

A Critical Review of Human Resource Competency Model: Evolvement in Required Competencies for Human Resource Professionals

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Abstract—The twenty-first century witnessed the development of human resource (HR) competency model in some regions. Many scholars in the human resource management (HRM) field have conducted a range of research regarding the competency model of human resource professionals. As a result, the purpose of this research is to review and synthesis literature on human resource competencies and analyze changes in required competencies of human resource professionals. The research discussed evolvement in HR competency model in the HRM literature. The findings reflected the changes of required HR competencies from functional HR competencies to HR competencies related to more strategic roles. This research is a review of HR competency literature and an attempt to shed some additional light on the field of competency model in general and HR competency model in specific, especially research in emerging countries. Implications from this research and suggestions for future research directions were discussed.

Index Terms—Competencies, HR competencies, HR professionals, HR roles.

I. INTRODUCTION

More recently, competency model has been used in many aspects of human resource management (HRM) practices, ranging from individual functions such as recruitment and selection, performance management to organizational strategic planning and design of organizational structure and culture. Human resource (HR) is known as essential factor in the success of many organizations and considered as a source of sustained competitive advantage [1]-[3]. As a profession, HR professionals are required to possess academic preparation, specialized knowledge, practical experience [4]. The twenty-first century witnessed heightened interest in developing HR competencies in different markets. Many scholars in the HRM field have conducted a range of research regarding the competency model of human resource professionals. HR competency literature has demonstrated that the requirements of HR competencies have been varied from emerging to traditional markets. Although many independent organizations, HR associations, consultants, and researchers have made an effort to propose competency models for HR professionals, there exists a debate on which

specific HR competency model is better [5].

Thus, the purpose of this research is to review and synthesis literature on human resource competencies and analyze changes in required competencies of human resource professionals. The research discusses evolvement in HR competency model in the HRM literature. Besides, the research also provides a comparison on empirical HR competency research between Western and Asian countries in order to present the differences on required HR competencies.

II. OVERVIEW OF HR COMPETENCIES

A. Definition of Competencies and HR Competencies

1) Competency

The HRM literature saw a transformation from job or task based to competency based system, which is today commonly used in most of organizations to achieve superior organizational performance. The terminology of “competency” was first perceived in the research of [6]. However, there has not been an agreement on the definition of competency yet up to now. In general, competency refers to a set of dimensions of behaviors that employees need to acquire in order to have superior performance at work [7], [8]. Specifically, competencies are determined to be “the skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, and behaviors needed to effectively perform a role in the organization and help the business meet its strategic objectives” [9]. Moreover, [10] defined competency as “an underlying characteristic of an employee (i.e., a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one’s self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge) which results in superior performance”. In other words, competencies are behaviors that encompass the knowledge, skills, and attributes required for successful performance. [11] defined competency as five types of “underlying characteristics” including motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skill. According to Iceberg model, skill and knowledge competencies are relatively surface, visible characteristics, which are easy to develop through training programs; while motives, traits, self-concept competencies are core personality, which are more hidden, considered as the base of personality iceberg and difficultly developed.

2) Human resource competency

To sustain the transformation of the HR function, HR professionals must develop and demonstrate a new set of

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competencies to fulfill their changing roles and responsibilities [12]. In general, HR competency is defined as a personnel-related concept referring to a set of behavioral dimensions of HR professionals' effective performance at work. HR competency is known to be a cluster of characteristics contributing to HR professionals' effective performance that helps an organization to implement successfully its business strategies in a competitive market [13]. These characteristics are knowledge, skills, abilities or personal characteristics which HR professionals need to achieve their high performance. HR professionals with the right competencies will perform better their job role.

B. History and Overview of HR Competencies

The present business world is experiencing great revolution, and HR practices are changing to focus more on activities related to strategic roles. Thus, many scholars have paid more attention on different kinds of HR competencies in order to add value to organizational performance. Over the last thirty years, it is witnessed an enormous growth in HR competency related research conducted to identify appropriate competencies for HR professionals in order to improve organizational performance. As early as the mid 1900s, the initial research on HR competency model was implemented by Patricia McLagan, sponsored by the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD). Her primary research focused on determining competencies for HR training and development (HRD) professionals; and then generalized to all HR professionals. This ASTD model for HRD professionals identified important HRD roles including administrator, HRD manager, evaluator, HRM material developer, career development advisor, instructor/trainer, marketer, need analyst, program designer, organization change agent, and researcher as well as developed four competency domains namely business, technical, interpersonal, and intellectual competencies [14], [15]. At the same time, a huge number of consulting firms such as Deloitte, Boston Consulting Group also began to build their own HR competency model. These works often originated by identifying low and high performance of HR professionals; and then interviewing these two HR groups around critical incidents to determine factors which would contribute to differentiate the two groups include knowledge, skills, and abilities. This way would help to build HR competencies leading to high performance.

Further, there are some scholars examining what skills, knowledge, attitude, behaviors are needed for HR professionals. Particularly, [16] identified HR competencies in leadership areas, including business knowledge, personal management, job skills, achievement directed assertiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, cognitive complexity and agility. In the collaboration with the Society for Human resource management (SHRM), [17] also developed five competency domains for HR executives containing influence management, HR technical proficiency, business knowledge, goal and action management, functional and organizational leadership. Similarly, another study of HR competencies sponsored by SHRM explored a cluster of HR competencies in three main areas, namely core HR competencies, level-specific

competencies for team leader, midlevel manager and executive, and competencies for three specific HR roles such as HR product and service specialist, HR generalist and HR strategist [18]. Moreover, [19] suggested two broad competency domains that help HR professionals improve effectiveness of HRM system include professional HRM capabilities relating to traditional HR delivery and business related capabilities reflecting a business understanding as well as strategy implementation.

Along with SHRM's research, at the professional level, HR associations in Australia and United Kingdom also began to create HR competencies into more specific and easily measureable capabilities. Specifically, The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development in the UK identified knowledge and behaviors for HR and learning and developing professional in an "HR profession Map", which comprises eight behaviors, ten professional areas and four bands of professional competence [20]. In the same vein, the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) has developed the "Model of Excellence" identifying capabilities and behaviors for HR practitioners. Based on data of 2014 AHRI member survey, the "Model of Excellence" encompassing ten behaviors and seven capabilities was designed as a framework for assessment competency proficiency as well as the formal accreditation of all HR training programs [21].

Notably, that is HR competency model originally developed by Ulrich and his research team. The initial HR competency model was developed in 1987 and over the years, the model has undergone massive updates and revisions. From 1987 to 2002, every five years, Ulrich and his research team have conducted six researches called the human resource competency study (HRCS) to determine needed HR competencies that explain what makes HR professionals have effective performance and what HR professionals do to influence organizational performance. By using a 360-degree methodology in each round, the HRCS identified specific behavioral competencies required for HR professionals.

To summarize, though there are great effort to develop a common list of HR competencies, there is no consensus on generic competency model for HR professionals due to different concepts and contexts employed by HRM theorists [22].

III. EVOLVEMENT IN REQUIRED HR COMPETENCIES

A. Identifying and Developing Required HR Competencies

1) Research approach and methodology

With the transformation of HR functions, there is a call for creating a new competency model for HR professionals. The alignment of HR competencies with the changing HR visions, strategies, systems, structures, and processes will contribute to effective transformation of HR functions. Most of HR competency studies have tried to answer the questions "what are the essential competencies of HR professionals to effectively perform their job role"? A numerous number of HR

competencies have been conducted to develop required HR competencies and have also investigated the impact of HR competencies on three organizational outcomes, namely individual job performance, personal effectiveness of HR professionals and business results.

A HR competency model can serve as an instrument to identify the current skill gaps as well as guidance to improve the performance of HR professionals. The main purpose of HR competency model is to improve the quality of HR professionals. Thus, HR competencies need to be revised over time to meet the changes of HR functions and business requirements. However, identifying needed HR competencies requires choice of suitable research methodology. There are some methodological issues which need to be considered, include “what you measure, whose perspective matters most, the frequency of evaluation, and analytical techniques” [5]. The HR competency research has focused on identifying individual behaviors, attitudes, performance outcomes and situational judgments by using behavioral event interview (BEI). However, most of HR competency research has been a cross-sectional study, which collected data at one point in time, while there is a few HR competency research using a longitudinal design with collected data at different points in time in order to explore changes and evolvement of HR competencies. Beside using case studies to design HR competency model [23]-[25], the scholars also relied on large-scale survey research based on self-assessment of HR professionals and consultants or a 360-degree methodology with assessment from HR professionals and their associates such as supervisors, peers, subordinates, and clients.

2) General and Tailored HR competencies

A critical review of HR competency literature reflects a predominant effort on developing general competencies, which are relevant to entire HR profession regardless of context such as firm size, role, function, career stage. Among these studies, there is a great deal of attention focused on assessing and verifying the influence of critical HR competencies on organizational outcomes [19], [26], [27]. However, there is a debate on the suitability of one-size-fits all and generic competency models in different organizational contexts because “They don’t work...competencies are particular to the organization or an industry...each person has to build on their own abilities and find what fits for them” [28]. Generic HR competencies involve key competencies that are universally applicable to the entire HR profession in different organizational context [28], [12]; while context-specific HR competencies are tailored competencies which are relevant to a particular organization or industry, or even HR job role or position level [12], [23].

Beside emphasis on identifying generic HR competencies, some scholars have claimed that HR competencies are role-specific [12], [23], [29]. [23], for example, conducted a field-study to identify required key HR competencies, including core competencies that are applicable to entire HR roles, leverage competencies and role competencies relating to particular roles. [23] also suggested that knowledge of

business strategy was a unique role competency and critical for only HR strategist or generalist, while leadership was necessary for just two roles, namely leader and organizational leader. Similarly, [12] developed a small set of core competencies for various HR roles such as effective communication, credibility and integrity, negotiation and conflict resolution, systematic perspective, business acumen, customer orientation as well as some role specific competencies, namely strategic HR competencies linked to leadership HR roles and functional HR competencies for consultation and specialist HR expertise roles. Further, competencies are “a set of context-specific behaviors that define what success looks like in action in a particular setting...each person can select competencies according to individual, functional, and organizational needs” [29]; therefore, HR competency model encompasses four competency blocks, such as personal attributes, leadership and management competencies, HR core competencies and HR role-specific competencies, which represents success factors to meet different cluster of environmental requirements for HR professionals [29]. Besides, some other scholars also emphasized on determining tailored HR competencies for specific organizations, for example, competency profile for HR relationship managers of the Bank of Montreal [24] or HR competency model for Reliant Energy [30].

3) Strategic and Functional competencies

Due to transformation of HR roles from functional to more strategic contribution to the business, the recent HR competency models are designed to assist HR professionals to adopt their strategic role. The HR competency research pointed out the importance of strategic HR competencies for job success of HR professionals. Specifically, based on situationalist perspective, [31] made an effort to identify functional and strategic HR competencies for HR practitioners. Functional HR competencies refers to the delivery of HR functions such as recruitment, compensation, employee education and training, employee selection and remuneration while strategic HR competencies are known as business-related competencies which enable HR professionals to align HR strategies with business strategies [19]. HR functional competencies comprise domains of HR delivery referring to ability to design as well as deliver basic and advanced HR practices, personal credibility related to effective interpersonal relationship, communication skills and achievement of results, and HR technology involving the ability to use effectively technology in HR transactions [27]. Strategic HR competencies consist of business knowledge relating to knowledge of company and industry, and strategic contribution including ability to relate to customers as well as active involvement in strategic activities such as organizational change and development, strategic decision-making [27]. Most notably, the study of [31] confirmed that self-belief and social factors, leadership and relationship building are generic HR competency domains, while business awareness serves as a main differentiator between strategic and functional HR roles. These findings

reflected an opposite view compared to those of [12], [23], [29], who identified generic HR competencies including business knowledge and financial savvy. However, the research findings of [31] are consistent with those of [13], [32], [33] that business awareness comprising factors of strategic thinking, political and financial savvy is more important for strategic HR roles because strategic HR roles enable HR practitioners more greatly interact with senior executives as well as participate in developing and implementing business strategy. Thus, future HR competency research should pay more attention on developing role-specific HR competency, especially strategic competencies that help HR professionals fulfill their strategic roles and create more added values to organizations.

B. Evolutionary HR Competency Models

More recent years witnessed an enormous evolution in identifying needed competencies for HR professionals. In the past, the HR practitioners predominantly focused on technical or functional HR competencies which related to only traditional HR functions. However, due to current business needs, HR professionals need to play more roles of strategic business partner to respond to the changing global business trends [34]. On the basis of the increased interest in human resource management – organizational performance relationship, many scholars have made an attempt to explore different categories of competencies that HR professionals should possess to add value to their organizational performance. Most notably longitudinal study of HR competency is the HR competency study originally developed by Ulrich and his team since 1987. The study has been conducted repeatedly every five years and every time, Ulrich and his team revised and updated new HR competencies which are suitable to the changing business world. At the beginning, the study was only carried out in the U.S region; however, since 2002, the other regions were involved in the study called HRCS. The participation of HR professionals in different regions has helped the HRCS become increasing global and more generalization. Especially, the 2012 study advanced to the global range to contain the leading HR professional organizations in Northern Europe, Australia, Latin America, Middle East, South Africa, India and China. Overtime, the HR competency models have evolved, which are described detail in the table 1 below. The most revised HR competency model by [35] suggested six HR competency domains with twenty HR competency sub-factors, namely: strategic positioner, credible activist, capability builder, change champion, HR innovator and integrator, technology proponent. This model is more relevant to the current business environment and is directly related with the HR professionals’ in the 21st century.

Furthermore, there is a series of HR competency research sponsored by SHRM [17], [18], [36]-[38]. More recently, SHRM developed a HR competency model through face-to-face interaction with more than 32,000 SHRM members and HR professionals at all HR career levels, ranging from entry to executive level. The SHRM competency model

has become the largest and most comprehensive HR competency model and developed nine key competency domains (details in Table I), along with a detailed set of sub-competencies and proficiency statements [39].

TABLE I: SUMMARY OF EVOLVED HR COMPETENCY MODELS

No	Authors	Sample	Findings
1	[37] sponsored by SHRM	interview with 20 CEOs and 50 HR professionals	5 competency clusters for HR executives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business knowledge • influence management • functional and organizational leadership • goal and action management • HR technical proficiency
2	[17]	Interviewed with 23 CEO and 30 senior-level HR professionals in the U.S	Senior-level HR competency model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business knowledge • Influence management • Functional and organizational leadership • Goal and action management • HR technical proficiency
3	[18] sponsored by SHRM	300 interviews in 21 companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>core HR competencies:</i> leadership style, management intuition, functional abilities, personal attributes • <i>level-specific competencies:</i> team leader, midlevel manager, executive • <i>role-specific competencies:</i> HR product/service specialist, HR generalist, HR strategist
4	Ulrich (1987)	10,291 respondents, including HR and line managers	3 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business knowledge • HR delivery • Change
5	Ulrich (1992)	4,556 respondents, including HR and line managers	4 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business knowledge • HR delivery • Change • Personal credibility
6	[40]	3,229 respondents, including HR and line managers	5 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business knowledge • HR delivery • Change • Culture • Personal credibility
7	Ulrich with SHRM [36]	7,082 respondents, including HR and line managers	5 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business knowledge • Strategic contribution • HR delivery • HR technology • Personal credibility
8	[38] (with SHRM)	10,063 respondents, including HR and line managers	6 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Ally • Strategic architect • Talent manager and organization designer • Operational executor • Culture and change steward • Credible activist
9	[41]	20,023 respondents, including HR and line managers	6 HR competency domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic positioner • HR Innovator and Integrator • Technology or information proponent • Change champion • Organizational capability builder • Credible activist

10	[39]	In 2012, conducted 111 focus groups and surveyed 640 CHROs and 32,314 SHRM members and HR professionals from 33 countries	<p>Identified 9 competency categories and created a Body of Competency and Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Relationship management • Ethical practice • HR expertise (HR knowledge) • Business acumen • Critical evaluation • Global and cultural effectiveness • Leadership and navigation • Consultation
11	[20]		<p>The Profession Map:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 professional areas: strategy and solutions, leading HR, organization design, organization development, resourcing and talent planning, learning and development, performance and reward, employee engagement, employee relations, service delivery and information • 8 professional behaviors: curious, decisive thinker, skilled influencer, personally credible, collaborative, driven to deliver, courage to challenge, role model
12	[21]	2014 AHRI member survey	<p>The Model of Excellence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 behaviors: professional, critical and enquiring thinker, solutions driven, future oriented, influencer, courageous, understand and care, collaborative, credible, resolver of issues • 7 capabilities: culture and change leader, stakeholder mentor and coach, workforce and workplace designer, business driven, expert practitioner, ethical and credible activist, strategic architect.
13	[31]	HR professionals in New Zealand	<p>HR competency model for strategic and functional HR practitioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and relationship building • Self-belief and social factors • Strategic focus and drive • Input and support • Business awareness • HR acumen • Systems and technology
14	[42]	483 HR officers and managers in the private and public sectors in South Africa	<p>HR competency model for the South African context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional behavior and leadership • Service orientation and execution • Business intelligence

From synthesis of HR competency research, required HR competencies can be summarized and grouped into six key HR competency domains which can embrace the expansive range of HR competency models, comprise business related competency, human resource tools, practices and process related competency, HR information systems, analytics and

architecture related competency, change competency, organization and culture competency and personal competency.

Business. This domain is called business acumen or business related competencies, which involve core business knowledge. HR professionals must possess not only knowledge of business operations such as distribution channels and operation management, supply chain management, finance, accounting, marketing but also knowledge of external reliabilities such as market segmentation, customer buying criteria, capital markets as well as have ability to apply this knowledge to formulate and implement business strategy [5] (Ulrich et al., 2015).

Human resource tools, practices and process. This category is called HR expertise, including well-developed knowledge about HR strategy, policies, structure, practices, laws, regulations and principles that underlie effective HR practices [39]. Besides, HR professionals also must have ability to design and use HR tools to successfully develop, maintain and executing rigorous HR practices, policies and procedures.

HR information systems, analytics, and architecture. Competence in this domain involves in information management and HR technology tools. HR professionals need to hold skills and knowledge related to human resource information system management, and apply predictive analytics to HR issues. Using HR technology will help to bring down HR costs and administrative burdens [43]; thus, HR professionals will have more time for strategic roles. Besides, HR professionals should be able to work with firm leaders to architect the flow of important competitive and market information from outside in to support executive decision making [5].

Change. Competent HR professionals should have ability to determine environmental changes that have influence on business and develop organizational capacity for change, and then transform that capacity into change process and structure. Beside, HR professionals need to sustain change in organization by ensuring resource availability such as capital, human resources and information [35].

Organization and Culture. This domain involves in ability of designing and restructuring organization, managing culture and creating innovative culture. Besides, effective HR professionals need to have competency of global and cultural effectiveness which refers to ability to value and consider the perspectives and background of all parties [39] and become an organization capability builder [35].

Personal. This HR competency domain relates to personal attributes such as ethical practice, leadership and navigation [39] commitment, continuous learning, honesty and integrity [29], personal credibility [36], credible activist [35], [38]. To be effective, HR professionals need to have effective interpersonal skills to build strong relationships with leaders and key stakeholders.

IV. THE COUNTRY-SPECIFIC HR COMPETENCY RESEARCH

It is evident from literature that most of the research on HR

competencies is conducted in the US. Although, there are some country-specific studies on HR competency, these studies often have applied developed HR competency models in the U.S to test whether these models work effectively in different contexts. Particularly, based on the outcome of 2002 global HRCS, a study with HR professionals and line managers of 40 European companies resulted that HR competencies of HR delivery and personal credibility had a positive effect with the ranking of HR function. Besides, business knowledge evaluated by European HR professionals is important for added value of HR function, while strategic contribution perceived by non-HR professionals results to financial competitiveness [26].

Compared to HR competency studies conducted in the western since 1980s, research on HR competency in Asian context has been received attention more lately. There is a series of HR competency study conducted in different Asian contexts in order to verify and generalize HR competency model of the Western [13], [32], [34], [44]-[51].

For example, [32] surveyed employees and line managers of Taiwanese high-tech competencies to test the relationship between HR competencies developed by [52] including business knowledge, field expertise, change management and HR effectiveness as perceived by line managers and employees. The study suggested that the two out of three HR competency domains, namely field expertise and change management were strong predictors of HR effectiveness, while there was no significant relationship between business knowledge and perceived HR effectiveness [32]. Along with this argument, other studies in Malaysia also indicated that there were only two main HR competency categories required for Malaysian HR practitioners, namely generic or behavioral competency and technical HR competency, while there was no significant result in business competency [34], [44]. Moreover, the study in Malaysian manufacturing firms was carried out to test the relationship between HR competencies adopted from Ulrich models and firm performance. The research findings presented that the highly evaluated HR competency factors were from personal credibility and HR delivery domains that were not correlated with firm performance [13], [47], [49]. The study also showed that HR competency domains of business knowledge, internal consultation, strategic contribution, and HR technology had significant correlation with firm performance; however, Malaysian HR professionals were extremely lacking in competencies related business knowledge and strategic contribution such as market-driven connectivity, fast change, culture management and strategic decision-making [13], [47]-[49]. This result was similar to the global results of Ulrich's human resource competency study in different regions. In comparison with the global sample, 2012 HRCS of Ulrich presented that HR professionals in China excelled in HR competencies related to capability builder, change champion and HR innovator and integrator but lacked in capabilities of technology proponent and strategic positioner [53].

Further, there is some research on HR competency conducted in banking sector of Pakistan. Particularly, [45]

identified the competencies for HR professionals in privatized Pakistani bank, including social competencies, technical competencies and willingness, which had a significant impact on HR professionals' effectiveness. HR professionals in bank sector need social based competencies, namely credible activist, talent manager and organizational designer, culture and change steward, which are abilities to manage relationships and interpersonal understanding with employees of the organization [45], [54]. In addition to social based competencies, HR professionals also have technical competencies, namely strategy architect, business ally and operational executor to design and develop the organizational HR structure, system and processes [45]. In another study in banking sector in Pakistan, [46] also suggested HR competency domains in relationships, processes and capabilities, which compose of competencies of credible activist, culture and change steward, business partner, HR experts, talent manager, organization designer, and leadership and management.

Moreover, based on the perspectives of Hong Kong CEOs and HR executives, [55] attempted to determine underlying characteristics HR professionals should possess to have successful and effective performance. The study asserted that HR leaders in Hong Kong should be well-equipped with a set of HR competencies to professionally manage issues related to human resources. Besides, HR professionals also need to develop priority HR competency domains including change agent, professional personal skills, innovation and crisis management, organizational knowledge in order to be proactive and strategic in their job role.

The findings of empirical research in Western and Asian context have shown that HR practitioners in developing countries are still fulfilling mainly HR functional roles [56], while those in developed countries are fulfilling more strategic roles [57], [58]. Although HR professionals in Asian regions excel in implementation of HR tools, systems, and process with great professionalism, they lack knowledge, skill, capabilities, experience, and credibility to design innovative HR tools in a systematic way, facilitate change management process as well as adapt to new change initiatives. Hence, HR professionals in Asian countries are extremely weak at competency domains related to business knowledge, strategic contribution, change champion, organizational capability builder.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Implications of HR Competencies

HR professionals are considered as a source of sustained competitive advantage, which can enable organizations to implement successfully their business strategies. Nevertheless, many HR executives are not welcomed to participate in discussion on the strategic planning table, because the core HR competency and most of HR functions still focus on traditional activities [59]. In fact, many HR practitioners still perform better in their functional roles than in making a

strategic contribution [60], [61]. Specifically, the survey of U.S HR practitioners, conducted by SHRM reported that only 34% of surveyed HR practitioners agreed that their executives evaluated their HR professionals as a strategic partner [62]. Supporting this argument, based on a study of 106 large US corporations, [63] showed that there was no increase in strategic role of HR professionals in the period from 1998 to 2007. HR professionals have played a main role in developing and implementing business strategy only when HR manager is a full strategic partner [59]. Though HR role of strategic partner is commonly accepted, “the reality of living the language has yet to be realized in many firms” [64].

HR competencies related to strategic roles such as business acumen, strategic positioner, change champion, organizational capability builder are considered as determinant factors to help HR professionals fulfill successfully their job roles and enable organizations to move forward, but these competencies are the weakness in competencies of HR professionals in practice. This is one of main barriers to overcome if HR professionals want to become strategic partners in their organizations. HR practitioners should make themselves available to participate in operation-related meetings whenever the opportunity arises. Becoming involved in operational issues may be a huge challenge for HR practitioners, as it involves knowing the process flow and technical know-how of product realization, but it is essential. Having this knowledge will allow them to offer possible changes to the operational processes, changes that may improve the efficiency of the organization. Hence, HR professionals should be well-equipped with professional personal skill, professional and organizational knowledge through formal training programs. Specially, in Asian region where HR practices and HR profession in Asian region are still in learning and development stage, HR professionals have received less formal HR education and possessed limited professional backgrounds. HR competency models help HR professionals identify necessary competencies for their profession as well as audit the current skill gaps to bridge. One of the most popular tools to help HR professionals bridge their competency gaps and develop advanced HR competencies is an online course on HR competency self-assessment called “The Human Resource Competency Toolkit” offered by Wayne Brockbank and Dave Ulrich of University of Michigan Business School [55] or AHRI accredited courses to get HR standard certificate. Moreover, not only large organizations, but also small and medium size organizations need to design in-house program or provide financial support for HR professional to equip future required competencies through attending external training programs in universities, vocational institutes and professional associations. Consequently, the professional training programs will help HR professionals possess good professional background and advanced skills and knowledge required for their profession and become skilled change agents and strategic partners.

B. Future Research Directions

This study has great contribution to the enduring debate on

necessary HR competencies by synthesizing HR competency literature to analyze changes in required HR competencies. Research findings let us make some observations regarding to diffusion of HR competencies for the HR roles. Firstly, HR is now not HR, but HR is central to achieve sustainable business success. As HR role changes from functional to more strategic contribution to the business success, identification of unique HR competencies for HR function and role can be required. Empirical research in the role of HR competencies has demonstrated a growth in the strategic role of HR functions. Moreover, HR competency literature has also provided evidence on the positive HR competency – organizational performance relationship; especially strategic HR competencies are highly evaluated to organizational business success. Consequently, there is called for developing role-specific HR competencies to align HR competencies to future business conditions as well as determining HR competencies that matter most for organizational performance. Besides, due to the increasing different contexts of human resource management and organizations, HR scholars also should focus on identification of tailored HR competencies to specific situations.

The configuration of empirical research into HR competency model has proved that the field of research on HR competencies are still continually rigorous and empirical [38], [65]. Although empirical research on HR competencies have established important role of HR competencies to outcomes of HR functions as well as business performance, the unopened black-box of performance in the relationship between human resource management and organizational performance is problem in debate. Hence, this would be a future question on underlying impact mechanism of HRM-performance relationship in general and HR competency – performance link in specific. Future research should open black-box to explore mediated or moderated factors in mechanism through which HR competencies impact on organizational outcomes. Furthermore, our findings suggest that required competencies for HR professionals are continually changing and will continue to evolve in the future and therefore make the future research receive more emphasis on the issue of “best practice” in HR competencies as well as in HR function.

VI. CONCLUSION

To conclude, by focusing on the behaviors, knowledge and attributes required in HR business partner roles, competency models offer the possibility of creating an integrated and consistent framework for the selection, appraisal, training and development of HR practitioners, as well as a mechanism for linking HR strategy and business performance [10], [33], [52], [66]. [29] suggested that “the next few years represent a critical period for the human resource community as new roles and responsibilities in organizations are being re-negotiated”. Hence, future research should focus on identifying a range of HR competencies that enable HR professionals master to meet ongoing challenges.

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