point of considerable contemporary relevance, given the increasing scale and sophistication of organisational data breaches and the resulting regulatory obligations imposed on employers under frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation (Wachter et al., 2017).

The chapter on future directions surveys the evolving role of digital HR strategy and related initiatives with a breadth that will orient readers effectively. Those with a particular interest in the frontier developments of artificial intelligence and predictive workforce analytics may find it worthwhile to supplement this chapter with more recent scholarship, given the swiftness with which the field has advanced since 2018; however, the conceptual framing it offers remains a sound and valuable point of departure for understanding the trajectory of e-HRM.

This volume makes a notable and timely contribution to a field that has been in pressing need of serious scholarly attention. Its most distinctive achievement resides in the editorial decision to organise the book around underlying processes and strategic frameworks, rather than simply cataloguing HR technology applications, a choice that confers upon the collection an intellectual coherence and depth that many edited volumes in this domain have conspicuously lacked. The uniform chapter structure, the consistent attention accorded to both theory and practice, and the richness of the accompanying pedagogical resources, including case studies, structured debates, and a companion website, render the volume exceptionally well-suited for deployment in courses on HRM and organisational behaviour. The volume serves readers at every level of familiarity with the subject, from students encountering e-HRM for the first time to experienced researchers and senior practitioners, which is a considerable editorial achievement. By engaging honestly with the risks, unintended consequences, and implementation challenges of digital HR, rather than portraying technology as inherently or unproblematically beneficial, the book substantially strengthens its credentials as a scholarly resource.

While the volume draws on contributors from across the globe, it would benefit from more substantive engagement with how e-HRM frameworks and digital HR tools translate across varying institutional, cultural, and regulatory contexts, particularly in developing economies where digital infrastructure, data governance regimes, and workforce literacy differ markedly from the Western organisational settings that implicitly anchor much of the discussion. A dedicated chapter or a structured section examining the contextual contingencies that shape e-HRM adoption and effectiveness across national settings would significantly strengthen the volume's claim to global relevance.

Conclusion

e-HRM: Digital approaches, directions, and applications is a comprehensive, well-structured, and intellectually rigorous text that makes a genuine contribution to the growing body of scholarship on digital HRM. It bridges the gap between conceptual foundations and practical application in a manner that is accessible without sacrificing scholarly rigour, and its four-part structure yields a coherent and intellectually rewarding reading experience for students, practitioners, and researchers alike. The volume also serves as an outstanding teaching resource, offering educators a thoughtfully organised and pedagogically versatile foundation for courses on digital HRM and HR technology. Its blend of conceptual clarity, empirical grounding, and applied case material makes it well-suited to support critical thinking, structured debate, and experiential learning across both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The volume is recommended warmly for all those seeking a well-grounded introduction to the field, and for educators in particular, it represents a resource of considerable value within the contemporary HR classroom.

About the Author

Mohan Thite is the editor of e-HRM: Digital Approaches, Directions & Applications. He is an Associate Professor at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, with a multi-disciplinary career in academia and industry spanning over 30 years. A HRM specialist, his expertise spans digital HRM, strategic HR, international human resource management, and global talent management. He is the Founding Editor-in-Chief of the South Asian Journal of HRM. A Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute, he has published over 50 journal papers, book chapters, and research reports, and has received several national and international research grants and teaching awards. The book draws on his extensive expertise at the intersection of technology and human resource management.

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