



## Strategic Human Resources Management: Concept, Theory and Applications\*

### Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi: Kavram, Teori ve Uygulamalar

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#### Abstract

Strategic Human Resources Management (Strategic HRM) is the purpose-oriented solution of human resources administration and policy problems so as to enhance the effectiveness of public institutions and organisations. It call for understanding how personnel functions have to do with context, recognition of their importance, and commitment by employees, public officials, political leaders and supervisors to work together for change. This study aims to look at the phenomenon of human resource management, which is a crucial important management approach in recent times, from the perspective of strategic management with it's conceptual and theoretical aspects. Before addressed the concept of strategic human resources management, the term of public personnel administration should be handled. Later, the theoretical framework of strategic human resource management is tried to be put forward and the types of applications related to the approach are explained.

**Keywords:** Strategic Human Resources Management, Concept, Theory, Applications.

#### Öz

Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi (Stratejik İKY) kamu kurum ve kuruluşlarının etkinliğini artırmak için insan kaynakları yönetimi ve politika sorunlarının amaca yönelik olarak çözülmesidir. Personel işlevlerinin stratejik bağlamla nasıl bir ilişkisi olduğunu anlamayı, öneminin farkına varmayı kamu görevlileri, siyasi liderler ve yöneticilerin değişim için birlikte çalışma taahhüdünü gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışma, son zamanların önemli bir yönetim yaklaşımı olan insan kaynakları yönetimi olgusuna, kavramsal ve teorik yönleriyle stratejik yönetim perspektifinden bakmayı amaçlamaktadır. Stratejik insan kaynakları yönetimi kavramına değinmeden önce kamu personel yönetimi kavramının ele alınması gerekmektedir. Daha sonra stratejik insan kaynakları yönetiminin teorik çerçevesi ortaya konulmaya çalışılmış ve yaklaşımla ilgili uygulama türleri açıklanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Kavram, Teori, Uygulamalar.

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## Introduction

The state lines up relations between human beings and ensures that these relations work in accordance with the norms and so it represents the supreme sovereign legitimate force that produces or manages public goods and services. While fulfilling state responsibilities, persons in a hierarchical and order assigned on behalf of the public administration are called “public personnel” or “public officials” (Eryılmaz, 2012: 2).

Personnel administration is often cited by management scientists as one of the key functions of management with particular emphasis on (Oral, 2019: 90). Personnel administration is the focus point of the management system. Personnel administration interacts with the political structure, management and economic system. This interaction determines the management of the personnel, by detecting of the possible negativities effects and eliminations it (Tutum, 1990: 40).

Public personnel administration is a set of basic rules and practices to which public officials are performing public services that the state is responsible for its (Tutum, 1980: 95). Thus, the subject of public personnel administration is the “organizing” and “managing” system of the personnel who job in public institutions and organizations and adopt these duties as a occupation (Bilgin, 2011: 223). Therefore, public personnel management should be considered as a state policy covering the whole administrative organization of the state.

Public personnel administration may be analyzed from at least four perspectives (Klingner et al., 2019: 4): Firstly, it's the functions (development, acquirement, planning and sanction) needed to manage human resources in public agencies. Secondly, it's the process by which public working are allocated (public working are rare because they are restricted by tax incomes). Thirdly, public personnel administration is also the interaction among four main societal values that often disagreement. These ones: “Responsiveness”, “Efficiency”, “Individual Rights” and “Social Equity”. Finally, public personnel administration is personnel systems, which the laws, rules, and regulations, used to express these abstract values in implementing personnel functions.

The reasons for examining the public personnel administration system can be stated as follows (Shafritz et al., 2001 & Stone, 1995 & Massey, 2011): Establishing of a personnel system that contribute to execution of public services; determining the state-wide management system of by which institution; in order to efficiently delivery of servies to provide the necessary qualified personnel employment; determination of the employment conditions including the rights and obligations of employees and ethical rules of conduct, managing or establishing a fair and success-based wage systems; training of personnel in accordance with public service before and within work; operating and establishing of a separate system for senior managers; establishing and operating of the retirement-social security system to which public personnel are affiliated.

In sum up, the matter of Public Personnel Administration (PPA) is that personnel issues of public organizations. PPA is provides the human power required by public organizations and the ways and methods of making the most efficient use of resources. Public personnel management is considered as a whole that includes “structural” and “functional” keys. Structural aspects of the system refers to classification, wage regime, personnel units and status rules to which public officials are bound while functional aspect of the system refers to human power planning, recruitment, training, evaluation, motivation and encouragement (Eroğlu, 2019: 412). On the other hand, process of shift from “Public Personnel Management” (PPM) to “Strategic Human Resources Management Approach” (SHRMA) in Public Administration: In the Industrial Revolution when developments in industrial psychology and

behavioral sciences have contributed greatly to the course from personnel management to human resource management (Çetin et al., 2017: 17). Issues such as strategic management approach which total quality, individualization in employee relations, flexibility, American and Japanese style human resources management gained importance in 1980s and bring about effective in revealing the distinction between Strategic Human Resources Management and personnel management more transparently (Gök, 2006: 3). The employ of qualified human resources is so important that its effects almost every period of the social and economic transformation process. It can be said that the post-industrial era, when is also described as the information age of human resources (Yeung et al., 1996: 48).

When its come to the process of shift from personnel management to human resources management; it can be said that personnel management does not carry out any activity other than record keeping in terms of employee wages, benefits, insurance premiums, leave to work and being late. Therefore, it's considered as a cost element working in personnel management. As a result of increasing social expectations and rapid changes, personnel management has been replaced by strategic human resources management (Akgemci, 2015: 255-257). What's more, transformation from personnel administration to strategic human resources management in public administration the following factors were effective (Ahammad, 2017: 412): Human resources management developed in response to the substantial increase in competitive pressures in management organizations began experiencing by the late 1970s as a result of such factors as globalization, deregulation, and rapid technological change. It should also be noted that the principles of the New Public Management (NPM) have accelerated the transition from personnel administration to strategic human resources management. Consequently, "the New Public Management" is be directing, transparent, accountable, obvious, performance-oriented, citizen-oriented, market-centered, effective, efficient and frugal, participatory management approach supported by information and communication technologies (Ateş, 2001: 52). Moreover, with the getting through of SHRM, the "value and importance to human beings" began to increase.

### **Concept: Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM)**

Strategic human resources management focuses on organizing internally consistent of human resources management practices to build the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of employees in an effort to support rivalry strategies and achieve organizations/ public administration objectives (Knies et al., 2018: 6). SHRM is gaining increasingly important because of strategic management emphasizes that in the knowledge-based economy and employees which are an important element to acquire competitive advantage. In this circle, the adoption of appropriate SHRM practices is important to ensure effective strategy implementation. SHRM practices create procedures that institutionalize the construction of the knowledge, aptitude and competences of employees in the organization to develop valuable, unique and difficult to replicate institutional capabilities that support competitive advantage (Werbil & DeMarie, 2005: 249).

Strategic Human Resources Management concept is derived from HRM and Strategy. This adds the HRM model, which focuses on strategy, integration and consistency, to key concepts of the strategy, that is; "strategic intent", "resource-based strategy", "competitive advantage", "strategic capability "and "strategic alignment" (Armstrong, 2006: 124). In this context, if we look at the definitions of strategic human resources management in national and international literature: Strategic human resources management is a pattern of planned human resources activities that are considered to aid an organization achieve its goals (Ngo et al., 2008: 73). SHRM is a critical impact on initiating organizational change and development by facilitating the management process and therefore "leveraging" the implementation of the organization's strategy (Wei, 2006: 49). SHRM is an approach that designed to identify the strategic

needs of the organization and the capabilities needed to implement a competitive strategy and achieve operational objectives (Chang & Huang, 2005: 435).

Strategic human resources management is planned human resources management activities implemented to provide that organizations achieve their goals (Gürbüz, 2011: 399). SHRM is the methods that enable employees to provide value and competitive advantage to the organization through training and career opportunities (Akdemir, 2005: 429). SHRM are policies developed to meet the demands of the organization and human resources. Moreover, It's the whole of the human resources planning, organizing, directing and controlling activities needed to provide competitive superiority in the organization (Bayraktaroğlu, 2011: 301). The concept of strategic human resources management is to improve performance in the enterprise, to increase innovation and flexibility, and to align human resources management with strategic goals and objectives (Truss & Gratton, 1994: 665).

Nowadays, organizations are under intense pressure to be more effective, faster and more effective. In order to work out the underlying factors of these pressures and nature of strategic human resource management then the factors that affect its development need to be examined (Dessler, 2000: 9-13 & Öğüt et al., 2004: 284). These ones: Globalization process, technological developments, deregulation, changes in the nature of work and labor diversity. In addition to the factors affecting the emergence of the above mentioned SHRM, it was also effective in (Gürbüz, 2013: 67-68): Gaining sustainable competitive advantage in organizations increased emphasis on the importance of human resources; The need to focus on the integration of organizational strategies with other factors and "improving organizational performance" through effective HRM practices. The comparison of strategic human resources management and classical human resources management is as follows:

Classical Human Resources Management	Strategic Human Resources Management
Application of management model according to current developments	Having a long-term perspective in managing people
Acting independently of strategic goals and objectives	Prioritizing organizational strategies
Evaluating competition and market developments independently of human resources practices	Considering competition and market developments together with human resources practices
Leaving organizational culture in the course of its development	Aligning organizational culture with "strategic goals and objectives"
Preparation of HR policies and procedures irrespective of considering the "strategies" factor	Preparing HR policies and procedures in line with and supporting strategic objectives and targets
HR managers only deal with their internal procedures. So, other functions see different departments as internal problems	Participation of HR resources managers in vital decisions and meetings of department managers such as delivery, quality, competition and efficiency

**Table 1: The Differences Between Classical Human Resources Management and Strategic Human Resources Management (Şencan, 2008: 5).**

Strategic human resource management should carry out in coordinated with the Strategic Management of organizations. The success of a human resources management that is incompatible with the strategy of the senior management cannot be mentioned. The main features of SHRM can be listed as follows (Aykaç, 1999: 74-76 & Kaçmaz and Serinkan, 2016: 153-155 & Mesch et al., 1995: 388):

- Long-term plans regarding the use of human resources can be realized through SHRM,
- According to the SHRM, the human fact is too important and difficult to imitate,
- SHRM assists organizations to cope with their competitors,
- SHRM acts with a learning-oriented approach and makes it widespread within the organization,
- SHRM promotes future-oriented, innovative, value-added behaviors in organizations,
- SHRM contributes to the entire strategy of the organization and the integration of human resources policies,
- SHRM provides a clear understanding of the objectives of the organization and,
- Its possible that the selection, training, change and evaluation of organizational personnel via SHRM.

Looking at the success of international organizations in the past twenty years, when it has been observed that the most important component that they attach to “human factor” which the most decisive factor (Tikici & Akdemir, 2002: 861). That’s why, the main purpose of the SHRM is to “establish the balance” between human resources functions and organizational strategies in order to achieve the objectives set by the organization.

Strategic Human Resources Management's objectives and plans should be related to the strategic aim of the organizations. In this context, purposes of it can be described as follows (Bingöl, 2016: 24 & Tompkins, 2002: 96):

- Contributing to the realization of the objectives of the organization by raising the ties and efficiency of the personnel towards the organization,
- To improve the skills and productivity of personnel and reduce intra-organizational discontinuity,
- Selecting the employees who will provide equipped and high quality service and preparing programs for their training,
- To provide equality to personnel with social responsibility awareness,
- To protect the health of the personnel and to be fair without discrimination against the personnel,
- To increase productivity in organizations as well as to gain knowledge and skills to personnel,
- Compete with changing environmental conditions and,
- To establish competitive advantage over other organizations.

### **Theory: Strategic Human Resource Management Approaches**

It’s important to consider which dimensions they have before discussing the main approaches to strategic human resource management. In strategic human resources management, organizations make plans to get through their goals (Wright & McMahan, 1992: 298). These plans consist of three dimensions:

*i. Horizontal (Internal Harmony) Dimension:* The success of strategic human resources management depend on horizontal (internal) harmony. Horizontal dimension refers to the internal harmony and consistency of human resources practices. The effectiveness of human resources practices working in harmony with each other is increasing. If this compliance is not achieved, then the effectiveness is expected to decrease (Delery, 1998: 293). If compliance is achieved, then achievement and effectiveness in the organization will be increased.

*ii. Vertical (External Harmony) Dimension:* The vertical dimension expresses that harmony between the strategic management process and human resources management functions (Schuler & Jackson, 1987: 208). In other words, its meant that the harmony relationship between organizational strategies and human resources strategies.

*iii. Content Dimension:* Strategic human resources management includes the following elements in the content determined by the organization in achieving its objectives:

- Strategic Human Resources Tendency,
- Strategic Human Resources Applications,
- Human Resources Effectiveness,
- Effectiveness of Human Resources Managers: Need to express that there are a number of qualifications which SHR managers must possess (Barutçugil, 2004: 46). These ones:
  - Competencies related to information management,
  - Organizing and planning competencies,
  - Managerial ability,
  - Integrative aptitudes,
  - Competencies related to alteration management.

There are four approaches regarding SHRM. Each of these approaches emphasizes a specific on dimension of SHRM. These ones:

- *Universalistic Approach:* Defined best practices for improving human performance and generalizable human resources management as well as explaining high performance work systems (Alcazar, 2005: 634). So, according to the universalist approach, there is a direct relationship between human resources management and performance. Lastly, the theory suggests that all organizations adopt best practices to gain competitive advantage and achieve high performance (Gürbüz, 2013: 13).
- *Contingent Approach:* The approach suggests that organizations with HR policy and practice are more prepared to respond to external factors that provide excellent performance (Allani et al., 2003: 236). Behavioral theory is the basis of contingent theory. Thus, certain organizational objectives require specific employee behavior; specific human resource strategies also produce specific employee behavior (Ericksen & Dyer, 2005: 908).
- *Configurational Approach:* According to the approach; organization, multiple variables pattern, thus, its a complex system consisting of internal and external sub-components connected to each other. These complex systems should be handled integrally, as no factor can lead the organization on its own (Sheppeck & Militello, 2000: 6). Briefly, the configurational approach has gained an

important place in the strategic human resources management literature due to the fact that it includes human resources management in the strategy preparation stage, approaches the organization and its functions with a holistic view and offers a more flexible structure compared to the contingent approach (Bayat, 2008: 79).

- **Contextual Approach:** The approach offers descriptive and global model. In addition, this model should be a broad model that can be applied to all different geographical and industrial conditions (Delery & Doty, 1996: 804). In this approach are explained that the internal functioning of strategic human resources management and its contribution to the achievement of organizational objectives, as well as the impact of external and organizational conditions on which managerial decisions are made (Alcazar et al., 2005: 637).

### Strategic Human Resources Applications

Strategic human resources management practices are defined as decisions and actions related to the management of employees at all organization levels and the implementation of strategies to maintain competitive advantage (Panayotopoulou et al., 2003: 682). It's also considered that when a firm's human resources practices are in line with each other and with the strategic objectives of the organization, its will be accepted that organizational efficiency and performance are increased (Khatri, 2000: 338). Thus, The significant of strategic human resources practices for the success and effectiveness of the organization is emerging.

In general, strategic human resource practices has seven applications areas (Olson et al., 2018: 65; Snell & Wright, 1997):

- Internal Career Opportunities; refer to the use of internal labor markets,
- Configurational Training Systems; refers to formal education given to employees the numbers,
- Valuation Measures; refers to based on results or behavior,
- Profit Sharing; seen as a part of the strategic HR system,
- Employment Assurance; the degree of this has many strategic implications,
- Suggestion Mechanisms; both formal configurational systems and participation in decision-making, emerged as key factors,
- Job Description; expresses that the degree of strait and limited definition of works.

It's possible for organizations to achieve the goals they have determined by using human resources effectively. Therefore, the strategic human resources management department should establish an "effective valuation system" in order to measure its effectiveness. This system consists of the following stages (Barutçugil, 2004: 49):

- To determining the contribution of human resources management in terms of achieving the goals and objectives of the organization,
- To identifying strengths and weaknesses by reviewing existing effectiveness measures,
- To defining the level of realization for each one of the assessments,
- To determining the results of the HRM support units within the organization and,

- Implement a draft monitoring report to allow comparison of planned and happened performance.

Each organization needs for human resources policies and activities in terms of its entire strategic objectives. The SHRM establishes and implements human resources policies in order to produce the employee competencies and behaviors necessary for the organization to achieve its strategic goals. In this context, the functions carried out by SHRM can be specified as follows:

### ***Job Analysis***

In order for the organization to achieve its objectives, it's necessary to make the labor division of the existing personnel and determine the job descriptions (Sadullah & Uyargil, 2013: 50). According to some views, job analysis is seen as the 'backbone' or 'cornerstone' of human resource management. Human resource employees can clearly define their job descriptions and can be an important source of guidance in the development of the organisation's performance standards via job analyses, In addition, with job analyses, it contributes to the recruitment, selection, training, remuneration, occupational health and safety of the personnel who will carry out the service not only during the service but also in the pre-service process, and to the evaluation of all activities separately according to the nature of the work to be done (Siddique, 2004: 220). Therefore, in order for human resources management to function effectively, jobs should be clearly defined by the organisation and these definitions should be understood by the personnel who will do the job.

### ***Planning***

Planning is one of the most important elements of strategic human resources management. Its aim is to produce strategies to meet the human power needed by the organization in the future and to use human resources effectively (Tunçer, 2011: 89). Strategic human resources planning differs from normal human resources planning studies in terms of activity planning. Accordingly, it's not enough to determine only the human resources needed for a certain period in numerical terms; the human resources and functions required qualitatively according to the internal and external environmental conditions, the strategy and objectives of the enterprise should also be determined. In this framework, three functions of strategic human resources planning can be mentioned: Firstly, strategic human resources planning enables the establishment of a human resources strategy linked to the institution strategy. Secondly, it meets the human resources demands supported by the objectives and strategies of the organisation. Finally, it develops policies and programmes that complement planning in line with strategies and human resources demands (Arslan, 2012: 92).

### ***Recruitment***

As the volume of work increases in an organisation it starts with the feeling that new employees are needed. It's important to anticipate the need for personnel and to take the necessary measures in a timely manner (Kumar et al., 2019). Recruitment has internal and external sources and each has its own advantages and disadvantages in strategic human resources management. The advantage of internal resources is that employee motivation is strong and staff are seen as an investment. The disadvantage is that the struggle of the personnel for promotion may negatively affect the morale of the employees. The advantage of external resources is that employees can bring new ideas and perspectives to the organisation. The disadvantage is that the duration of work orientation and training is a long time. It's also possible that moral conflicts may arise between employees who think they are doing a job better (Jaradat & Cicioc, 2016: 220-221).



### ***Training and Career Development***

These are practices which aimed at training and career development efforts that will help an organization to acquire the knowledge and skills it needs and to realize the highest level potential of its employees (Sabuncuoğlu & Tokol, 2013: 110). By career development, organizations will have a more effective place in the market and will retain qualified employees. The fact that the personnel receive trainings related to their work increases the quality and efficiency of the services they will provide and helps to determine the services that citizens need. Accordingly, the performance of the employees is expected to increase. Increasing the performance of employees also brings competitiveness. Shortly, training and career development increases the competences of employees and improves organisational belonging (Hosen et al., 2024: 2). Career training and development is a systematic process in which employees can continuously evaluate themselves at the organisational level.

### ***Performance and Job Evaluation***

Performance evaluation is a process in which managers in an organisation observe the effectiveness and success of the work and operations of the personnel. This is the decision on the assessment and evaluation of how well and correctly the employees perform their duties. Through performance evaluation, both the institutional feedback mechanisms are analysed, the services performed by the personnel are controlled and the effectiveness of the service outputs are audited (Murphy, 2020: 14-15). That is, personnel success will be evaluated with objective criteria and will contribute to the strengthening of employee and organisational performance (Duru & Korkmaz, 2013: 16). Job evaluation is the formal and systematic comparison of a job for the purpose of remuneration to determine the value of one job relative to another. Its provided that a fair and balanced wage structure (Sabuncuoğlu, 2000: 194).

### ***Remuneration/Wage***

Wages or remunerations are paid which for performing to personnel duties in organizations. As a strategy, it's an important human resource function that affects employee satisfaction and performance (Barutçugil, 2004: 444). Strategic wage management must be compatible with both organization policies and human resources department strategy. The most important lever between human resources practices and corporate performance is wages. There are three basic remuneration models in strategic human resources management. The first is the universal model, which wages are generally determined on the basis of individual or collective performance. The second is the vertical wage model. There is a close relationship between organisational performance and job objectives in the model. Wage satisfaction increases when organisational performance approaches institution objectives while more emphasis is placed on collaborative behaviours in the horizontal wage model. The last one is the resource-based wage model. According to the model, wages are based on competition. That is, the employee's contribution to organisational effectiveness with high performance contributes to the formation of a competitive environment in the wage system. (Kessler, 2015: 250-251).

### ***Occupational Health and Safety***

Occupational health aims not to harm the health of employees due to their work while occupational safety aims to prevent accidents at work and to create a safe work environment. Human resources managers try to solve such problems of employees through training and organizing panels on the subjects (Tan & Çalışkan, 2018: 36). Managers should not just focus on the efficiency of the service, but merely take occupational safety measures and establish public policies that can guarantee human health. Therefore, it's necessary to look at occupational health and safety strategically (Alzyoud & Ogalo, 2020: 45). Looking

at service providers only as a source of efficiency, cost and financing causes the strategic dimension of the issue to be ignored.

## Conclusion

The most vital factor for an organisation to achieve its strategic goals is humanbeing. It may be possible to say that classical management approaches have started to be abandoned especially due to globalisation movements, the spread of liberal values in the social sphere, and the acceleration of information and communication technologies. Instead, with the fact that not everything is efficiency and effectiveness, and that the employee is a psychological individual, organisations should carry out human resource management processes with a macro-level strategic perspective. In this study, the structure, role and function of human resources management are discussed in a strategic context and tried to be explained at conceptual and theoretical level. In addition, by trying to explain the strategic application models in this field, it has been tried to shed light on the functioning of the strategic human resources management process, which is a fairly novel approach in the field of human resources management.

The conceptualisation types of strategic management need to be explained. Because, in order for a management to be considered as strategic, firstly, this concept should be handled in its classical context and then strategic management approaches can be represented formally and it's possible that it depends on environmental conditions at the point of application. General approaches to strategic management emphasise content or process. It's important whether each strategic management approach is to be implemented at central or local level; for a community; or for international cooperation. These questions are tried to be explained in the context of strategic human resource management through four basic approaches: universalistic, contingent, configurational and contextual. It can be said that practices related to strategic human resources management actually bring a strategic perspective to the human resources management process. Depending on the opinion human resources officials are expected to be more professional in matters such as work structure, information management, change management and planning.

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