Overview of Jobs and Careers in Human Resource Management

By

Okere Loveday, Ph.D
Professor of Management (HRM)
Faculty of Administration and Management
Department of Management
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
E-mail: okereloveday22@gmail.com
&
Philonice Ariri, Ph.D
Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria
P.M.B. 127, CBD
Swali Atissa, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
E-mail: philsariri@yahoo.com

Abstract

Jobs and careers in human resource management can be both challenging and rewarding. A job is an organizational unit which consists of a group of defined tasks or activities to be carried out or duties to be performed. The purpose of this paper is to examine human resource management jobs, typical compensation, and future career opportunities. The work adopted literature survey method to gather information for the study. The study observed that professional positions can be divided into three categories: Human resource specialist, Human resource manager, and Human resource executive. The study also recommended among others that human resource professionals should endeavour to contribute to the strategic direction of the organization that employed them by helping to create and sustain the competitive advantage of the firm.

Key Words: Jobs, Careers, Human Resource, Management, Organization.

Introduction

The analysis of jobs, roles, skills and competencies is one of the most important techniques in human resource management. It provides the information required

to produce job descriptions, role profiles and person and learning specifications. It is of fundamental importance in organization and job design, recruitment and selection, performance management, learning and development, management development, career management, job evaluation and the design of grade and pay structures. These constitute most of the key human resource management activities (Armstrong, 2009). Jobs are about tasks and duties. It is recognized more generally that organizations consist of people using their knowledge and skills to achieve results and working cooperatively together rather than impersonal jobs contain in the boxes of an organization chart. Research also suggest that the existing or proposed job title should indicate as clearly as possible the function in which the job is carried out and the level of the job within that function (Okere, 2019). The use of terms such as "manager, assistant manager, or senior" to describe job levels should be reasonably consistent between functions with regard to grading of the jobs (Armstrong, 2009).

The question is "What competencies are required if one is to be effective as a human resource professional? Karen (1998) suggest that in the twenty-first century, human resource professionals will be expected to contribute to the strategic direction of the organizations that employed them by helping to create and sustain the competitive advantage of them. However, the following competencies are considered critical to this expanded role (Kathleen et al, 2000):

1. Business capabilities, that is, having knowledge of financial, strategic, and technological aspects of business marketing and sales, computer information systems, customer relations and production capabilities.
2. Human resource practices, that is, attracting and promoting appropriate people, designing development programmes, developing effective appraisal programmes and feedback processes, communicating organizational and human resource policies, and providing a mechanism for integrating different business units.
3. Managing the change process, that is, establishing trust, providing vision, putting problems in the context of larger systems, clarifying roles and responsibilities, encouraging creativity, and being proactive in bringing about change.

These competencies represent a mix of skills that can be acquired through education, for example general business knowledge, functional human resource expertise, and experience. The human resource professional of the twenty-first century is viewed as a strategic partner in running the business.

Types of Human Resource Professional Jobs

In the words of Richard and Carol (1997), opportunities vary across organizations, and they vary within organizations depending on the level at which one is working. Professional positions can be divided into three categories. Human resource specialist, Human resource manager, and Human resource executive. In addition, there are numerous support positions, for example clerical personnel and computer programmers.

1. **Human Resource Socialist.** Human resource specialist jobs are usually the entry-level positions for a human resource management career. Included would be such roles as interviewer, compensation analyst, benefits coordinator, job analyst, and trainer. In larger organizations, there may be promotional opportunities within the specialist might begin as an interviewer, move up to coordinating university recruiting in a region, and progress to supervising, all university recruiting. Alternatively says Armstrong (2009), an entry-level specialist might work in a smaller company or plant as one of two or three professionals providing human resource services. In this case, the specialist might do a little of everything. For example on any given day, the specialist might run an orientation programme for new employees, interview applicants, develop information for contract negotiations, or check with other companies in the area regarding hourly wages (Okere, 2019).

   Robert and Milton (2001) observed that human resource specialists typically have formal university training in human resource management or a related area, such as industrial – organizational psychology, adult education, or industrial relations. Some organizations hire business or liberal arts graduates with excellent interpersonal skills to start in a specialist role while continuing their education in human resource programme at the master's degree level.

2. **Human Resource Manager:** The human resource manager is a generalist who administers and coordinates programmes spanning several financial areas. The human resource manager is usually a top-ranked person at a plant or facility and, as such is expected to be knowledgeable about all areas of human resource management, to oversee the implementation of organizational human resource policies at the facility, and to advise line managers on human resource issues.

   Another role for the human resource manager would be to head a functional personnel activity at the corporate level. Many large organizations are organized into relatively autonomous divisions. Typically, such organizations have functional specialists at the corporate level to translate corporate strategy into human resource policy and to coordinate this policy throughout all divisions (Jay and Patrick, 1998). For example, the corporate headquarters may have a manager of affirmative action to develop or comprehensive plan based on corporate objectives and commitments. The manager would then coordinate with divisional human resource manager to make sure that plans at the local level are consistent with corporate objectives. The human resource manager is an experienced professional, usually someone who has served in several specialists positions. The individual in such a position will have obtained knowledge and skills through experience but may or may not have a degree in human resource management.

3. **Human Resource Executive:** The top-level human resource executive, usually Deputy Managing Director of the organization, has the responsibility of linking corporate policy and strategy with human resource management. The top human resource executive would also be expected to have input into organizational goals, especially as these goals affect or are affected by personnel activities. It is important to consider human resource opportunities and limitations in establishing overall organizational directions.

Compensation for Human Resource Professionals.

The society for human resource management conducted an annual survey of compensation for human resource professionals. The 2000 survey included approximately 1,100 organizations with a combined total of more than 8 million employees (Patricia, 2000). The thousands of respondents constitute a cross section of industries, representing both small and large employers, with the largest share falling into the categories of healthcare, banking and financial services, professional services, and manufacturing. These results are presented in three ways 1(1) base pay, also called total cash compensation, for various human resource executives, (Table 1); (2) base pay for various human resource managers (Table 2) and (3) base pay by company size (employees and revenue) and industry for three human resource professional Jobs (Table 3). In table 1, average base pay for top human resource executives in the respective area is given. On average, top human resource executives for large companies earn just over $200,000, before incentive compensation. Top executives in specialty areas had average earnings of between $124,500 (training executives) depending on the specialty (Patricia, 2000).

Average base pay for human resource managers is given in Table 2. Average cash compensation, before incentives pay, for human resource manager ranges from $62,600 for payroll managers to almost $100,000 for labour relations managers. Of interest is the fact that labour relations managers are approximately $13,000 above the next highest manager specialty human resource generalists (Patricia, 2000).

Obviously human resource pay varies by size of company, that is, number of employees or revenue, and industry. Variations in human resource pay are shown in Table 3. For example, human resource directors average $112,000. This varies from $99,700 for companies with fewer than 1,000 employees to $115,200 for companies with more than 10,000 employees. Interestingly, human resource directors average $114,000 in companies with $1 billion to $5 billion in revenue, and just over $100,000 for either larger or smaller companies. Finally, human resource directors are most rewarded in manufacturing that is, $129,000 and least rewarded in government/non profit that is, $87,300. Although average pay is lower, similar variation are also shown for training and employee relations specialists (Patricia, 2000).

Although not covered in the latest survey, other summaries of human resource pay have shown that short term incentive pay that is, bonus, is popular in rewarding human resource professionals. For example, a survey by Mark (1997) found that the vast majority that is, 81% of top human resource executives are eligible for short term incentive compensation. On average, 55% of the human resource professionals are eligible for incentive compensation.

Table 1: Human Resource Executive Pay (Total, Cash Compensation)

Top Corporate Human Resource Executive Jobs in:	Cash Compensation
Human Resource management	$201,500
Labour/International Relations (IR)	$157,000
International Human Resource Management	$149,000
Compensation and Benefits	$143,200
Organizational Development	$141,500
Compensation	$132,900
Benefits	$127,400
Employee Relations	$125,200
Total Quality	$125,200
Training	$124,500

Source: Adapted from: Patricia Schaeffer, "Human Resource Pay Keep Rising" Human Resource Magazine, October, 2000, pp.78 - 83

Table 2: Human Resource Management Base Pay (Total Cash Compensation)

Labour Relations (IR)	$99,200
Human Resource (generalist)	$86,600
Compensation	$86,000
EEO/Diversity	$80,700
Benefits	$80,000
Human Resource Information System	$77,800
Employee Communication	$77,000
Employee Relations	$76,700
Training	$71,400
Safety/Security	$64,500
Payroll	$62,600

Source: Adapted from: Patricia Schaeffer, "Human Resource Pay Keep Rising" Human Resource Magazine, October, 2000, pp.78 - 83

Table 3: Human Resource Base Pay (Cash Compensation) For Three Job Tittles

Average Cash Compensation	Human Resource Director	Trainer	Employee Relations Specialist
Overall Average	$112,000	$42,200	$55,000
By Number of Employee			
Small companies (<1000 employees)	$99,700	$44,500	N/A
Medium companies (1000 – 10 employees)	$108,100	$46,850	$50,000
Large companies (>10,000 employees)	$115,200	$39,400	$60,100
By Company Revenue			
Small companies (<$1 billion)	$110,150	$38,000	$48,500
Medium companies (<$1 – $5 billion)	$114,000	$48,650	$57,050
Large companies (>$5 billion)	$100,350	$44,750	$60,050
By Industry			
Banking/financial	$124,800	$40,500	$54,500
Government/non profit	$87,300	$38,700	$42,700
Healthcare	$105,300	$52,000	$54,200
Hospitality/entertainment	$95,600	$45,000	$43,200
Insurance	$102,600	$42,800	$50,100
Manufacturing	$129,000	$51,400	$60,200
Professional Services	$117,000	$48,700	$51,000
Retail/wholesale	$105,300	$35,700	$43,000
Telecommunications	$107,300	$42,800	N/A

Source: Adapted from: Patricia Schaeffer, "Human Resource Pay Keep Rising" Human Resource Magazine, October, 2000, pp.78 - 83

Future Career Opportunities for Human Resource Professionals

The career outlooks for human resource professionals is reasonably strong. The external factors that is, events related to corporate reorganizations, global competition, and changes in workforce demographics, represent long term trends that have transformed the way organizations' interest with employees. Human resource professionals are in a pitol position in terms of these challenges. An even

more promising trend is the strategic role played by human resource professionals. More and more, organizational effectiveness is being determined by the degree to which strategic objectives are formulated in light of human resource considerations. This means that human resource professionals must look ahead with respect to corporate objectives, whether they involve a new line of business, a possible acquisition, or a new corporate emphasis, and make sure that the human resource policy is consistent with the overall objectives. Thus, the increased status of human resource management can be illustrated by tracking human resource reporting relationships over the past several years. Some years ago, senior human resource executives typically reported to the third level of management, for example, to an administrative deputy director. Now senior human resource managers often report to first or second-level managers, for example deputy managing director or executive managing director (Okere, 2019). Today many senior human resource executives are officers of the corporation and represent the human resource point of view as members of the board of directors.

Career Progression

1. **Entry:** The human resource competencies give an idea of how one can build a career. Technical knowledge is essential. For most, the career entry point with a university degree is the position of human resource specialist (Okere, 2019). Many business schools have a specialization in human resource management, including courses in most of the major areas of management sciences. One also can major in social sciences areas, such as psychology, sociology, or economics, perhaps with a major in business, and then gain further learning on the job as a technical specialist. According to Fish et al (2003) "The Society for human resource management, formerly called the American Society for Personnel Administration, has student chapters at colleges and universities. Campus chapters of Society for Human Resource Management provide speakers, field trips, and internship opportunities for participating students". Thus, many institutions of higher education have graduate programmes in human resource management. Such a programme normally would lead to a master's degree in business with a specialization in human resource management. A typical curriculum would include courses in business that is, accounting, finance, marketing, organizational sciences, and graduate-

level study in major Human Resource Management areas. Frequently, students would be encouraged to hold an internship as human resource assistant for a semester.

A final entry route is as a line employee who transfers into human resource management. After gaining experience as a supervisor, for instance, it may be possible to switch areas and become a human resource specialist. The competition for entry level human resource management jobs is often quite stiff (Jeffrey, 1998). These jobs attract new graduates, internal candidates, and would-be career changers from other human service areas, such as teaching and social work. The key to getting interviews and landing the first jobs is experience. Students who have completed one or more personnel internships have much greater success in the human resource management job market (Joanne, 1998).

2. **Advancement:** Career advancement is earned by experience in the major areas of human resource management and at different levels within the organization. Hypothetical organizational structures within typical human resource departments are shown in Fight 1. Table 4 illustrates how one might progress. These department structures show the different specialist, managerial, and executive roles that might exist in a large corporate environment. It is not necessary to rotate through all major areas and levels of an organization when pursuing a career in human resource management, although it is important to gain experience in most areas. Progression is not always stepwise, from plant to division to corporate headquarters. It is possible to start at the plant, move to the division or headquarters, and the move back for further experience at the plant.

Figure1: Organization Charts for Typical Human Resource Departments

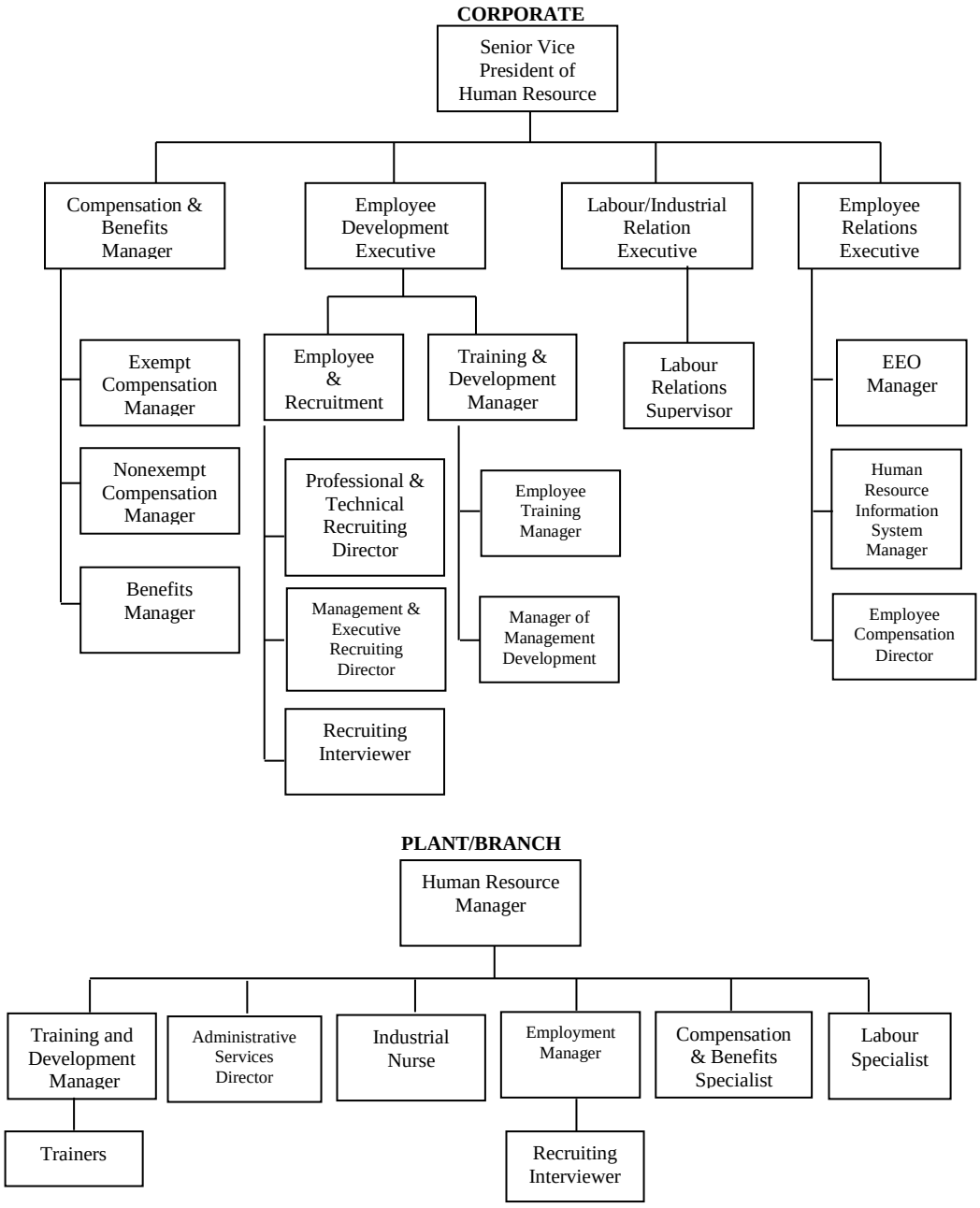


Table 4: Typical Job Activities in Human Resource Management

	Possible Job Activity		
Experience Area	**Plant**	**Division**	**Corporation**
Planning	Analyze jobs for compensation decisions	Analyze human resource consideration associated with plant expansion	Analyze human resource consideration associated with new line of business
Organizational entry	Visit technical schools to recruit hourly workers Test applicants for hourly positions	Visit colleges to recruit graduates Develop affirmative action goals	Develop company-wide EEO plan Develop succession plan for key executives
Developing employees	Orient new employees Monitor plant-wide suggestion system for productivity improvement	Establish quality circle programme for productivity improvement	Plan job rotation of experienced managers for further training
Performance evaluation, and reward system	Apply job evaluation procedure to new job titles Supervise performance evaluation	Develop policy for annual wage and salary increases	Plan bonus system for corporate executives

Maintaining human resources	Resolve employee grievances Conduct exit interviews	Negotiate contract with union	Develop plans for organizational retrenchment

Certification as a Human Resource Professional in Organization

The Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI), an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management, is a non-profit corporation that recognizes and accredits individuals who have met experience requirements and have demonstrated a mastery of the human resource body of knowledge (David, 1995). The levels of human resource certification offered by the institute and the requirements for each level are as follows:

1. Professional in Human Resource (PHR): Four years of Professional Human Resource Management experience or two years of Human Resource Management experience and a related bachelor's degree or one year of Human Resource Management experience and a related graduate degree.

2. Senior professional in Human Resources (SPHR): Eight years of professional experience or six years of Human Resource Management experience and a related bachelor's degree or five years of Human Resource Management experience and a related graduate degree; the most recent three years of experience must include policy-developing responsibility.

In addition to meeting the educational and experience requirements, applicants must pass an intensive four-hour examination to demonstrate mastery of the various types of knowledge. The exam covers the six areas shown in Table 4. As indicated, the greatest weight goes to general management and Human Resource practices, followed by compensation, selection, and employee/labour relations (Karen, 1998). The certifications serve largely to indicate the qualifications of the recipients and ensure the professionalism of the human resource field. The

certification exam has become popular among professionals. For example, in 1990, just over 2,000 candidates took the certification exam, whereas in 2,000, 20,000 candidates completed the exam. Over 44,000 human resource professionals are now certified (Richard et al, 1997).

Table 5: Content Areas Covered for Human Resource Certification

Content Area		**Example Topics'**
Strategic Management (12%, 26%)	*	Lawmaking and administrative regulatory processes
	*	Environmental scanning techniques
	*	Strategic planning process and implementation
	*	Organizational social responsibility
	*	Management functions
Work Force Planning and Employment (15%, 13%)	*	Legal and regulatory factors
	*	Quantitative techniques in Human Resource
	*	Recruiting and staffing
	*	Selecting methods
	*	International Human Resource
Human Resource Development (15%, 13%)	*	Human Resource training and organizational
	*	development theories and applications
	*	Training methods, programs, and techniques
	*	Employee involvement strategies
	*	Performance appraisal and performance
	*	management methods
	*	Instructional methods program delivery and program effectiveness
Compensation and Benefits (20%, 16%)	*	Tax and accounting treatment
	*	Economic factors affecting compensation
	*	Compensation philosophy, strategy, and
	*	policy
	*	Compensation and benefit programs
		Executive Compensation
Employee and Labour Relations (21%, 24%)	*	Union representation of employees
	*	Employer unfair labour practices
	*	Union unfair labour practices, strikes, and

	*	boycotts
	*	Collective bargaining
		Individual employment rights issues and practices
Occupational Health, Safety, and Security (6%, 5%)	*	Health
	*	Safety
	*	Security

Topics listed in descending order of coverage within the section
Percentage weight of PHR and SPHR exams, respectively
Source: Certification information handbook, 1998 edition. Copyright@ 1997 by Assembly Systems, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the HR Certification Institute, Society for Human Resource Management, Alexandria VA

Conclusions

Jobs are about tasks and duties. It is recognized more generally that organizations consist of people using their knowledge and skills to achieve results and working cooperatively together rather than impersonal jobs contained in the boxes of an organizations chart. Professional positions can be divided into three categories that is, human resource specialist, human resource manager, and human resource executive. Career opportunities are many and varied. The entry level position is often that of technical specialist. In this role, one would assume responsibility for handling and coordinating well-defined human resource programmes in a single area. Progression would be to human resource manager, a generalist responsible for administering programmes across activity areas. The final step would be that of human resource executive. In this role, one assumes responsibility for overseeing major areas of activity and for integrating organizational and human resource objectives.

Recommendations

The study proffer the following recommendations:

1. Human resource professionals should endeavour to contribute to the strategic direction of the organizations that employed them by helping to create and sustain the competitive advantage of the firm.
2. Human resource specialist should perform the roles of interviewer, compensation analyst, benefit coordinator, job analyst, and trainer.

3. Human resource manager should oversee the implementation of organizational human resource policies at the facility, and to advise line managers on human resource issues.
4. Human resource executive should link corporate policy and strategy with human resource management. Also the human resource executive should impact into organizational goals.
5. The career outlook for human resource professional should be reasonably strong.
6. Career advancement should be earned by gaining experience in the major areas of human resource management and at different levels within the organization.
7. Human resource certifications should serve largely to indicate the qualifications of the recipients and ensure the professionalism of the human resource field.

References

Armstrong, M. (2009): Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice. London, Replika press PVT Limited.

David, I. L. (1998): Reinventing the workplace: How business and employees can both win. Wadington, D. C.: Brookings institution.

Fish, C. D., Lyle, F. S. and James, B. S. (2003): Human resource management. New York: Houghton Mifflin company.

Jay, B. B. and Patrick, M. W. (1998): On becoming a strategic partner: The role of human resources in gaining competitive advantage. Human resource management, 37, 1, 31 – 46.

Jeffrey, P. (1998): The human equation: Building profits by putting people first. Boston: Harvard business school press.

Joanne, C. (1998): Flying high at Southwest. Human resource focus, 75, 5, 8.

Karen, E. M. (1998): Work in the 21st century: The changing role of human resources. The industrial/organizational psychologist, 35, 3, 28 – 31.

Kathleen, K.; Peter, B. and Dean, F. (2000): Workers of the world, leg on. Business week, 52.

Mark, J. A. (1998): Rising salaries reflect human resource's new role. Human resource magazine, 87 – 98.

Okere, L. (2019): Human resource management. Port Harcourt, Sambiz Publications.

Patricia, S. (2000): Human resource pay keeps rising. Human resource magazine, 78 -83.

Richard, W. J. and Carol, D. (1997): Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st century. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 53.

Robert, L. and Milton, M. (2001): 100 best companies to work for. Fortune, 148 – 159.