

The Emergence and Rising of an Academic Discipline: The Adventure of HRM in Turkey

Fuat Man

Assistant Professor, Ph. D.,
Sakarya University,
Business School, HRM Department, Email: fuatman@yahoo.com

Abstract *What does an academic field mean, and how does it emerge? Obviously these questions are highly stimulating. Answering these questions there is a requirement to begin with an 'emergence of an academic field' idea. However, this idea forces us to explore the nature of 'knowledge or science – power relation'. The main purpose of this paper is not to focus on this relation but an adventure of HRM field in Turkey. In that paper, I intend to trace of personnel management area as an academic field in industrialised countries. And the main focus of the paper will be on Turkey. So, I intend also to trace of the area in Turkey or in universities of Turkey. Several different academic traditions appropriate the 'employee relations' issues in current university system in Turkey: Industrial relations, business management, human resource management and partly public administration. In that paper, I suggest a 'multi-disciplinary' approach to employee relations and explain two main bases for HRM area, one of them is industrial relations and the other is business management. My key reason that lay under that suggestion is that: Looking at a certain point from different perspective produces a strong explanation.*

1. Introduction

Modern social sciences have appeared in modern age. The development of social sciences has followed 'natural sciences'. Because natural sciences have completely stand on 'reason' that is the basis of modernity. This basis of modernity paved the way to a 'meta narrative' or a 'grand scientific tendency': positivism. The first generation of social sciences was strictly attracted by this tendency (positivism). So, when they think that it should be some universal rules to examine society and try to find a name for these scientific initiatives they, firstly, thought a name derived from the natural science area: social psychic (for details see Maus 2001). Social psychic then turned 'sociology' (a new scientific area that had intentions to examine society to find its fundamental rules).

So, the aim of this scientific area was to reach the universal rules that direct society. Sociology field, as several other fields like political science and economics, had been shaped at 19th century. All these disciplines had similar motivation: to construct a kind of social science on a positivist ground, just like natural sciences. But with the development of capitalism and modernity, the great fragmentations occurred in the scientific area. With the developments of the reel world (e.g. in economic field) new fields or sub-fields were born. At the end of the 19th century the organized capitalism showed a great development and the production figures and the number of employee in manufacturing sector (and also in services) were getting growing. So, the companies needed to construct new department to dealing with the personal issues.

In the following sections of the paper I intend to present a brief historical background of the scientific areas that examines the employment relations or personnel issues. Doing that, we will see a clear difference on that area between the two sides of Atlantic Ocean. The second section of the paper will be on the developments of labour relations area in Turkey.

2. Labour relations area: Industrial relations, personnel management and human resource management

As Kaufman (2007: 20) stated 'the first visible roots of the HRM function as practiced today in modern business organizations appeared in the late nineteenth century more or less contemporaneously in England, France, Germany and the United States.' But there was no need to having a formal HRM department for personal issues at that time. At the nineteenth century the functions of HRM (e.g. hiring, training, compensation and discipline) were performed in alternative ways. Some functions, like pay rates or motivation for hard work (through the treat of termination and unemployment) were held by labour markets while the others were done by the owner of plant managers or foremen (Kaufman 2007: 20).

There were some developments to get modern HRM departments. One of them was about the paternalistic tendency (or industrial welfare work). In Britain and North America increasing numbers of employers were accepting responsibility for the general welfare of their workers in the 1890s. In Britain, a number of philanthropic employers began to develop a paternalistic care and concern for their employees (Bratton and Gold, 1999: 6). One of the most known example of these

initiatives was 'Ford's sociology department'. Although the main aim of the department was to create an 'Americanisation' tendency among the workers for high commitment, there was a welfare intention under the establishment of the department (Hooker, 1997). According to Kaufman (2007: 20), new staff position was created to administer these activities, called a 'welfare secretary' and women or social workers were often appointed.

In practice, the transformation of personnel issues department from 'primitive' to complicated one was affected most by wars. Both World War I and World War II have great effect on the development of the area in practice. The expansion of capacity during the war was achieved largely by longer hours of labour and more intensive work, better equipment, better management and better workshop organization. The development of complex new payment systems meant that large organizations had to create a centralized wages department which further boosted the role of personnel management (Bratton and Gold, 1999: 7).

The road to modern HRM as a practical and academic field could be divided several stages to understand it well. In this section I will try to track the names that have arisen from employment relations.

As stated above, the first development in making of modern HRM was the emergence of welfare work at the late nineteenth century. During the first quarter of twentieth century the term 'industrial relations' (IR) came into common use in Britain and North America. Then it has been joined by personnel management (PM) (Edwards, 2003: 1). Of course mentioning IR and HRM in the same context is not a thing that has a wide consensus. In fact, it's generally accepted that IR is a field that trying to keep a looking for labour relations from the employees' perspectives while the HRM field looks the matter through the employer's perspective (for core propositions of HRM see Thompson and Harley, 2007). This acceptance is not superfluous. Looking at the first writings on business management is supplying substantial narratives that confirm this acceptance. Moreover, the professions of the first generation writers of classics on the field tell more: Not just F. W. Taylor but its predecessors were also engineers. Similarly, a writer of classics from the continental Europe (France), Henry Fayol, was an engineer.

As technologies developed and markets expanded, the labour issues become one of the most important factors for firms. To control labour and get financial gains, organizations designed works and workplaces and developed labour control system (Gospel, 2009). All these initiatives were about labour management. Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of scientific management, dedicated his life to develop a new way for production that will depend on high productivity. According to Taylor, American way of doing jobs was not scientific and productive. To change this useless way he tried a new way: scientific management. He conduct many experiments / or research in the workplace on the way of doing jobs and employees. After long-term test, he achieved the 'principles of scientific management': He split the works into small pieces, arranged fixed times for each work and made a clear distinction between manual works and head works (Taylor, 2011). Human resource was an emotion-free component in Taylor's system. It was seen just such as other sources by Taylor and his followers.

The developments between two wars and after the World War II paved the way to high industrial conflicts and then the importance of some industrial relations instruments become popular in practice. According to Kaufman these developments had some positive effects, beside negatives one:

'On the positive side, the rapid spread of collective bargaining actually worked to the advantage of HRM in several ways. For example, in an effort to avoid unionization many companies quickly established or strengthened their personnel programs. Also, once the companies were unionized they needed to add personnel and labour relations staff to conduct collective negotiations with the union and administer the contracts. And, finally, unions pushed for wage standardization, job classification systems, formal grievance systems, and written employment rules, all of which required personnel / labour relations staff to develop and administer. The new government labour and social insurance law (in USA New Deal Programme, F.M.) had much the same effect' (Kaufman 2007: 27).

As Kaufman (2007: 29) stated '1950s saw the high water mark in union density and collective bargaining. The most popular title for the corporate HRM function in large companies, particularly in the union sector, was *industrial relations*'. According to Kaufman, the industrial relations department was typically divided, in turn, into the labour relations (collective bargaining) section and personnel (employment) section.

Industrial relations area was a multi-disciplinary field that covered four core courses according to a curriculum survey (Estay 1960 quoted in Kaufman 2007: 32): labour economics, collective bargaining, personnel management (and human relations) and labour law. As an academic field in university employment relations area has been witnessed the attractions of several different social sciences fields. Around the mid-century HRM (personnel management) was a sub-field of industrial relations (IR). These days the field was not so popular and did not attract the students in USA

universities. The following years IR more narrowly focused on unions and labour-management relations and HRM on the functional parts of employee management. This tendency replaced the academics from business management area with economists (Kaufman 2007: 32-5).

As a last point for that section, during the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter, a divorce has occurred between personnel management and industrial relations areas. The second field become a part of business schools and increasingly the preserve of scholars from management and behavioural science (Kaufman 2007: 33). The HRM area, during the 1908s and 1990s become one of the most popular field in USA universities and then in the rest of the world.

During the twentieth century, the road of personnel management has followed different areas and has been shaped in different ways. As stated above, personnel management issues were analysed in different academic fields like economics, industrial relations, business management and industrial psychology. But as an independent field, it has been emerged in the last several decades. Of course, the debates on the nature of the field have not been finished yet. Especially in higher education system of Turkey the scene is highly fragmented. The personnel management issues have taken part in several different schools' and departments' curriculum. Until recently the human resource management issues have supplied by 'Business Administration Departments' and 'Labour Economics and Industrial Relations Departments' in Business Schools and Schools of Economics and Administrative Sciences. But during the last decade the HRM Departments have emerged separately firstly as associate degree and then as undergraduate programmes. This short introduction supplies some important clues about the development of the area in Turkey. In the following section I will present a depiction of two different streams that constitute the HRM field in Turkey, business management and labour economics and industrial relation fields respectively.

Business Management Field as a Vein that Constitutes HRM

Before telling the development of business management (BM) as an academic field, we need to supply a brief explanation of capitalist production in Turkey. Because the BM or HRM field has a close relation with the development of capitalism. Of course the development level of capitalism for Ottoman Empire in nineteenth century was not so advanced. Nevertheless The Ottoman manufacturing sector was in a meaningful position (Quataert, 2002) and has a limited potential to struggle with the Western manufacturer. The number of big-size producers was so small. Shortly, the Ottoman Country was not occupying the core position in the modern world system (for details see Wallerstein; 2011) although the availability of manufacturing business. But the aim of public administrators in Ottoman Empire (and then in Modern Republic) always has been carrying country to Modern Western World, or getting western political culture, production system etc. After the foundation of the republic these tendencies went on. Industrialization was a sign that symbolize the modernization and westernization. Free market economy was intended in the first decade of the new republic by the founders but there was not a strong capitalist class to carrying the country into capitalist world. Thus, in the early 1930s 'etatism' become a key principle of new republic. 1930s were important for another point: The university reform that shaped the higher education in Turkey occurred at 1933. But the history of business management in schools goes back the earlier years.

Following Üsdiken's (2004) analysis, we can divide this history in three parts. Each part can be identify with an effect of a country: France, Germany and USA. Turkey-France relations have a long and deep history. After the Ottoman authorities decided to modernize the country, they began to observe 'the modern Europe' and modelled it¹. France was one of the most important countries that had effect on modernization of Turkey until recently. Public administration and hence education institutions was re-formed under the French style. So, getting inspired from *Grandes Ecoles* in France, the first business education institution, Higher Trade School (*Yüksek Ticaret Okulu*) was established in 1882 (Sargut, 2009).

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the German effects on Turkey. As it's known, Ottomon Empire allied to Germany. But the origins of German effects on higher education did not base on that war alliance but the coming of Nazis to power in Germany in 1930s and their attitudes to the Jewish community. Many Jewish academics who tried to run away from the Nazis' treats come to Turkey and contributed to re-shape the new higher education system in Turkey. Of course these emigrant German academics were not the only source of the development of German style business

¹ There is a large literature on 'westernisation or modernisation of Turkey'. For some prominent explanations, see Mardin 2000, Ahmad 1993, Zürcher 2004.

education. Some people who got their education in Germany had an important role to develop this kind of education in Turkey (Üsdiken 2003: 125).

“With the founding of the Faculty of Economics in 1936 at the University of İstanbul, *BWL (betriebswirtschaftslehre – business economics – işletme iktisadı F.M.)* was allocated a separate chair (taken up by an emigrant German professor –Alfred Isaac) and three courses (out of 28) in the program. When doctoral studies began in 1941, *BWL* was accepted as one of the areas of specialization, though seminar work had to include economics and one other area as well” (quoted by Üsdiken 2004: 11, from Fındıkoğlu).

After the World War II, Turkey got into the influence of USA. For detailed reasons that steams from internal and external world Turkey become a very important ally for the western world especially for the USA that was a main side of the cold war. After the WW II, political structure of Turkey also went on transformation from the single-party regime to multi-party one. This transformation and the American efforts that try to reconstruct Europe against the communist pole were coincided. At the beginning of this term, with the financial and academic support of Ford Foundation and Harvard Business School, as a separate academic unit in İstanbul University, Business Economics Institution was founded at 1954 (İİE 2012). This institution has been a basis for the Business School that was going to found at 1968. This detail is significant to understand the development of HRM. Because the other vein to shape HRM area has been arisen from the Faculty of Economics that was also the home of Business Economics Institution initially.

The Americanisation process in higher education or in business education in Turkey has been speeded up and cleared with the foundation or development some higher education institution such as Middle East Technical University (in Ankara, 1956) and Robert College (then Bosphorus University -1971-, in İstanbul). These new generation universities have launched a new tendency in higher education that raised the USA effect. These institutions' course language has been English. With rise of English language and Americanization, the German and French languages have weakened in education system in Turkey. After 1980, higher education in Turkey was put in a highly formal structure and the Americanisation process has still gone on. This means most of the curriculums are similar and the focus of courses in Business Schools is mostly on market. In another word, the curriculums have been designed to train appropriate candidates for business markets. In comparing American HRM tradition with the European tradition, this point is highly important. The other path that affects HRM area in Turkey is from social policy and industrial relations origins. The next section will be on that detail.

3. Industrial Relations Field as the Second Path that Paved the Way to HRM

Unlike personnel management studies in Business School, labour relations studies have been generally located at faculties of economics or at different formation such as the most famous example in USA, Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. The key components that have shaped the industrial relation tradition in Turkey are various. The current situation of the departments in universities (labour economics and industrial relations departments) that focus on labour relations and social policy has shaped since 1980. But the history of labour relations and social policy studies in universities of Turkey dated back 1930s.

The Jewish academics immigration from Germany (because of the Nazi regime) shaped also this second path to HRM. Or saying that the coinciding of this immigration with the university reform of 1933 in Turkey fostered the formation of some academic field is more correct statement. The history of labour relations area in universities of Turkey goes back to the foundation of Economic and Society Institution in the Law Faculty of İstanbul University. The most important person in the foundation of that institution was one of these immigrants, Gerhard Kessler (more details for Kessler's role see Hanlein 2006). After the foundation of the Faculty of Economics in 1936 the Economics and Society Institution was attached that faculty. Kessler and the institution established a social policy and labour relation tradition in universities in Turkey.

The other important contribution to the field was made by Cahit Talas in Ankara University Faculty of Political Science (Uçkan 2010). Of course Kessler and Talas were not the only academics who studied the social policy and industrial relation area but they were the pioneers. Their followers or students continued to establish the tradition of social policy and labour relations.

After the military coup of 1980 in Turkey, the higher education underwent a crucial transformation that has still been shaping the university system. With a legal regulation a new era has begun for higher education as well as social policy and labour relation units / institution in universities. According to the new arrangement these units has been organized as departments with the name of 'labour economics and industrial relations' (LEIR). These departments supply a multi-

disciplinary curriculum for their students and prepare those students for wide-range professions such as trade union expertise, human resource expertise, personal management, banking and many expertises in private and public sectors. The curriculum of these departments is including a range of knowledge field such as labour economics, industrial relations, human resource management, organizational behaviour, sociology of work, social policy and labour and social security law. Today all LEIR departments meet in 'annual labour relations congresses' and continue to reproduce the tradition². One of the most controversial subjects that raise enthusiasm debates in these meeting the future of the departments and the challenge with HRM area. Comparing with the departments in the same faculty (generally faculty of economics and administrative science) such as business management, public finance, political science and economics department LEIR departments are not so popular among students who take the nation-wide central university entrance exam. This situation is one of the reasons of debates among the academics from LEIR community. Some academics are suggesting changing the name of the departments (for example as 'labour relations and human resource management') while the others are emphasising the tradition of the field (for a debate see Yıldırım 2007; Makal 2008). The formers refer the global tendency in university: Recently most of the academic units in worldwide that focus on personnel management or labour relations issues changed their name or close to HRM area. While the latter group say that there is no need to make such a change because this tradition has potential to adjust itself to global development in the area.

4. Conclusion: HRM as a Combination of LEIR and Business Management?

Is it possible to talking about a combination of business management and LEIR in creating HRM area? At first sight, it will be seen to too many scholars as combining two poles in one point. In another word both LEIR and business management are different paradigms and for anybody who is at one of these paradigm it difficult to image such combination. As Kuhn implied, the paradigms confined scholars inside to see the other paradigms' perspectives. But confined in a paradigm prevent to analysis an issue in a wide context that is needed to understand it closely. In another words confined in a paradigm reminds Bauman and May's arguments, familiarization. They offer sociological thinking to overcome with the familiarization. Sociological thinking will generate defamiliarization (Bauman and May, 2001: 10): "Most importantly, it may open up new and previously unsuspected possibilities of living one's life with others with more self-awareness, more comprehension of our surroundings in terms of greater self and social knowledge and perhaps also with more freedom and control."

Looking at academic debates on the meaning of HRM, it can be said that the paradigms' wall is obviously thick and visible. On the one side there is a long LEIR tradition that located itself largely in labour side on employee-employer relations while there is business management tradition that has reached an overwhelming size in Turkish universities and in market oriented. The LEIR tradition was born in social policy origins and thus it emphasises the labour rights more than employer's interests. While the key aims of business management traditions is to educate the students for organizations which operating under the 'rational' rules in markets. But we need to state that there is no homogeneity in LEIR curriculums. There are 21 LEIR departments³ in Turkish universities and some of them have HRM area as one of the main fields while the others have HRM just as course in their curriculum. Yet, the general tendency to HRM for the academics in LEIR departments is unfavourable or mostly these academics have critical approach to HRM because of its business-oriented character.

On the other hand, the business management area is highly popular among the universities in Turkey and the students. 117 of Turkish universities have business management that is actively teaching the curriculum. One of the most important teaching areas in those departments is HRM. But content of HRM in Turkish universities is generally highly narrow: It's generally limited with the HRM functions. The nature of employment relations and its sociological bases are generally neglected.

Recently there has been an effective development in universities of Turkey: the foundation of separate HRM departments. At the moment there are associate degree programmes (two-year programme) in HRM in fourteen universities while for now just one active undergraduate programme (four-year programme) in HRM. The only undergraduate HRM programme in Sakarya University was founded by academics from LEIR field with an intention of constructing a HRM department which will approach HRM in a broad sense. But this approach has raised debates

² Every year a different university hosts the meeting. The 14th meeting is going to be held by İstanbul University in May 2012.

³ All the figures about the number of departments have been taken from the following web site: <http://www.tabanpuanlar.net/> accession date: 27/02/2012. The numbers has been taken from the statistics of the university entrance exam result of 2011.

intensively in both academics from business management field and LEIR fields. It can be said that the main reason of the debates is the restrictive character of the paradigm which they are in. In a close future the number of HRM undergraduate programme will rise and it seems that these new departments will be established by business management paradigm.

As a last point, I would say that confined by a strict paradigm prevents to see the issues or research subjects in a wider context. To reach such a context we need to analysis the issues in a sociological thinking or as Gulbenkian Commission (1996) suggests in a multi-disciplinary approach. A multi-disciplinary approach will take us from a restricted area into a wide field that is fed by many different academic disciplines such as economics, sociology, business management, politics, social policy, industrial relations, labour economics etc. A HRM in multi-disciplinary approach will be more powerful to close the nature of labour relations / employment relations.

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