

Where next for HRM?
Rediscovering the heart and soul
of people management

Professor Mick Marchington
Manchester Business School and
IES Visiting Fellow

Structure of talk

- Brief history of HRM/people management
- The dangers facing HRM:
 - (a) idealistic and uni-dimensional
 - (b) use of superficial metrics
 - (c) elitist obsession with the few
 - (d) ignoring where HRM takes effect
- My ideas for a way forward

Brief history of HRM/people management over forty years

- Around 1970: personnel, training, manpower planning, gender-specific
- Around 1990: HRM enters stage left but personnel still most popular term
- In 2008: HRM well-established, business partners, learning, talent management but personnel not dead

The limits of focusing on one dimension

- HR function as an intermediary
- HR function oriented totally to management/needs of employers
- HR function and stakeholder needs/social legitimacy
- HRM-performance and sustainability
- Business partners, alignment and employee advocacy

The dangers of using superficial measures

- The measurement/metrics mantra
- Stakeholder views
- Service level agreements – timescales, quality and target setting
- Benchmarking – standard metrics, easy to measure indicators but how meaningful
- Quantity/quality of HRM; ratios not set in context; absence/embeddedness of HR

Misguided view that HRM is for the few not for the many

- Conforming/trying to reach goals set by senior managers alone
- Forgetting the value added by front-line service providers
- Managing people across organisational networks/agency labour
- Talent management, stars and the search for high rankings
- Fairness at work and equity/equality

Failure to focus on where HRM really makes an impact

- HR practices and processes
- Job design, discretion and AMO
- Line managers as the focal point of worker commitment to organisations
- HRM is as much about management of managers as anything else – recruitment, training, appraisal, careers

Rediscovering the heart and soul of people management

- HR needs to be seen as a problem-solver
- HR needs a sound understanding of markets and institutions
- HR needs to have high levels of technical excellence
- HR needs to display commitment to range of stakeholder interests
- HR needs a longer-term perspective