Globalisation of HR at function level: exploring the issues through international recruitment, selection and assessment processes

Paul R. Sparrow
Centre for Performance-Led HR
Lancaster University Management School

ABSTRACT

Much of the debate around convergence-divergence is based around comparative analysis of HR systems. However, we need now to combine these insights with work in the field of IHRM on firm-level motivations to optimise, standardise and export HR models abroad. A series of the changes are being wrought on a range of IHRM functions – recruitment, global staffing, management development and careers, and rewards - by the process of globalisation highlighting the difference between globally standardised, optimised or localised HR processes. This paper reports on a study of firm-level developments in international recruitment, selection and assessment, drawing upon an analysis of four case studies each conducted in a different context. Organisations are building IHRM functions that are shifting from the management of expatriation towards supplementary services to the business aimed at facilitating the globalisation process, and this involves capitalising upon the fragmentation of international employees. As HR realigns itself in response to this process of *within-function globalisation* (building new alliances with other functions such as marketing and IS) the new activity streams that are being developed and the new roles and skills of the HR function carry important implications for the study of convergence and divergence of IHRM practice. Globalisation at firm level revolves around complexity, and this is evidenced in two ways: first, the range of theory that we have to draw upon, and the competing issues that surface depending on the level of analysis that is adopted; and second, the different picture that might emerge depending upon the level of analysis that is adopted. This paper shows that although the field of IHRM has traditionally drawn upon core theories such as the resource-based view of the firm, relational and social capital, and institutional theory, once the full range of resourcing options now open to IHRM functions are considered, it is evident that we need to incorporate both more micro theory, as well as insights from contingent fields in order to explain some of the new practices that are emerging.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most academics still subscribe to the view that globalisation is more a work in progress, the boundaries of which are still hard to fathom. Only a few firms are considered to have developed an effective capability to locate, source and manage human resources anywhere in the world (Lewin and Volberda, 2003) and multinational enterpriisess (MNEs) continue to have assets,

sales, ownership of workforces and control concentrated in home countries or regions (Rugman and Verbeke, 2004). The observation that stateless organisations operating independently of national borders under global rules of economic competition are few and far between (Ferner and Quintanilla, 1998) would still seem to hold true. Yet, considerable globalisation is in progress, with 63,000 transnational corporations shaping trade patterns account for about two-thirds of all world trade but the top 100 of these corporations accounting for 14 per cent of worldwide sales, 12 per cent of assets and 13 per cent of employment (UNCTAD, 2004). We need to understand better how this process operates in relation to the human resource management inside organisations.

Globalisation is examined at different levels of analysis, each tending to produce different perceptions of how advanced or pervasive the process is and the extent of its influence over IHRM policies and practices. The main models and frameworks that have been used in the field concentrate on five levels of analysis:

1. comparative analysis of national business and management systems (Pieper, 1990; Whitley, 1992, 2000; Brewster, Tregaskis, Hegewisch, and Mayne, 1996) which itself can have different embedded levels of analysis from business system down to specific HR practices (Brewster, 2007);

2. the globalisation of industries (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989; Morrison and Roth, 1992; Makhija, Kim, Williamson, 1997);

3. relative levels of internalisation of the firm (Sullivan, 1994; Ramaswamy, Kroeck and Renforth, 1996; Sullivan, 1996);

4. the progressive building of international capabilities within organisations (Hamel and Prahalad, 1985; Prahalad and Doz, 1987; Yip, 1992; Dunning, 1993; Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick and Kerr, 1995; Caves, 1996; Stonehouse, Hamill, Campbell and Purdie, 2000; De Saá-Pérez and García-Falcón, 2002;); and

5. processes of functional realignment taking place in response to globalisation (Malbright, 1995; Kim, Park and Prescott, 2003; Sparrow, Brewster and Harris, 2004; Brewster, Sparrow and Harris, 2005).

Most of the theoretical developments within the field of IHRM (as opposed to comparative HRM) are driven by attention to the third and fourth levels of analysis (Schuler and Tarique, 2007).

The study of functional realignment within globalising organisations examines the driving forces within business functions as they seek to co-ordinate (develop linkages between geographically dispersed units of a function) and control (regulate functional activities to align them with the expectations set in targets) their activities across borders (Kim, Park and Prescott, 2003). Malbright (1995, p.119) argued that true "…Globalisation occurs at the level of the function, rather than the firm". We therefore need to understand how organisations enhance the ability of specific

functions to perform globally. Recent empirical analysis of these pressures conducted at the level of the HR function in its totality has revealed five factors driving the organizational strategy of globalizing firms, each associated with different combinations of the above issues: efficiency; information exchange/organisational learning; global provision; core business process convergence; and localization (Brewster, Sparrow and Harris, 2005). The requirement for efficiency has witnessed the pursuit of three key delivery mechanisms for global HRM: a focus on shared service structures, the e-enablement of many HR processes on a regional or global scale, and the pursuit of global centres of excellence. This global reconfiguration of activity has extensive ramifications for the field of IHRM. Historically, it was the preserve of those professionals dealing with managers working on overseas postings, with attention given to the need to identify the particular skills and competencies that were important to be an effective international managers. Attention has now shifted to the need not just to have a separate IHRM function for a dedicated group of managers, but to internationalise all of the fundamental HR processes of an organisation. HR is being applied to an ever more diverse and global workforce and the key challenge is to be able to ensure that HR professionals, who might work in a specific domestic setting, nonetheless operate HR processes that are robust enough to operate across cultures and diverse labour markets.

This paper examines the process of functional realignment due to globalization within one of the core IHRM functions, that resourcing (international recruitment, selection and assessment). The study reported on here addresses three research questions:

1. If globalisation is evidenced at the functional level, what sort of indicators evidence this and might form the basis of future research?

2. Can we detect patterns or strategies within the activity of organisations?

3. Can these patterns be explained by existing theory and what new directions would be helpful?

The study of global staffing has traditionally concentrated on resourcing key positions within MNEs and top management team positions at HQ and subsidiary locations, generally with idiosyncratic mixes of strategy rather than any logical progression of focus related to the process of globalisation (Harzing, 2001, 2004). The literature gives most attention to recruitment and selection of expatriates and international managers, talent management at HQ or local level, and more flexible forms of international business travellers, virtual teams and inpatriates (Scullion and Collings (2006). Yet, as Briscoe and Schuler (2004, p. 223) noted that the definition of international employee inside organisations continues to expand: "… the tradition of referring to all international employees as expatriates – or even international assignees – falls short of the need for international HR practitioners to understand the options available…and fit them to evolving international business strategies". In the context of international resourcing, this now

includes a fragmentary group of individuals, ranging from: contract expatriates (Baruch and Altman, 2002); assignees on short term or intermediate term foreign postings (Morley and Heraty, 2004; Mayerhofer, Hartmann and Herbert, 2004); permanent cadres of global managers (Suutari, 2003); international commuters (Economist, 2006); employees utilised on long-term business trips (Mayerhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch-Riedl and Kollinger, 2004); international transferees (moving from one subsidiary to another) (Harvey, Price, Speier and Novicevic, 1999; Millar and Salt, 2006); virtual international employees active in cross-border project teams (Janssens and Brett, 2006); skilled individuals working in geographically remote centres of excellence serving global operations (Sparrow, 2005); self-initiated movers who live in a third country but are willing to work for a multinational (Tharenou, 2003); immigrants actively and passively attracted to a national labour market (Millar and salt, 2006); and domestically based employees in a service centre but dealing with overseas customers, suppliers and partners on a regular basis. Millar and Salt (2006) draw attention to a number of factors that have increased demand for new forms of international mobility: the need for skilled expatriates to help build new international markets (Findlay, Li, Jowett and Skeldon, 2000); temporary and short term access to specialised talent in sending countries to assist the execution of overseas projects (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Hocking, Brown and Harzing, 2004); and the need for highly mobile elites of management to perform boundary-spanning roles to help build social networks and facilitate the exchange of knowledge (Tushman and Scanlan, 2005).

In addition to this process of fragmentation, the opportunity for broader resourcing strategies has increased markedly in certain labour markets that have themselves globalised (Ward, 2004). Considerable attention has been given for example to the globalization of healthcare markets (Aiken, Buchan, Sochalski, Nichols and Powell, 2004; Clark, Stewart and Clark, 2006; Kingma, 2006; Oberoi and Lin, 2006). Not only has international recruitment and resourcing moved away from its traditional focus on managing pools of expatriates, but the changing structure and role of International HR functions means that these functions and their HR business partners now have to help their organisations manage a very wide range of options associated with global resourcing (Hustad and Munkvold, 2005; Sparrow, 2006).

Organisations face the challenge of on the one hand providing some degree of consistency (through either standardisation or optimisation) of practices around the world so that their operations use the same tools and techniques to obtain candidates who increasingly act as part of a more global community, and on the other hand maintaining locally responsive and differentiated approaches (Wiechmann, Ryan and Hemingway, 2003). Harvey, Novicevic and Speier, (2000, p. 382-382) argued that many firms had not yet internalised the influence of global markets and that "what is needed is a global management staffing strategy that enables global consistency among various managerial pools and the foreign subsidiaries" concluding that the proper integration of a transcultural emphasis in global staffing systems would be an intriguing future research topic. In

order to ensure that the correct balance of standardisation versus differentiation is reached, geographical partners have to be treated as equal partners in the ensuing debate. Often it is the local in-country HR Business Partner who has to manage these tensions. Consequently, research has to give attention to the role of local HR business partners in this process of interpretation and negotiation.

METHODOLOGY

The literature review shows that international recruitment, selection and assessment is carried out now in very different contexts, and it is these contexts that are used to structure this research. The paper is based on primary research conducted in four case studies, each of which outlines the challenges faced by the typical international recruitment contexts faced by UK firms. The case studies were structured to demonstrate the main issues for International HR professionals when operating in each of four contexts.

1. International recruitment from overseas countries for employment in the home (UK) market. The case looks at the experiences of South East London Strategic Health Authority as it, along with the National Health Service in general, operated a number of programmes to attract overseas candidates into the UK. It shows how the activity of the HR function shifts as it works its way through the initial challenges of attracting and recruiting overseas professionals, on to the longer term issues associated with then managing this cadre of overseas recruits through the organisation's career systems.

2. Resourcing specialist skills for use in home and overseas markets based on the experiences of BBC World Services. Many organisations now have to resource very specialist technical skills for deployment in overseas markets, and at the same time manage a strong employer brand. The case examines conduct of these activities in the context of an ongoing process of outsourcing.

3. Recruitment in the context of an internationalisation strategy. The case examines the experiences of Barclaycard International as it set up operations in a series of new countries as part of a strategy to massively expand the scale of international business activity. It explores the activity necessary to ensure more expatriate mobility, a smooth process of new country start ups, and changes in the role of in-country HR partners.

4. Devolving responsibility for international recruitment. The case examines experiences of Save the Children and learning from the not-for-profit sector as the need to combine diversity priorities with central needs for talent management are tackled through a decentralised responsibility for international recruitment activity.

Data were gathered from February 2005 to March 2006. Interviews were conducted with 14 HR professionals based in the UK, Spain, Germany, and Ireland (job titles ranged from HR directors international, international HR manager, head of resourcing, and country HR business partner). The interviews were used to explore the: strategic nature of HR interventions; political/ process skills brought to bear; technical knowledge needed by HR community; contrasting expectations of the intervention role between central and business partner roles; perceived link to organisational effectiveness and contribution to strategy (mission, objectives, structure, systems, culture) and the risks/cost of failure. Organisation websites and intranets were accessed to gather data on employment policy and an external search of professional and press coverage conducted. In each instance, the case study was sent to all interviewees from the organisation for interpretation and further comment and insight on events. One of the realities of global HR strategies is that they emerge in the context of often rapid contextual change. In each case study, the opportunity afforded by the year of study enabled analysis of the changing context for study over the period. For example, BBC World Services continued to clarify and develop its strategy around outsourcing. Within the NHS changes in national immigration rules in the UK resulted in a public discussion about the ethics of overseas recruitment. Decisions about the nature of central co-ordination roles were made at Barclaycard International. Finally, in order to provide peer interpretation of the findings, each of the emerging case studies was disseminated and interpreted at three workshops involving HR professionals and service providers not involved in the case organisations, hosted by the European Association of Personnel Management and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in May and July 2005 and March 2006.

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

The case studies reveal important implications for the field of IHRM from developments at firm level occurring within sub-functions (in this case the globalisation of recruitment and selection functions), especially with regard to Schuler and Tarique's (2007) concern for the issue of complexity. Sufficient case detail has to be provided to enable an understanding of how this complexity patterns. In this section the complexity within each case is outlined by examining the range and sequence of activity surrounding the development of the international resourcing function. They show the complexity of functional-level developments at this level of analysis, especially once attention is turned away from the traditional focus on MNCs. Patterns across the cases are interpreted in the context of IHRM literature in the discussion section.

International recruitment from overseas countries for employment in the home (UK) market

The situation in the British National Health Service (NHS) shows the complex issues faced by HR professionals in coping with overseas recruitment into domestic markets. The NHS is the largest single employer within the UK, employing over a million people, 5% of the working population. There are numerous careers in over 70 professions. International recruitment is an option mainly

used by to fill vacancies in particular geographical areas or medical specialties with recognised shortages. These have grown markedly. Although by 2003 just 4% of nurses had qualified overseas the flow of new and young nurses had become highly internationalised. In 2002/03 43% of new nurse registrants were from abroad. The number of work permits issued to foreign nurses nearly doubled from 2000-2003. The vast majority of nurses arriving in London in the last ten years came from just six countries – the Philippines, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Ghana. The flow of skilled professionals had also become more internationalised. In each year from 1993-2002 nearly half of all new registrants to the General Medical Council were from abroad, increasing to nearly two-thirds by 2003 (National Primary Care Research and Development Centre, 2003; King's Fund, 2004).   The case study reviewed the experience of the NHS in general and the South East London Strategic Health Authority in particular in dealing with international recruitment.   The need for International recruitment was inextricably linked to demand for skills and HR professionals with time dedicated to managing international recruitment found that the nature of their role changed both in line with the level of demand for candidates, but also in line with a set of evolving needs. At a national level the Department of Health established codes of practice and ethical policies in order to promote the best possible standards in international recruitment, discourage inappropriate practices which could harm other countries' healthcare systems or the interests of those who apply for posts. The use of external service providers carried both reputational and technical risk for the purchasers of these services if the conduct was not appropriate and the content of the Code of Practice evolved through three iterations to tighter specification of recruitment practice relating to specific country practice, financial arrangements with applicants and recruitment processes, as more was learned about the management of international recruitment. Government to government agreements were set up with some countries to ensure that UK recruitment drives did not strip other national health systems of talent; global advertising campaigns were run and web gateways established; and schemes designed to attract specialists in short supply. A value proposition for international recruits was communicated on websites.. Selection and assessment procedures differed for each group depending on vocational and professional bodies.   Across all occupational groups, however, the assessment of English language competence was a crucial issue.   Two basic aspects of English language competence needed to be established: levels of language proficiency that ensured safe and skilled communication with all stakeholders; and levels of knowledge and effectiveness comparable with UK vocational and educational standards. Prior to arrival a range of issues had to be managed including: occupational health clearance, Criminal Records Bureau clearance, references, registration with professional bodies, work permit applications and assistance with finding accommodation and schools for children. The key issues that arose from international migration of talented labour were: establishing where professional expertise and technical insight lay (which sector bodies, HR networks, agencies and service providers could

help); deciding whether the initiative required a targeted campaign or a longer term strategic move to sourcing from specific countries or regions; understanding and establishing base technical competence of recruitees and setting up assessment processes where necessary; considering the ethical and reputational issues associated with campaigns; ensuring a local infrastructure in receiving units to handle the increasing workforce diversity that resulted from successful campaigns; building the reputation of receiving units, operations so that they could be seen as internationally competitive and attractive (thereby aiding subsequent retention and the success of future campaigns). Sourcing employees internationally also needed three strategies: active recruitment policies: where specific skillgroups and countries were targeted, arrangements with service providers established, different media and channels to labour market known and tested, overseas recruitment trips normalised and codes of practice reflected in internal practice; passive recruitment policies: where the applicants took the initiative which needed to be capitalised on, and where candidates could be captured simply because there had been an increase in both the 'flow' and 'stock' of international employees or qualified refugees; and longer term strategies to ensure the continued ability to compete in international labour markets.

Resourcing specialist skills for use in home and international markets

The BBC World Services case study shows how the agenda for those involved in international recruitment, selection and assessment is determined by the use of technology and the attractions of shared service models applied on a global basis. International recruitment activity initially moved from World Service Broadcasting to BBC People in April 2004 but was subsequently substantially outsourced. Around 500 people are employed worldwide in BBC World Service, which broadcasts in 43 languages to 148 million people, competing for audience figures with Voice of America, Radio Monte Carlo and Al Jazeera. The bulk of international recruitment activity concerned recruiting journalists (producers) for language services of World Service and staff to work overseas in the World Trust Service. For the latter candidates needed very specialised skills (media skills but also experience of global news issues such as HIV/AIDS, dysentery) in order to make media programmes for developing countries. In many international organisations, there is a challenge to understand what the local issues are and adapt service provision accordingly. The World Service Trust has the challenge of managing projects that are driven by local conditions, with programmes made for particular countries and cultures, but managed from London in line with overall brand values. In all instances the BBC's employment brand was a key differentiating factor for recruitment in local countries. Programming needed an independent and impartial approach, but also had to effect local behaviour change. Work was carried out centrally to identify brand values, reflected in brochures, with adjectives such as: international; trustworthy; award-winning; accessible; impartial; educational; and online. Although London based Producers in the World Service worked within their own culture in terms of language used, BBC values covered their conduct with the people with whom they worked and audiences broadcast to. Campaigns

were run by a central team of eight HR professionals for different areas of the world, offering advice and expertise on the best recruitment media in local labour markets, interviewing, applying for work permits, assisting new recruits with visa applications, and providing training.   A recent Arabic campaign received applications from 34 countries. Assessments (written journalistic and language skills and voice tests) were held across countries at a similar time. Candidates were tested on technical and language skills, suitability of voice for radio and ability to write and work for radio and online, with judgements made about the cross-cultural validity of tests (overseas applicants might achieve lower consistency and lower scores) to counter risks that test performance favoured candidates from specific countries which could limit diversity of the candidate base and lead to claims of unlawful discrimination. Judgements about how best to organise international recruitment activity were bound up in general changes in HR delivery that had been taking place over a three year period, culminating in a 10 year outsourcing deal worth £100 million and producing savings of £50 million (International Herald Tribune, 2005; Griffiths, 2005; People Management, 2005; Pickard, 2006). The BBC underwent two waves of downsizing, eliminating 3,780 jobs (19% of its UK workforce, or nearly 14% of its worldwide staff of 27,000). HR was centralised and a business-partner model introduced. Professional services, including parts of HR, were outsourced. Employment within BBC People fell from 1000 to 450.   11 areas for possible outsourcing were drawn up (resourcing, remuneration, contracting, relocation, disability access services, HR advice and occupational health) including the conduct of international recruitment.   The functions finally outsourced included recruitment, pay and benefits (excluding pensions), assessment, outplacement and some training, HR administration, relocation, occupational health and disability access services.   Service delivery to line managers, driven by service level agreements, was split from strategic HR, the latter focusing on building capability within divisions.

Recruitment in the context of an internationalisation strategy

The Barclaycard International case study demonstrated how firms can use the development of a multicultural workforce to the advantage of an internationalisation strategy. Barclaycard was the UK's first credit card and as one of the largest global credit card businesses now has a rapid growth strategy. Outside the UK, it operates in the United States, Germany, Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, France, Asia-Pacific and across Africa. A strategy to become as meaningful a contributor to the Group as Barclaycard UK currently is by 2013 has witnessed alliances with Standard Bank of South Africa, acquisition of Juniper Financial Corporation (rebranded as Barclays USA) and a series of in-country launches. It employed 3000 staff, with 15% based in the UK. To enable expansion, Barclaycard International built a platform of people management processes (processes, structures and frameworks) to bring stability, governance and control.   Challenges varied across countries but always included ensuring rigour and consistency across operations in very different cultures, business markets and labour markets.

Primary agenda items for the HR team in 2006 were international resourcing, international mobility, talent acquisition and development of global policies and frameworks.   Resourcing, then transferring, capability globally, either within an existing business or during start up and building of a local business, necessitated a range of preferred recruitment suppliers and the building of networks across them to transfer learning about: the management of different types of supplier and agency; assessment of their true global capability; and availability of skills available in each labour market.   Intranets exchanged vacancy information between Hamburg, Zaragoza and Dublin. A new International Resourcing Business Partner role acted as a support mechanism for HR Business Partners and business leaders to facilitate the acquisition of top talent through: negotiation of global preferred supplier arrangements for head-hunters and research institutions; development of an employee value proposition and employment brand across countries; advise on global versus local process; sources of best practice; and appropriate geographical diversity in the use of international talent.

Barclaycard's call centre in Dublin acted as a central platform and nursery for future international expansion. It moved from10 to 360 people from 1997-2006. Initially intended to support non-UK operations, it grew to serve eight countries including Ireland, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Greece, and Botswana.   Dublin was chosen because of the nature of the role, the employee base, and the City's labour market. The recruitment population was well-qualified, with intentions to stay in country for around 12 to 18 months. Employees spoke (and were hired for) their mother tongue in the markets they served, requiring principles of cross-cultural management to be applied to a single internal labour market. The acquisition of Banco Zaragozano enabled a new contact centre in Spain.   35 employees moved from Dublin to Spain to help transfer practices. HR Business partners dealt with: setting up legal entities to transfer employees; deciding the best mix of local recruitment; use of local job centres; assessing funding support; and understanding the implications and ramifications of local employment law and sector agreements. New country operations oversaw other start-up operations (Portugal and Italy were initially resourced under the guidance of the Spanish HR partner).   Considerable insight into country capability resided at HR partner level. A "framework for growth" was established to replicate in-country moves and transfer learning. Many aspects of recruitment, selection and assessment could be "cut and pasted" across operations (procedures, training plans, interview and induction processes, job standards) whilst others had to be dealt with flexibly (for example criteria-based interviewing and diversity practices).   Dublin acted as a nursery (providing people to facilitate international expansion).

Rapid global expansion required the deployment of skills and experience in a multitude of countries at short notice, not always achievable at pace through local recruitment.   A new international mobility framework reduced the cost and complexity of expatriating individuals by securing talented employees on global contracts with a premium for global mobility but only "light"

expatriation benefits. Assignments were designed by HR business partners and International Assignments Services (IAS) teams located within key global regions. Two initiatives supported a global mindset: awareness building amongst the senior leadership community through workshops on the cultures of current and potential labour markets; and cross cultural training interventions linked to a global induction programme. Talent management tools and techniques supported International resourcing through successive application to: top leadership roles, senior cross-Barclays role potential, top 450 leadership potential, and finally a broad business talent population. Succession planning and talent identification processes were integrated with long-term incentives tied to identified capabilities. The top 10% within internal expertise fields were identified on a global basis. Rather than wait until Barclaycard International was in or near-market, people were recruited for target markets ("resourcing ahead of the curve") with investments made in forward market mapping (using research agencies and head-hunters to map a wider range of geographical labour markets, and researching people working in target roles). Global policies and frameworks operated on an exception basis (even if culturally uncomfortable, explicit guidance and global protocols governed activity unless it was illegal to do so) to ensure consistency, rigour, global governance and risk management. Finally, control monitoring processes were aligned with institutional requirements such as Sarbanes Oxley in areas like pre-employment screening policy. The case revealed a clear sequence of HR issues regarding choice of HR processes to be managed globally or in country and the role of local HR business partners developed in relation to recruitment and selection activity, and emerging sophistication of insights into the behavioural implications of central HR policies within local cultures.

Devolving responsibility for international recruitment

Not-for-profit organisations have had to learn quickly how to combine diversity priorities with globalised talent management processes (Czerny, 2006). The final case study analyses developments at Save the Children. It has a mission to 'fight for children in the UK and around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence and to work with them to find lifelong answers to the problems they face'. Emergency relief activity runs alongside long-term development and prevention work. At the time of the case it operated across six geographical regions and recruited to opportunities in three different categories: long-term development posts based overseas, emergency posts based overseas and locally appointed posts based in the UK and countries where it worked. Candidates were subject to host country requirements, with large responses to vacancies and three quarters of applicants usually screened out. It was working on a number of measures to attract and recruit talent to worldwide roles, repositioning the HR function and looking at long-term strategy. It launched a new brand positioning statement and confirmed a new strategic direction focusing on national level advocacy, decentralising operations and devolving accountability to line managers, passing the entire recruitment process down to 40 country directors. Recruitment was impacted in a number of ways: a smaller, more strategic

global head office HR function; changes in the skill specification for international appointments; developments to improve the sophistication of the selection processes; more attention to the employer brand; focusing of talent management processes on creating a cadre of internationally mobile staff on permanent contracts; and building the capacity and careers of national staff. The HR team at headquarters was reduced in size, becoming less operational and providing central expertise, including: a specialist international resourcing team to develop more creative and co-ordinated recruitment support and initiatives; and toolkits and training for country operations on strategies and key steps in recruiting international staff. The Global HR team was tasked with: understanding the labour markets that sourced candidates and competitors for talent; and developing the organisation's resourcing capability. Induction was costly. Speed was everything, particularly when an emergency hit, as NGOs competed for the same high calibre candidates. Many staff in the sector moved out of an organisation to return later on another programme and charities competed with each other for staff needing to be mobilised at short notice. Sourcing capability was developed in four ways:

1. Regional HR manager roles, spotting internal talent at local level, understanding local media, expanding candidate networks, building databases of potential employees, and re-evaluating retention strategies.

2. Global protocols were established, such as a 'recruitment planner' for developing new assignments, setting resourcing strategies, identifying likely whereabouts of suitable candidates and ways to market roles.

3. Talented employees and people for specialist functions tracked both whilst they worked for the organisation and when engaged elsewhere, through use of networking skills

4. Agencies and charities recognised the need to grow more talent for the sector through collaborative arrangements, with Save the Children contributing a Child Protection trainee scheme to assist resourcing in this difficult specialist area.

Selection criteria were broadened to include relevant experience in a developing country (two years), understanding of development issues, and a range of cultural skills, with staff resourced from broader backgrounds and better links forged with the corporate sector. A more flexible candidate risk management approach attracted candidates from different sectors (military, finance, sales and marketing) counterbalanced by greater attention to induction, learning, development and evaluation. Recruitment relied on the overall brand and image of the organisation and all advertising was fitted with the brand. On-line recruitment was adapted for international resourcing. Appointments were marketed strongly and attention given to key selling points of working in a particular programme, country or region. Advertising became more customised and e-resourcing capability reviewed to ensure fast and effective access at local as well as global level. Selection techniques became more formalised with psychometrics used more

often, requiring understanding of issues associated with using tests across cultures to be understood. Talent management processes were developed. An International Core Team was launched in 2006 to establish long-term relationships with international staff, building expertise and global perspectives. Permanent contracts were offered in return for moving to a new country posting every three to five years, supported by more attention to skills development and career planning. The forward strategy included more work around the employer brand, incorporation of this into resourcing strategies, and a redefinition of volunteer and secondment work to use skills on a global basis.

DISCUSSION

Many of the arguments about processes of globalisation within the HR function rest on the assumption that there has and continues to be longitudinal change in the conduct of HR. The case studies in this research have looked at an important sub-function – that of international recruitment, selection and assessment. Clearly, they have only tapped around one year of such change. However, some comment can be made by comparison of this 2006 study to a previous study of international recruitment, selection and assessment activity in UK based firms in 1999 (Sparrow, 1999; Sparrow, 2006). In the intervening seven years a wide range of contextual changes have led to significant globalisation of activity, including: the transfer of work abroad, either to outsourced providers or on a global in-sourcing basis; the e-enablement of many HR processes; greater sophistication in HR information technology; new structures for International HR functions; greater competition for talented staff at all levels of organisation; more protracted and strategic talent pipelines; and the need to attract international labour to home markets from new and little understood labour pools. In particular, there has been a very strong marketing, corporate communications and IT influence on the HR function. The HR function is realigning itself in response to this process of cross-function globalisation (building new alliances with these functions) creating new activity streams and new roles and skills required of the HR function (Sparrow, Brewster and Harris, 2004). The case studies suggest that a number of new tools and techniques have become part of the mainstream armoury of HR functions, bringing the language of employee value propositions and employment branding (for example to assist passive recruitment in the NHS or address skills shortages in the Francophone aid worker market in Save the Children), corporate social responsibility (for example as part of the branding at BBC Worldwide), market mapping and recruiting ahead of the curve (for example to plan for new market entry in Barclaycard International or to exploit local networks amongst aid workers in save the Children) into the mix of international HR resourcing activity.

However, are we seeing a new wave of global co-ordination of resourcing activity? The answer varies depending on the phenomenon being looked at. In line with other research, a picture of more localised and culturally-dependent processes still exists from this research when one

observes factors such as models of global labour supply and immigration rules; the legislative context (Posthuma, Roehling and Campion, 2006); variation in qualifications, language skills, and implicit capabilities (Suutari, 2004); retention/ career advancement behaviour; preferences for use of specific recruitment tools (Ryan, McFarland, Baron and Page, 1999; Huo, Huang and Napier, 2002); competency specification at behavioural indicator level (Ryan, Wiechmann and Hemingway, 2003); test behaviour and desirability (Van de Vijver, 2002); and employee engagement behaviour or buy-in to corporate values (Universum, 2005). It would still be fair to still that whilst resourcing philosophies may be generalising, assessment process/detail and employee behaviour around these philosophies still does not. Yet, activity at the functional level does appear to have been transformed since the earlier study, with this transformation concerning the importation of new co-ordinating themes and most certainly the adoption of a wide range of resourcing strategies to capitalise upon the fragmentation of international employees.

The first research question asked if globalisation is evidenced at the functional level, what sort of indicators evidence this and should form the basis of future research? There are three important implications for the field of IHRM from the developments tracked in this research. The first concerns complexity (Schuler and Tarique, 2007). As functions forge new relationships with contiguous functions (this research has indicated that HR-marketing-corporate communications and HR-IS functions are pursuing increasingly common agendas and sharing tools and techniques) new activity streams are developing. Second, there are shifts in expertise at firm-level. Although the IHRM field has traditionally focused on the management of internationally-mobile employees and expatriates, firms now operate in an era where domestic functions too operate in more globalised contexts. New professional groupings/ alliances are emerging to cope with this and are influencing the strategic thought process inside organisations. Parallel developments in topics of academic interest are occurring, with new dialogues between researchers studying these topics. Third is the issue of risk. HR theory emphasises the function's role in value creation but the case studies also revealed the need for IHRM to protect the value of the organisations. In both the NHS and BBC Worldwide there was a need to possess a higher contextual understanding of language given the potentially high risks involved if misunderstandings occur. Control risk assessment methodologies, previously the domain of auditing functions, become important in this regard.

Therefore, if one were to ask what evidence should be used to assess the presence of globalised HR at the level of sub-function (as opposed to the more traditional focus on commonality of HR practice associated with comparative HR traditions), questions could be asked about the extent to which processes of functional realignment against global strategic agendas and new hybrid professional groups and sources of expertise existed inside organisations. How might researchers judge how global a recruitment function is? Taking one key example, that of talent management, researchers could measure: the extent to which firms research consumer insights

into the employment brand across international operations; the business models used to enable them to recruit "ahead of the curve" in different international labour markets; consistency of global communications; frameworks for global risk management; the existence or not of centres of excellence to gain control over the skill formation process; and use of global suppliers and how this alters the tools, techniques and services offered. Measurement against such indicators may provide a different view of how rapidly resourcing functions have globalised. Progress on such indicators however may still be interpreted from a comparative HR perspective. As Brewster (2007) notes, comparative HR evidence suggests limited progress towards true convergence of HR, but rather suggests the presence of directional convergence, when the developmental tendency goes in the same direction (Mayrhofer, Morley and Brewster, 2004). The indicators noted above may provide evidence of directional convergence mechanisms operating at functional level, or be the end point of true convergence. They certainly suggest new avenues for more nuanced convergence research and yardsticks by which we may judge the balance between global-local HR dynamics inside organisations. The more sophisticated the skills and networks that exist around these indiactors, the more successful and strategic the work, but the less capability there is in the HR function to manage these indicators, the higher the chance of failure and the more research will continue to demonstrate convergence in HR at high levels of policy but local re-establishment of cultural control. By applying social capital theory to the conduct of IHRM (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 2005) we may well better understand how progress along these indicators could be managed.

The second research question asked whether we can detect patterns or strategies within the activity of organisations? Significant issues of local cultural sensitivity aside, the cases evidenced renewed attempts at global consistency. In practice, global HRM seems to revolve around the ability of the organisation to concepts that have "relevance" to managers across several countries. Corporate strategy is expressed through performance management systems applied globally to measure and manage a balanced series of outcomes. The case studies also used three *super-ordinate themes* to provide a degree of consistency to their people management worldwide and attempts to socialise employee behaviour and action:

1. Core strategic competences considered to differentiate the firm and lead to its competitive advantage, being reflected in a series of organisational capabilities or competencies that once specified were integrated into career development and/or performance management systems.

2. The pursuit of talent management initiatives at global level.

3. Corporate and global brands, whereby organisations think about their external brand image and corporate reputation, and the ways in which their employees identify with and actively support the brand.

These patterns of co-ordination cannot all be discussed in detail within the confines of an article, so attention is given to the last (most recent and least discussed within the literature) of the three: global employment branding. This strategy has received some attention of late (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Davies, Chun, Da Silva and Roper, 2003; Martin and Hetrick, 2006) and the case studies showed organisations have learned important lessons. Despite operating in very different contexts, BBC World Services, Save the Children and Barclaycard International all attempted to differentiate their employment brand. From a resource-based view of the firm, they were developing an inimitable source of labour market advantage (Morris, Snell and Wright, 2005), though from an institutional theory perspective this advantage ultimately depends on how strong the level of identification with the brand was across geographical labour markets (Kostova and Roth, 2002). There was a clear sequence of implementation which developed over time. Initially attention was given to "stabilising" key people management processes across different geographical operations. Then, decisions were made about the look and consistency of the employment brand. Early and basic considerations were: creating the same physical brand (e.g. logo and literature); sharing a common mission, vision and set of stated values; setting minimum HR standards and conditions to shape a generic (cross-country) process of employee engagement; examining how the pay strategy and associated benchmarks defined the calibre of applicants; and then understanding how this helped bring consistency to the employee experience in each geographical labour market in terms of competencies and leadership capability.

Schuler and Tarique (2007) draw attention to the work of Higgs, Papper and Carr (2000), on the adoption of a systems approach to strategic HRM, both in terms of horizontal alignment (to other HR functions) and vertical alignment (to internal contextual factors such as vision, values and culture), noting that this has led to the inclusion of a much wider range of activity under the umbrella of selection inside organisations. Employment branding strategies are an example of this. Adopting a systems view of selection revealed that a large number of HR practices previously considered as distinct activities could all be considered selection processes, requiring a process of entire global system consistency and internal integrity. This can be applied to developments at the functional level. A systemic development of globalised HR processes was seen across several cases. For example in Barclaycard International globalisation of international resourcing activity required aligned developments in: expatriate management, the process of creating new in-country operations, talent management and the HR business partner role. The boundaries between many sub-functions such as international recruitment, development and rewards became opaque in the pursuit of globalised strategies. The pay strategy and associated benchmarks defined the calibre of applicants in geographical labour markets. The link between the consequent calibre of attracted local applicants and consistency in the local employee experience (influenced by the competencies and leadership capability of candidates and their adherence to brand values) had to be understood through judgement and learning at HR business

partner level. Alignment of rewards to the realities of the local labour market is a source of tension in internationalising organisations. Much knowledge about rewards and competency markets resides in-country, whilst development and design of global standards for recruitment and rewards exists at HQ. Such globalised strategies can only be executed effectively where there is considerable reverse diffusion of HR knowledge (Edwards and Ferner, 2004).

Firms continue to find both new paths to global co-ordination as well as blocks at local level. Institutional theory can explain the various pulls and blocks behind employment branding strategies (Björkman, 2005) which have to cope with different values embedded in different national cultures. In practice these global themes may still end up being operationalised with local adaptation (Kostova and Roth, 2002). For Kostova (1999) successful transfer of practice is dependent on implementation (diffusion of sets of rules to subsidiary employees, rules being implied by practices, and reflected in objective behaviours and actions in the actions of employees) and internalisation (ability of subsidiary employees to make sense of and attribute meaning to rules in the same way as host country or headquarters employees). Organisations use scores on key "tracker" opinion survey items to assess this (Martin and Hetrick, 2006). However, such indicators may reflect either poor execution of HR, or a more fundamental problem with relevance of the global employment brand. To determine which is the case, globalising organisations need to establish pan-international frameworks to ensure that policies and practices across countries are either harmonised, or where not, that a direct "read across" from one policy to another between countries has been understood by key global and local actors. Institutional theory reminds us that organisations imitate each other in situations of uncertainty (the pursuit of global employment branding could be seen in this context) but researchers need to study the *macro and meso level processes of institutionalisation* associated with the successful adoption of such strategies (Björkman, 2005). Studying the three co-ordinating themes identified in this research, as well as the new and more radical resourcing options available to MNEs, from this perspective, would be a fruitful. As noted, managing the employment brand for international recruitment purposes required judgements about the capability of the international operations.

The research also showed that ensuring alignment of these super-ordinate themes in HR strategy with the firm's internationalisation strategy may be unrealistic. The new corporate architectures being adopted are often more advanced than the ability of either central or local HR functions to make this architecture work effectively. There is considerable potential for a lack of alignment between the global HR strategies and the prerogatives created as a consequence of the mode of internationalisation. Global expansion may be delivered through mergers and acquisitions or joint ventures (absorbing operations to whom the host employment brand is meaningless) or the creation of "young" operations in new countries. Naïve labour markets may make it difficult to bed down perceptions of an employment brand. Outsourcing and global redistribution of work can mean that in addition to operations sited in a country because of local market need, other

operations might be sited in-country (from call centres through to advanced centres of excellence) creating a range of operations based on very different business cost models, again making it difficult to develop a common brand and employee experience within a single country, let alone across countries.   Local HR functions have to answer a number of questions. How does the typical history of candidates in each national labour market shape desire to "live the brand"? Which values predominate - corporate, product division, service brand, or those attributable to national culture? These are complex questions that may be used both to criticise the pursuit of a centralised global HR strategy, but also much academic work. How often does academic study separate out the effects of each level of analysis on values?

The third research question asked whether the observed patterns can be explained by existing theory?   From the previous reference to the resource-based view of the firm, institutional theory and social capital theory the answer is broadly yes, but there are still two pressing needs:

1. more micro theory aligned to and explanatory of the behaviour of the different international employee groups, and processes used to manage them. This may bring with it a process of reintegration of IHRM concerns into the field of OB.

2. perspectives from cognate academic disciplines to broaden the way that global resourcing strategies are interpreted.   Some examples are provided from economic geography.

In relation to micro theory, two examples are provided from this research. The first concerns the nature of international skills that need to be resourced. The growth of networks and teams as part of international resourcing strategies draws attention to the need to understand *mutual adjustment* processes from an interactionalist view of culture. This has become important for a number of reasons: on assignment expatriates increasingly work as part of an international team with sporadic and dispersed control (Zimmermann and Sparrow, 2007): such teams represent the most attractive unit of analysis to evidence (or not) accelerated processes of cultural bridging (Erez and Gati, 2004); and the new international employee categorisations noted in this paper show that global resourcing strategies are producing multi-dimensional intercultural interactions (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004) requiring a broadened process of adjustment. We need to refine our understanding of the skills that are needed to effectively navigate, work and manage in cross-cultural contexts that demand the maintenance of partial and multiple identities. This in turn is moving attention back into understanding the role of power and political capital theories. Harvey and Novicevic (2004) have examined the role that different forms of people-related capital play in assisting international employees in their roles, noting that global leaders have to possess a complex amalgamation of technical, functional, cultural, social and political competencies to navigate successfully the intricacies of changing cross-border responsibilities.   They have analysed the ways in which social capital leads to trust, political capital leads to legitimacy, human capital leads to competencies, and cultural capital leads to social inclusion and acceptance.

The second example concerns processes of managing within-culture functioning. There is no evidence that cultural distances inside organisations are being reduced despite globalisation strategies, Indeed, the opposite is likely the case. The strategy seen at Barclaycard International is not exceptional. The development of a multicultural workforces in global city labour markets can also act to the advantage of an internationalisation strategy. Organisational psychologists have investigated the skills and competencies important for successful "within-culture functioning" and this may now be relevant in the context of international resourcing strategies. For example, Bandura (2001, 2002) has examined intra-cultural diversity and agency skill theories that explain how people successfully integrate   Organisations recruiting this type of international employee can find that they are particularly effective at the modelling skills identified by cross-cultural researchers (Matveev and Nelson, 2004). This context requires people to learn by observation, enabling the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, values, emotional proclivities and competences through the information conveyed. They develop three important "agency skills" : direct personal agency to manage their own lives and bring influence to bear directly on themselves and their own environment; proxy agency skills for those spheres of people's life where they have no direct control over the social and institutional practices that affect everyday life and so must rely on others to act on their behalf to secure personally desired outcomes i.e. socially interdependent effort; and collective agency skills: where people act in concert with other people to shape their future by pooling knowledge, skills and resources, forming alliances, and acting in mutual support to secure that which they cannot accomplish on their own. Similarly, Pires, Stanton and Ostenfeld, (2006) have examined the adjustment process of recently arrived ethnic migrants and their use of ethnic group social networks, resources and ICT to bridge enable successful adjustment. This is clearly relevant to the study of adaptation across expatriate and other expertise networks but also has practical benefits for selection systems that are now being designed for a much broader range of international employees, but especially also in the context of HR functions recruiting more culturally diverse workforces, even in their domestic markets, because of new forms of international working.   Other areas in which better micro theory is needed include the link between value orientations (at national, corporate, product division, and service brand levels of analysis) and employee engagement behaviours. Does the service-profit chain work across cultures or would imitation be ill-advised?

CONCLUSIONS

The research has shown that the HR function in internationaling organisations has to meet a series of challenges.   Three key conclusions about the role of HR professionals working in the field of international recruitment, selection and assessment can be drawn:

1. The added value of the HR function in an international firm lies in its ability to manage the delicate balance between globally co-ordinated systems and sensitivity to local needs,

including cultural differences, in a way that aligns with both business needs and senior management philosophy.

2. There now appear to be a distinction to be made between international HRM (HR policies and practices directed at the management of cadres of international employees) and global HRM (the development of more globalised people management processes at all levels of the organisation in the context of competing demands for optimisation and localisation)

3. In this transition, the old functional divides between international recruitment, international management development, and international reward management have become increasingly weak.

Moreover, there is an opportunity for us to broaden the way that globalisation strategies regarding resourcing are interpreted. For this we may look to some cognate academic disciplines. Organisations are using many strategies to resource internationally. They may solve skills shortages in labour markets through immigration, technology to assist remote working, alterations to business process and work standardisation, the development of centres of excellence that can then be used to disseminate organisational learning throughout operations, or offshore outsourcing. As attention shifts towards managing geographical dispersion and optimisation of resources, there is an opportunity for the field of IHRM to capitalise on related work. For example, economic geographers have given attention recently to the topics of high skilled migration (Briggs, 2003; Baganha and Entzinger, 2004; Beaverstock, 2005; Williams, 2005; Millar and Salt, 2006), transnational skill supply strategies/ outsourcing (Bryson, Daniels and Warf, 2004) and resourcing through hybrid corporate cultures based on principles of strategic localisation (Coe and Lee, 2006). Millar and Salt (2006) argue that the rise of business process outsourcing models and client pressure to reduce costs has encouraged organisations to adopt novel skill supply strategies. One way or another, international resourcing strategies cope with the reality that work generally moves to where the staff are and not the other way round. Therefore an area that needs to be examined is what organisations *do not* do i.e. what strategies do they pursue to avoid the need to cope with the complexities of international employee resourcing? There are many options available, but the study of them tends to have been studied by fields other than IHRM. This knowledge deficit needs to be addressed. There is clearly an opportunity for a more fruitful dialogue between a broad community of academic disciplines who share common research interests.

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