

Iwona Kubica

**Department of Human Capital Management
Cracow University of Economics, Poland**

THIRTEENTH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE “UNCERTAINTY IN A FLATTENING WORLD: CHALLENGES FOR IHRM”, 24–27 JUNE 2014, CRACOW, POLAND

Ten or fifteen years ago, the international aspects of human resources management (HRM) had yet to arouse any particular interest among either theorists or practitioners of management, whose attentions were instead focussed mainly on production, marketing or sales strategy (Scullion 2001, p. 288; Poczowski 2008, p. 14). Yet the onward march of globalisation, the increasing possibilities created by technology, the generation of intellectual capital as a source of competitive advantage and, finally, the need to operate under conditions of continuous change, have turned international human resource management (IHRM) into one of the most important challenges that modern organisations must face (Ulrich 1996, pp. 126–27). The broad range of issues that fall within the scope of IHRM can be described by reference to three major thematic strands, which may also be understood as three different but overlapping trajectories: HRM in international enterprises, comparative IHRM, and cross-cultural HRM (see Morley 2007, Dowling, Festing & Engle 2008, p. 1; Stor 2011, p. 94). This means that both theorists and practitioners of HRM are asking themselves questions about the continued relevance of the field’s paradigms and about ways to achieve still more effective management of organisations – including in terms of the personnel strategy adopted. The following are the most immediately relevant issues (Poczowski 2014):

- adding value for stakeholders on international markets,
- labour mobility on international markets,
- convergence versus divergence in IHRM,
- diversity management,
- generation management,

- global talent management,
- international assignments and expatriation,
- the ethical and environmental aspects of IHRM.

These themes are raised both in research projects and academic papers, as well as appearing in various types of discussions both in Poland and abroad on the influence of internationalisation on HRM. In addition, representatives of the academic community and business share their observations and practices during a variety of different meetings and conferences, of which the International Human Resource Management Conference is one example. Given that it was first convened at the end of the 1980s, and since then has been held in different countries every two years, it is a conference with a long tradition. A Conference Committee composed of the following people supervises organisational matters and institutional support for each particular Organising Committee: Professor Paul Davidson (QUT Business School), Professor Michael Morley (University of Limerick), and Professor Pawan S. Budhwar (Aston University). The conference hosts have so far included Singapore, Hong Kong, Ashridge (UK), Gold Coast (Australia), San Diego (USA), Paderborn (Germany), Limerick (Ireland), Cairns (Australia), Tallinn (Estonia), Santa Fe, New Mexico (USA), Birmingham (UK) and Gurgaon (India). The thirteenth conference took place on 24–27 June 2014 at the Cracow University of Economics.

The “Uncertainty in a Flattening World: Challenges for IHRM” conference was organised by the Department of Human Capital Management at the Cracow University of Economics. The conference was chaired by Professor Aleksy Poczowski. The conference was attended by 160 people interested in exchanging views on current research areas and emerging developments in various areas of IHRM. The diversity represented by the delegates – originating from 33 different countries (developed countries, developing countries, and emerging economies) – provided the perfect opportunity to share knowledge, culture, and research results in the field of IHRM.

The conference began with two workshops. The first of these, “Teaching IHRM for Optimal Impact”, was led by three professors: Paul Davidson, Charles M. Vance, and Dennis Briscoe. During the second workshop, “How to Write for International Journals”, Professor David Lepak, Editor in Chief of the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, gave a presentation about the acceptance procedure for publications in his journal, while also pointing out the most frequent mistakes made when editing scholarly articles. The opening day of the conference culminated in a welcome reception held in the Senate Hall of the University of Economics.

A host of panel and plenary sessions were held on the second and third days. The participants had the opportunity to attend five major lectures given by the keynote speakers:

- Professor Helen De Cieri (Monash University, Australia), who has taught on university and executive programmes in Australia, China, Malaysia, and the USA

for many years, is the editor of the journal *Human Resource Management*. She is a member of several programme boards and publishes her articles in leading HR journals. The conference participants attended her lecture entitled “Global Uncertainty, Dynamism, and IHRM: The Challenges of Workplace Innovation, Workforce Well-being, and Performance”;

– Professor Michael J. Morley (Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick, Ireland) in addition to being the author of some 20 books and more than 100 articles is also the editor of several international journals. During the conference, he focused on appointments abroad and employee mobility and gave a paper entitled “Expatriate Assignments and Global Mobility Research in Retrospect and Prospect?”;

– Professor Peter J. Dowling (La Trobe University, Australia), who has taught at universities in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Germany, is the author and co-author of numerous publications on IHRM and the editor of leading HR journals. As he is an authority on the subject, he concentrated on the trends and challenges of international human resource management in his lecture entitled “IHRM Trends and Future Challenges”;

– Agata Stachowicz-Stanusch (Professor of Management at the Silesian University of Technology, Poland) is the author of more than a dozen books on management in the education sector. She is also active in several organisations, including as an international fellow of the World Engagement Institute and as a member of the Anti-Corruption Academic Initiative (ACAD). She drew on her research interests in her talk on “Academic Integrity: Sine Qua Non for the Development of the Ethical Business Leaders of the Future”;

– Professor Paul R. Sparrow (Lancaster University Management School, UK), who is a lecturer and consultant, is recognised as one of the top fifteen most influential people in HR. He is the author of numerous books and articles and has been active in an editorial capacity for the most respected and authoritative HR journals. His lecture, “Developments in Global Talent Management: Setting the Research Agendas”, concerned the perennially topical theme of the competition for talent.

In addition to the lectures given by the keynote speakers, the conference participants had the opportunity to attend lectures selected from among the more than 130 articles prepared for the conference. The articles submitted were categorised according to 34 thematic sessions with the following titles: Strategic Issues in IHRM (12), International Assignments and Expatriate Management (21), Diversity Management (9), Human Resources Development (11), Career Management (8), Talent Management (15), Performance Management (7), Employee Engagement (15), Leadership (6), HRM in Different Working Environments (13) and Ethics, Sustainability, Innovation, and HRM (16).

Based on a rigorous selection of papers, academic articles were prepared with a view to publication in a number of Polish and international journals. All of the articles dealt with IHRM and the presentation of research findings on the subject of

the growing complexity and mutability of the operating environment of enterprises on international markets as well as its influence on the personnel function in modern international enterprises.

During the conference, the participants also had the opportunity to get to know each other better, build relationships, and strengthen international cooperation. This was facilitated by the many attractions provided by the organisers, including a sightseeing tour of Kraków, a *soirée* at a regional restaurant, and a visit to the famous Salt Mine at Wieliczka combined with a ceremonial banquet 125 metres below ground.

The themes discussed at the conference confirmed the contemporary relevance of the debate around international human resource management, highlighted new trends, and served to inspire further deliberations and research in this area. The fourteenth conference, to be held in Canada (Vancouver) in 2016, will provide a further opportunity for the IHRM community to exchange ideas and observations.

Bibliography

- Dowling, P. J., Festing M. and Engle, Sr A. D. (2008) *International Human Resource Management. Managing People in a Multinational Context*. Fifth edition. London: Thomson Learning.
- Morley, M. J. (2007) "Of Infants and Adolescents: Progress and Pessimism in the Development Trajectory of International Human Resource Management". Keynote presentation to the 9th IHRM Conference, Tallinn, 12–15 June.
- Pocztowski, A. (2008) *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi. Strategie – procesy – metody* [Human resources management. Strategies, processes, methods]. Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne.
- Pocztowski, A. (2014) "From the Editor". *Human Resource Management* 6.
- Scullion, H. (2001) "International Human Resource Management" in J. Storey (ed.) *Human Resource Management. A Critical Text*. Second edition. London.
- Stor, M. (2011) *Strategiczne międzynarodowe zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi* [Strategic international human resources management], Wrocław: Wrocław University of Economics Press.
- Ulrich, D. (1996) *Human Resource Champions*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.