

Book Review

Encyclopedia of Human Resource Management, Edited by *Adrian Wilkinson and Stewart Johnstone*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016, Hardback, £190.00, ISBN: 978 1 78347 545 2, 552pp.

'*Human Resource Management*' (HRM) is said to be an essential part of modern managing and is studied in most university business school and departments of management across the globe. 'People', after all are the main producers of wealth, as much as 'Capital'. Academics, students and managers, its proponents say, need to update their competence continuously these days. It is, however, contentious in its fundamental premises, one might argue. Some, for instance, find references to 'human capital' a dehumanizing notion these days! A more benign and enlightened approach to HRM is surely needed. But that is yet to come.

The newly-published *Encyclopedia of Human Resource Management*, edited by Dr Adrian Wilkinson, Professor of Employment Relations, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia and Dr Stewart Johnstone, Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management, Newcastle University Business School, Newcastle, UK, spells out a good deal of recent knowledge in the subject. If a rather 'conventional' compendium, it nonetheless has over 400 short entries in total, a number by well-known figures in the field and covers many key areas of HRM, from A to Z (in fact, from 'Absence' to 'Zero-hours'). It covers a lot of ground in the field. There is not perhaps a great deal of interest from a 'theory' point of view but it still has a substantive stock of material covered. It is indeed, in this regard, a cornucopia of many useful facts and figures. It has a very wide coverage of useful if down-to-earth topics, at least as far as practising managers are concerned. No-one can accuse the editors of slacking in this respect.

Yet, the work as a whole is somewhat like a 'curate's egg', some entries being more interesting than others and some which might have been more geared to wider *cross-cultural* foci than the more everyday topics it covers. A truly global perspective may have helped organize the material more interestingly. A wider range of cultures and countries could have been included. Even so, it may be useful at least as a *reference-work* for undergraduates and MBAs in business schools, as well as practitioners, if at a high cover-price. A paper-back edition would be, of course, most welcome and there may well be a wider market for such a product if this was offered.

We may note in passing that a precursor of this brave effort, with which it can be compared, and which was coincidentally also '*alphabetic*' – was by Professors Michael Poole (1943–2012) and Malcolm Warner, the present reviewer, who edited *The IEBM Handbook of Human Resource Management* (London: International Thomson, 1998 and London: Thomson Learning, 2001). This latter effort was part of a much bigger multi-volume encyclopaedic exercise at the time and is still at hand in most university libraries, with somewhat longer and more detailed entries than the book under review here. But the new compendium, admittedly, updates the coverage of the field up the year 2016.

So, we may conclude, the new Encyclopedia may have potential usefulness to interested parties in the field and may be a 'prize' purchase for HRM Directors' office-shelves, if recommended with the limitations set out above.

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