

Change and continuity in HRM after German reunification

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RESUME

If personnel management is looked at from a functional point of view, there is hardly any difference between the major industrial countries. The meaning, importance and composition of these techniques, however, are shaped by the institutional setting of each country.

There seems to be a peculiar "fit" between the importance and shape of personnel techniques deployed, on the one side, and the beliefs, traditions, norms and regulations, which are deeply rooted in the respective society, on the other side. The institutions which shape these configurations are, to a large extent, pre-existent. They are also partly the result of management practice itself. In any case, they are reproduced in, and through, the actions of management, as well as of other "players" in the game.

German personnel management can be seen as a configuration shaped by a specific form of "corporatism", worker participation, and the educational system (particularly the apprenticeship tradition).

Although challenges from new technology and internationalisation have prompted new concepts and negotiation patterns, the approach to personnel management in Germany has not changed drastically. This is reflected in a reluctance to accept, or translate, the label of "Human Resource Management".

The historically unique constellation of a rapid integration of a previously separate and potentially hostile state (the GDR) into the Federal Republic has brought about new strategies and procedures of co-operation between employers, unions, and state agencies.

Four issues pertaining to the employment situation in East Germany will be discussed :

- (1) The emergence of temporary employment and retraining schemes as a response to massive unemployment ;*
- (2) new leadership patterns on the shop-floor which replace the previous "(un-) productivity pact";*
- (3) the introduction of West German pay structures which result in high labour costs without the productivity level of the West ;*
- (4) the (re-) construction of a worker representation structure based on industrial relations traditions in West Germany.*