



## Book review by Fredrik Wicklund

### **International HRM – Managing Diversity in the Workforce**

**Edited by Maryann H. Albrecht**

**Publisher: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford and Malden 2006**

As organisations have moved from a regional setting to a global arena, there are significant changes in perspectives, structures, systems and behaviours, which are relevant for all who manage individuals from diverse cultures and subcultures, according to the editor Maryann H. Albrecht.

*International HRM – Managing Diversity in the Workplace* is a selection of articles and cases that focus on cultural diversity in the global workforce. It is designed to provide the skills and attitudes managers need for success in multinational environments.

The third part of the book, “Recruitment, Selection, and Placement in a Global Context”, talks about the development of the “boundaryless organisation”, an organisation that focuses on permeating all internal and external boundaries with free movement of ideas, information, decision, talent, rewards, and action, even between nations. The effect on recruitment as suggested, is that gaining competent employees at all levels of the organisation would be based on more than the candidates’ experience, personal characteristics and training. Instead, the boundaryless organisation emphasizes the development of a shared mindset among all its employees and the continuous support of this collective culture. Rather than focusing on “who does what” and “the way we do things around here”, the values, norms, and beliefs, which underlie all of the work in the organisation, is said to become increasingly salient to workers.

However, little reference is made to the consequences of the boundaryless organisation in different cultural settings, and only that a workforce which contributes to the business strategy, results in fluid power structures. One may then question the feasibility of the boundaryless organisation in countries with clearly defined hierarchical structures.

As a consequence of the rapidly growing global business environment, in a following article it is argued that companies cannot afford to recruit people without global mindsets. Corporations that are established in the international sphere have to redefine recruitment criteria to

maintain a competitive edge in the long-term. Global competency includes such qualities such as flexibility, open-mindedness, multiple language proficiency and the willingness to take risks.

A following chapter identifies some skills that are essential for “local” management, namely the ability to:

- ✓ manage local operations and personnel abroad effectively
- ✓ tolerate and adjust to local conditions personally
- ✓ cope in the long term with a large variety of foreign contexts
- ✓ identify high calibre staff members capable for an international career
- ✓ respond rapidly to local markets and situations in a way that matches more decentralised “local” companies
- ✓ organise an effective transfer of learning from any geographic point of the company to another

According to the editor, articles from a range of different cultures have been specially chosen for their readability and for their practical application. Cases at the end of each section provide real life examples from different countries, highlighting national differences and challenging readers to provide solutions to real life issues.

The chapters as discussed above are well written and provide an initial insight into the issues and challenges involved when recruiting globally. Although some tips and guidelines are presented, one needs to take into account that they are not country specific, and therefore do not provide tailor-made solutions.

In general, the complete book contains a great amount of information on human resources, management and cultural diversity. Covering topics such as strategic HRM, diversity training and virtual teams, this collection of articles, case studies and exercises is a must read for managers who want to be successful in the international arena.

*Maryann Albrecht is Associate Professor of Management at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she teaches cultural diversity, organisational behaviour and career planning. She is currently an Officer in the National Academy of Management and an Executive Board Member of the Midwest Academy of Management.*