

Book Review:

Readings in Human Resource Management: Volume 3

Author: **Raymond J. Stone**Stone, R. J. (1998). *Readings in Human Resource Management: Volume 3*, Jacaranda Wiley Ltd.

REVIEWED BY: KATHLEEN CAMPBELL

This is the third in a series of books of readings in the area of human resource management edited by Professor Raymond J. Stone of Hong Kong Baptist University. As Stone points out, he has carefully selected the forty articles presented here for readability by practitioners, students or anyone with an interest in HRM. All but a few of the readings have been previously published in journals or business publications, primarily in publications from the Asia-Pacific region in 1996. Although the book is intended to represent the thinking of academics and practitioners from this region, it is only fair to point out that the majority of the articles are written by Australians and deal with research and practical HRM issues from Australia. In fact, of the forty readings in the book, only eight deal with non-Western societies at all. Of these eight, five represent research from Hong Kong/China; one deals with Singapore; one discusses Japan; and the last discusses sexual harassment in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and the United States.

The book is organized into seven distinct sections, each with a representative sample of articles in a specific area. The sections include a general overview of HRM, human resource planning, attraction and selection, training and development, compensation, diversity and then a catch-all section entitled, Managing Human Resources. This division of the readings into categories certainly makes the reader's job easier but the book would have benefited from an introduction to each of these sections explaining how and why the specific articles were chosen.

Although Australia is certainly over-represented in terms of the readings selected (more than half of the articles deal with HRM in Australia), a number of even these readings deal with issues that will be of interest to practitioners throughout the Asia-Pacific region. For example, Kane's overview article on HRM includes a discussion of a number of current "hot topics", for example, "best practices", change process, network organizations, multicultural HRM, etc. Another piece by Bennington and Tharenou explores various myths about older workers and would be useful to specialists in areas where the work force is aging rapidly. Another overview piece by Clegg deals with new paradigms for management in the 21st century and argues for more training in the social sciences for all managers, especially those who specialize in human resource management.

There are also several pieces dealing with specific HR topics that will be useful to practitioners. One by Graves and Karren looks at the selection interview, outlines the problems with interviews as selection tools, and suggests ways to strengthen this instrument through the development of clear selection criteria, by training interviewers and by evaluating the effectiveness of such interviews. There is also a thoughtful article on 360-degree performance appraisal by Cipolla and Trafford which includes a number of practical suggestions for the implementation of such a program. O'Neill's article on the problems with performance-based pay systems may also be useful to many who want to know more about this issue; again, this piece includes a number of sensible suggestions for implementing incentive plans.

For those who want to know more about human resource practices in Asian societies, five articles will be useful. Wan's piece on the role of government policy in developing a well-trained and productive workforce in Singapore is helpful. Chiu and Levin discuss labour shortages in Hong Kong and again discuss government policies which should help. Stone, in another piece on Hong

Kong, discusses problems especially with deteriorating English language skills among workers there. Wines presents an interesting discussion of rewarding personnel in an Asian context and Benson offers a reflection on recent structural changes in the Japanese system of employment.

There are also articles on health and safety, trade unions and management education, but these seem focused on specific issues in Australia and New Zealand rather than more broadly applicable. The pieces on expatriate remuneration and on dual-career couples are rather too general to be of use to any but those brand new to the field of human resources. The articles dealing with sexual harassment and with women's employment in China, on the other hand, are geared more to sociologists than to human resource practitioners.

Collections of readings are always difficult to put together as editors must attempt to reach diverse audiences. Stone has done a fairly good job with this volume. It will certainly be a strong resource for his major audience: students in HRM courses. It will also be useful to the majority of HR practitioners who don't have the time to pursue the various journals in the field and who would like a convenient way of sampling recent publications.

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