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# International Human Resource Management

*Globalization, National Systems and Multinational Companies*



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Tony Edwards | Chris Rees



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**Preface**

This book is about the management of international human resources (HR) and employment relations within multinational companies (MNCs). It aims to take a distinctive approach to the subject in terms of both its structure and its content.

There are a growing number of introductory texts in the fields of international human resource management (IHRM) and international/comparative employment relations. These texts can broadly be broken down into three types. First are those which are structured along country lines, with individual chapters on different countries and comparisons between them being implicit in the main and explicit in the introduction and conclusion. Examples of this are the collections edited by Kamoche et al. (2004) on HRM in Africa and Budhwar (2004) on HRM in Asia-Pacific and those by Bamber et al. (2004) and Ferner and Hyman (1998) that focus on national systems of industrial relations. These provide very detailed explanations of distinctive national patterns but are not designed to suit most IHRM courses and consequently do not tackle many of the issues on such courses. Second are those with a predominantly international business strategy focus that consider aspects of HR strategy in certain chapters. Good examples here are John et al. (1997) and Parker (1998). These books provide a lot of useful material on such issues as the strategies and structures of MNCs and the economic context in which such firms operate but, like the first category, they are not designed primarily for IHRM courses. Third are those that take a more thematic approach, with chapters on particular areas of HR policy, commonly pay and reward, training and development, recruitment and selection, and so on. Well-known recent examples include Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt (2004), Tayeb (2005), Dowling and Welch (2004) and Brewster and Harris (1999).

It is this third approach that is the most relevant to discuss. There are three further distinctions we make within this category. First, some of these books are mainly about the management of those managers and other senior staff who travel frequently between countries. A good example of this is the book by Dowling and Welch (2004). We see this as being one part of IHRM, an important one undoubtedly, but not the only one. Thus our focus is wider, incorporating the study of both managerial and non-managerial employees.

A second distinction that we make is between approaches to understanding IHRM that focus on national cultures on the one hand and those that focus on the wider institutional context on the other. The first of these is the one that is most widely used in international HR research more generally and features very strongly in some of the textbooks, such as that by Tayeb (2005). While not disregarding culture, we

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# International Human Resource Management

*Globalization, National Systems and Multinational Companies*



Tony Edwards | Chris Rees

This exciting new text tackles the issues raised by cross-national differences in HRM styles. Specifically, it identifies a number of themes: the meaning of globalization and the extent to which it is a novel phenomenon; the challenges to national traditions; the way in which many key issues within international HRM are contested; and the extent to which change in national systems is evident.

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- Case studies throughout help students to see how the theory applies in practice, many from the authors' own research.
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