

Development of human resource management in Vietnam: A semantic analysis

Diep Thi Ngoc Nguyen¹ · Stephen T. T. Teo¹ · Marcus Ho²

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Abstract The present study offers a logical understanding of the development of human resource management (HRM) in Vietnam over the past 30 years. While previous studies have examined the adoption of HR practices, there remains a need to understand the current state of HRM development in Vietnam. Using a semantic analysis approach, we systematically analyzed the themes and concepts from 100 journal articles related to HRM in Vietnam, selected from academic databases between 1984 and 2013. The main study findings show that the development of HRM is associated with the key stages of economic development in Vietnam.

Keywords Institutional environment · Human resources · HRM · Semantic analysis · Vietnam

The field of human resource management (HRM) has “emerged, developed, and evolved” to “represent one of the more interesting and important areas of organizational science and practices ... in the context of industrial change and economic development” (Dulebohn, Ferris, & Stodd, 1995: 18). As research reflects the current state of contextual conditions, describing the significant influences of the context on HRM research can reveal how HRM develops over time (Budhwar, Varma, & Patel,

✉ Diep Thi Ngoc Nguyen
diep.nguyen@ecu.edu.au

Stephen T. T. Teo
drstephen.teo@gmail.com

Marcus Ho
marcus.ho@aut.ac.nz

¹ Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia

² Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

2016; Cooke, 2017; Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, & Campion, 2013). This argument highlights the need to examine the context in HRM research to access the history and development of HRM in developing economies (Budhwar & Debrah, 2009; Cooke, 2017; Poon & Rowley, 2010). For example, Fey, Pavlovskaya, and Tang (2004) showed that the economic changes and historical and institutional roots in China and Russia make it difficult for multinational companies to adopt formal practices in training and development, internal communication, and compensation systems. Warner (2011) also showed the influence of culture practices (such as *guanxi* and traditional Chinese personnel practices) together with historical and institutional changes in legislation have an impact on HRM development in China.

Although the context is important for HRM research, particularly in developing economies which have been through institutional changes, systematic reviews of HRM development in such settings have been scant (Cooke, 2017). Budhwar et al. (2016: 7) recently argued for an understanding of “the specific context within which the HR function has evolved, and is developing, its background and present state, and the emerging HR challenges.” Their framework highlights that a historical assessment of HRM development is a primary step in identifying directions of future studies of HRM at the meso and micro levels. Our study responds to Cooke (2017) and Budhwar et al. (2016) by examining the development of HRM in Vietnam over the last 30 years.

The development of HRM in Vietnam has become a central area of interest for understanding how HRM concepts and ideas (often attributed as Western management thought) are disseminated in developing countries (Budhwar & Debrah, 2009; Cooke, 2017; Poon & Rowley, 2010). This burgeoning interest in conducting research in Vietnam can be attributed to an increasingly dynamic economy with a young, literate labor force and the increased attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) (Bartram, Stanton, & Thomas, 2009; Budhwar & Debrah, 2009). Topics on HRM in Vietnam tend to be based on different perspectives of HRM literature and the research focus of researchers. For example, a good number of studies have focused on the utilization of HRM practices in different ownership types (Kamoche, 2001; Thang & Quang, 2005b; Zhu, Collins, Webber, & Benson, 2008) and in small and medium-sized organizations (King-Kauanui, Ngoc, & Ashley-Cotleur, 2006; Thang & Bryant, 2004). Others have examined the overarching macro-effects of the changes in Vietnam’s industrial relations system (Collins, Nankervis, Sitalaksmi, & Warner, 2011; Zhu & Fahey, 1999, 2000) or specific micro-HR practices, such as the association between training and firm performance (Nguyen, Truong, & Buyens, 2011).

Recent research in Vietnam has shown how the conceptualization and practice of HRM has evolved in organizations due to institutional changes in the Vietnamese context. For instance, Zhu et al. (2008) emphasized the effect of economic transition on the application of HRM practices in the different organizational types in Vietnam. Vo and Bartram (2012) addressed the role of government, regulations, and political policies in the management of reform in state-owned organizations. These studies also demonstrated the hybridization of Vietnamese HRM, highlighting the importance of contextual conditions in Vietnam. Nonetheless, there are still substantial gaps in our understanding of the development of HRM in Vietnam, particularly in the context of the economic development within the country in the last 30 years since the economic reform in 1986.

This study has two main research questions: “What is the current state of HRM development in Vietnam as identified by HRM research in the past 30 years?” and “How have the changes in economic development and the institutional environment of Vietnam influenced the development of HRM research in Vietnam?” Accordingly, we utilize institutional theory relating to HRM as a lens to review published academic articles in the field over the last 30 years. We take this approach because the development of HRM in developing economies is better understood by a historical and institutional review (Budhwar et al., 2016; Collins et al., 2011; Tregaskis & Brewster, 2006). Charting the development of HRM in Vietnam allows consideration of the spread and dissemination of Western HRM ideas into developing countries (Budhwar et al., 2016; Collins et al., 2011).

Institutional theory addresses the experience of organizations in a specific context taking into account institutional forces such as legislation system, national culture, economic development and market pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Institutional theory emphasizes that managerial practices are designed and implemented according to changes in the institutional environment of a specific context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). Institutional theorists have argued that the isomorphism of an organization is a signal sent to its internal and external stakeholders that its structures, values, and management practices are consistent with dominant views in a larger society (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008). Using institutional theory as a lens, this paper has a number of theoretical implications. Specifically, this study differs from previous research in that it synthesizes and provides an updated understanding of HRM development in Vietnam over the last 30 years. In particular, we contextualize the development of HRM by adopting a systematic and semantic review through an institutional lens. We will review and synthesize the literature and we will outline a future research agenda for HRM research in relation to the current state of Vietnam’s economic and institutional conditions.

Our paper begins with an overview of the institutional approach adopted in previous HRM studies. We then present a brief description of the Vietnamese context, including key stages of economic development and the institutional environment. Following this, we describe the process of data collection and data analysis. Lastly, research findings are presented, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications in this study.

Literature review

Institutional perspective in HRM studies in Western economies

Different theoretical lenses have been adopted in the study of HRM in a specific environment, including the universalistic perspective, the contingency approach, and the institutional perspective. The universalistic approach concentrates on examining the universalization of Western HRM models in another context without considering characteristics of institutional settings (Boselie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005). The contingency approach, in contrast, considers the influences of contextual factors on the transferability of organizational structures, practices, and managerial processes from a particular context to another (Legge, 1978; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Studies using the contingency approach have shown the influence of the contextual conditions on the efficacy

of HR practices, including business strategy, industrial characteristics, technological developments, and management philosophy (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Sheehan, Cooper, Holland, & De Cieri, 2007). Although the contingency approach provides an understanding of the contextual influences on the transferability of HRM across contexts, this approach does not explain how the HRM field emerges, develops, and evolves as the development of HRM is associated with institutional and economic changes in a particular context (Dulebohn et al., 1995; Posthuma et al., 2013). Thus, a beneficial way in which to understand the development of HRM in developing countries is the utilization of the institutional approach.

Despite different variants in institutional theory across disciplines and a classification between “old” and “new” institutionalism, this study adopts a perspective of “new” institutionalism. New institutionalism in the area of organizational management demonstrates that an institutional environment includes the government, regulatory agencies, the professions, social expectations, and leading organizations (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008). In other words, institutional contexts are comprised of three components: regulatory, cognitive, and normative institutions (Scott, 2008). Regulatory institutions contain laws and rules that endorse certain types of behaviors and restrict others. The cognitive component reflects the shared social knowledge by people in a given environment. Normative institutions reflect the norms, assumptions, beliefs, and values in relation to human action, and define goals and the way people pursue them in a particular country (Kostova & Roth, 2002; Scott, 2008). An organization operates under the standardization of rules and regulations, and a hierarchical structure reflecting the broader society (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008).

New institutionalism highlights the isomorphism of organizational practices in a specific environment. Organizations are believed to be isomorphic based on their employment of three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008). The coercive mechanism is related to political influence and power sources such as social partners, labor legislation, and the government. These powerful forces influence organizations in terms of conformity and satisfaction with the cultural expectations of the society (Gooderham, Nordhaug, & Ringdal, 2006; Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). The mimetic mechanism gains power when the external environment creates uncertainties resulting in organizations performing standard responses to uncertainties. Organizations tend to benchmark and implement similar practices or imitate successful or legitimate organizations in their field (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008). Normative isomorphism is associated with the adoption of standards and routines considered appropriate in a specific environment, as well as the relationship between management policies and the background of employees (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003; Scott, 2008). The three mechanisms of isomorphism lead to the homogeneity of HRM development and adoption across organizations in the same environment that gains organizations legitimacy, their probability of survival, and organizational performance (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Heugens & Lander, 2009).

Although organizations tend to be isomorphic in the same environment, they are likely to use their own HR practices to be different, inimitable, and non-substitutable in order to be more successful in both local and global markets (Farndale, Brewster, & Poutsma, 2008). Ownership types can be used to explain differences in the adoption of HR practices across organizations in a specific environment (Gooderham, Nordhaug, &

Ringdal, 1999; Kostova & Roth, 2002). For instance, subsidiaries of Western multinational companies in developing economies are likely to adopt more advanced and sophisticated HR practices than are local organizations (Bjorkman, Fey, & Park, 2007; Lawler, Chen, Wu, Bae, & Bai, 2011). Public sector organizations in Australia are regarded as adopting a less strategic orientated HRM approach than private sector organizations (e.g., Josseland, Teo, & Clegg, 2006). Simultaneously, perceptions of the management of the HRM function has been found to be influenced by contextual factors (see the review by Jackson & Schuler, 1995) because perceptions and references of management can rationalize the way in which employees are managed differently between organizations (Golden & Ramanujam, 1985; Schuler, 1992). For example, economic pressures emphasize the maximization of efficiencies and profitability while normative pressures reflect a concentration on ethical values adhering to societal norms and the consideration of the well-being of all organizational stakeholders. Thus, organizations that solely attempt to satisfy normative requirements will adopt HR practices largely focused on stakeholders' well-being while organizations solely concentrated on economic pressures will adopt HR practices that reflect minimal concentration on the well-being of employees (Evans & Novicevic, 2007; MacDuffie, 1995).

Other studies have given a broader view of institutionalism when studying the development of HRM. For instance, ownership types (Gooderham et al., 1999; Zhu et al., 2008), economical factors (Giardini, Kabst, & Muller-Camen, 2005; Gooderham & Nordhaug, 2010), and the role of the state or culture and legislation (Fey & Bjorkman, 2001; Gooderham & Nordhaug, 2010) have been found to influence the development of HRM in Western economies (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Furthermore, the contemporary literature demonstrates that the development of HRM is relative to key stages of economic development (Budhwar & Debrah, 2009; Dulebohn et al., 1995). Studies on HRM in European economies have shown that differences and similarities in the adoption of HRM derive from stages of economic development (e.g., Brewster, Mayrhofer, & Morley, 2004; Gooderham & Nordhaug, 2010). Other institutional theorists have argued that HR practices are the reflections of or responses to market pressures and the formal and informal rules and structures of the larger institutional environments (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003; Powell & DiMaggio, 2012). For instance, the idea of personnel management as a separate function was initiated when the Industrial Revolution led to an increasing number of employees in organizations (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). In the 1980s, globalization, international competitions, and institutional changes in regulations, unionization, and demographic variations occurring in the US led to the growth of HRM scholarship (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). During this time, the requirements of HR practices such as human capital management, knowledge management, and resourcing and performance management resulted in the perceptions of the HRM function as value adding to the organization (Barney, 2001; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Strategic human resource management (SHRM) developed in Western economies due to significant changes in the US economy, economic trends in the 1970s, demographic shifts in 1980s, and the difficulties of organizational management. These economic and institutional changes led to the need to examine the linkage between HRM and organizational strategy (Jackson & Schuler, 1995; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). In India, the evolution of the HRM function has been consistent with the institutional and economic changes of the country, from holding a clerical status during the 1930s to being a strategic partner since the 2000s

(Budhwar et al., 2016). These prior studies have confirmed that institutional and economic forces have played an important role in determining the development of HRM in a particular context. In general, previous studies on HRM that have applied a lens of institutional theory, have concluded that the institutional environment determines the level of HRM development at national level and the adoption of HRM in organizations (Boon, Paauwe, Boselie, & Den Hartog, 2009; Gooderham et al., 1999). Based on assumptions and findings from prior studies, this study uses an institutional lens to examine the development of HRM in Vietnam.

Vietnam's institutional and economic contexts

Vietnam is located at a strategic crossroads in the Asia Pacific region and is characterized by its political and social stability, cheap labor, and geographic proximity (Bartram et al., 2009; Cooke & Lin, 2012). After the Vietnam War in 1975, the Vietnamese government centrally planned its economy and all state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that were dominant in the economy. This country was one of the poorest countries in the world with many problems including a trade embargo by the West, famine, and hyperinflation (The World Bank, 2012). The legislative system mainly focused on structuring the government, and developing criminal law and the military. This economic situation provided constraints for the development of trading and business activities across the country. In the early 1980s, the government reinforced the organizational apparatus to prepare for economic reform. In 1986, the government decided to restructure the economy to make it more market-oriented, aiming to attract foreign investments, increase private businesses, and exploit the opportunities of globalized competition (Quang, 2006).

The economic transition of 1986, "Doi Moi," raised significant matters of responsibility and accountability, and caused changes in management systems in both the public and private sectors (Kamoche, 2001; Truong & van der Heijden, 2009). Specifically, the Foreign Investment Law 1987 and the Company Law 1990 promoted FDI and the establishment of the private sector. Additionally, Vietnam's Constitution of 1992 officially emphasized human rights, the development of a multi-sector economy, and the important role of human resources to organizations. These milestones of institutional and economic development increased the perceptions of the value of human resources in organizations (National Congress of Vietnam, 2011; Vietnam Ministry of Justice, 2015). The reform policy also raised the efficiency of all the enterprise sectors, for example, allowing local enterprises the freedom to sell their products at market prices or to establish direct trade links and liberally compete with other enterprises. These institutional and economic conditions were a primary stage in Vietnam's preparation to join broader international markets (Vietnam Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2012).

From 1994 to 2003, Vietnam witnessed significant changes in the institutional environment and economic development, as well as the rapid development of the legislative system. These changes had an influence on the management practices of Vietnamese organizations. In particular, the Labor Law 1994 resulted in a dramatic transformation of people management systems in Vietnamese organizations. This law regulated the rights of employees, leading to the utilization of long-term employment contracts, the harmony of employer-employee relations, and the establishment of trade

unions in organizations. This law also officially introduced a mindset of the relationship between the competencies of human resources and organizational performance (Zhu, 2005; Zhu & Fahey, 2000). The government also revised and enacted a great number of business-related laws such as the Law of Foreign Investment in Vietnam 2000, the Labor Law 2002, and the Company Law 2003 that affected foreign investments, state-owned and privately owned companies, and trading and commercial activities. The purpose of the changes in legislative system was to encourage the efficiency and effectiveness of local enterprises and increase the number of foreign investment companies in Vietnam (Zhu, 2005). During this period, Vietnam became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1995), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) (1995), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (1998). These economic milestones were good preparation for becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the government has since attempted to develop legislations that are consistent with international laws and provide fundamental support to local companies in terms of global competition (Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004; Vietnam Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2012).

Although Vietnam was not significantly influenced by the 1997 the Asian crisis, the economic chaos led to a greater call for flexibility and strategic orientations in the management of people in Vietnamese organizations. For instance, wage systems were linked closely to organizational and individual performance in terms of profit, productivity, skills, and responsibility (Zhu & Fahey, 1999, 2000). In order to increase the effective operation of organizations, senior managers were urged to apply transactional leadership while middle and HR managers were required to show a transactional approach (Zhu, 2002). Following the Asian crisis, Vietnamese organizations were advised to use numerically and functionally flexible strategies in order to adapt quickly to other economic crises and global competition (Zhu, 2005). However, the adoption of labor flexibility could not be adopted evenly among Vietnamese organizations because of the influence of political, cultural, legal, and economic factors on their practices (Zhu, 2002, 2005). For example, organizations could not adjust the number of regular employees due to the constraints of the Labor Law (2002). In addition, the emphasis on harmony in employment relations and workplace environments made it hard for a full adoption of functional flexibility (Zhu, 2005).

Since 2003, Vietnam has become a lower-middle-income country with dramatic changes and significant achievements in the economic and social life of its people. These changes include growth in international trade, high inflows of (FDI), vigorous exports, and universal access to primary education and health care (Quang, Thang, & Rowley, 2008; The World Bank, 2012). Achieving WTO membership in 2006 gave Vietnamese organizations opportunities to enhance their competitive advantage. Vietnamese organizations now have to compete with foreign investment businesses in terms of the knowledge and intellectual values that are contained in high quality of products and services. The revision and promulgation of all business-related laws including the Company Law, which strongly focused on the private sector, and the Labor Law have ensured the consistency of management practices in Vietnamese organizations in line with local and international competition. Vietnamese organizations implemented effective people management systems in which employees' rights are protected and which add value to organizational performance. New forms of employment contracts, such as fixed-term, temporary, and unlimited-term contracts

were introduced to replace the lifetime employment system that predominated in the old economic system (Zhu, 2005). However, the existing government regulations and laws, out-of-date management thinking and knowledge, cultural customs, an incomplete market-oriented economic system, and remaining traditional personnel practices prevented the full adoption of new forms of people management in Vietnamese organizations (Vo & Bartram, 2012; Zhu et al., 2008). Meanwhile, globalization has required local Vietnamese organizations to learn and adopt advanced management practices from multinational organizations and (FDI) to enhance productivity and competitive advantage (The World Bank, 2012; Vo & Bartram, 2012; Zhu et al., 2008).

Empirical research on human resource management adoption in Vietnam

The developments in the economic, legislative, and social life of Vietnam have resulted in significant changes in organizational life and people management practices. For example, organizations have been independently adopting their own management philosophies and a significant variety of people management practices (Zhu, Warner, & Rowley, 2007). As human resources are seen as an important source of an organization's sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 2001), there has been a great number of studies examining HRM from different perspectives (e.g., Thang & Quang, 2005b; Vo & Bartram, 2012; Zhu et al., 2008). For instance, prior studies have found the adoption of HRM in Vietnam reflects a combination of the socialist tradition, traditional personnel management (PM), and recent HRM models (Thang & Quang, 2005b; Zhu et al., 2008). They have also addressed the different levels of understanding and recognition of the strategic role of HRM in adding value to organizations (Quang et al., 2008; Quang & Thang, 2004). Other studies have highlighted differences in HRM practices in different ownership types. For example, Kamoche (2001) found SOEs' interest in performance management, yet the heritage of losing face culture has constrained SOEs to implement a transparent performance evaluation. Thang and Bryant (2004) suggested Vietnam's small and medium enterprises to utilize clear criteria in performance management system to retain high-quality employees and to stay sustainably competitive. Previous studies have shown that privately owned enterprises have been more limited in their implementation of new trends in HR practices, although there have been attempts to be systematic and rational in their HR management (Bartram et al., 2009; Thang & Quang, 2005b).

Research has shown that there is a divergent of HR practices adopted by multinational companies (MNCs) in Vietnam. For instance, Vo and Stanton (2011) concluded that these MNCs played a key role in creating a competition for qualified and highly committed labor force. Others (such as Quang & Thang, 2004; Zhu et al., 2008; Zhu & Verstraetan, 2013) concluded that foreign-owned enterprises are displaying much more progressive and sophisticated HR practices by following international standards of management practice. The views expressed by these scholars were consistent with the "divergence thesis" which suggests that foreign MNCs would retain their home country HR practices in the host country (see Budhwar et al., 2016). Vietnam's local organizations are able to learn, imitate, and adopt "best practice" of HRM systems in order to improve their management systems and develop a skilled and committed workforce (Bartram et al., 2009; Vo & Stanton, 2011). Although institutional theory

highlights the isomorphism of management practices across organizations in the same specific environment, Vo and Stanton (2011) provided empirical evidence for different degree of transfer of HR practices by foreign-owned enterprises in Vietnam. For example, Vietnamese workers warmly welcome American performance management practices because they can see the link between performance management and career development while PM practices in Japanese MNCs were not transferred easily to their Vietnamese subsidiaries (Vo & Stanton, 2011). Consistent with her other research, Vo and Hannif (2012: 87) concluded that for MNCs operating in multi-domestic industries, HR practices tend to be more localized while those foreign subsidiaries with a high degree of interdependence with their home office (headquarters) would adopt HR practices consistent with their home country. More recently, Budhwar et al. (2016: 313) concluded that due to the heterogeneity of the economies in the Asia Pacific, there is a strong possibility that the HRM models practiced in various nations in the region can be quite different, with each country identifying and using what works “best” for them. Therefore, there is support for a divergent approach to HRM of MNCs operating in the region.

In general, findings in previous studies on HRM in Vietnam have highlighted an understanding of cultural and contextual conditions in the adoption of HRM in a specific environment. The implications from previous studies on HRM in Vietnam indicate that “the problem of direct criticism was more a potential than a real difficulty, and that cultural values are not overwhelming constraints to the implementation of PM [performance management], as long as expatriates and local managers are sensitive enough with the issue” (Vo & Stanton, 2011: 3524). Although prior studies have examined HRM practices in Vietnam since the economic reform of 1986 with regard to a diversity of research interests and theoretical approaches (Collins & Zhu, 2005; Vo, 2009), a systematic analysis of the current state of HRM research and HRM development in Vietnam is lacking. This is the main aim of the present study.

Methodology

Data collection process

This study examines the current state of HRM development in Vietnam through a semantic analysis of published HRM articles. Specifically, this study consists of four analyses that aim to answer the two research questions. First, this study focuses on identifying the main themes and concepts emerging in prior studies. Second, the present study examines the development of HRM research by decade. Third, the analysis focuses on investigating the relationship between contextual attributes and the state of HRM in Vietnam. The final stage in the analysis process is to review methodologies and theories in prior studies. The findings will result in the development of a research agenda for future studies.

The present study follows the procedures established by Cummings and Daellenbach (2009), and Cretchley, Rooney, and Gallois (2010) in utilizing a semantic analysis approach to identify relationships between themes and concepts in published articles and examine how they have changed over time. The present study also adopts best practice for conducting a systematic literature review as outlined by Short (2009),

and as utilized in recent review articles (see the process outlined by Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2012). These studies emphasize that a comprehensive and thorough review involves examining the body of relevant conceptual and empirical works in the field.

This study collected and created a database of HRM journal articles written between 1984 and 2013 that fit the Vietnamese context. In accordance with Short (2009) and Ucbasaran et al. (2012), the data collection process consisted of two steps: searching by using keywords and screening for relevant articles. In this study, keyword searches were undertaken on the titles, keywords, and abstracts of articles indexed with Business Source Complete (EBSCO Publishing), Web of Science (Thomson Reuters), Academic Research Premier (ESCOB Publishing), Emerald Fulltext, ProQuest Science Journals, and ProQuest Central databases. Keyword searches initially included “Vietnam,” “human resources,” and “industrial relations.” This first step produced a large number of journal articles and brief introductions of book chapters. For instance, there were 220 results in the Business Source Complete database and over 700 results in Emerald Fulltext. However, these results also included irrelevant articles that were not HRM studies conducted in Vietnam. Hence, the process moved to narrowing down the pool of relevant journal articles.

In the second step, we used screening criteria to decide which articles to include in the analysis after removing replicate and irrelevant articles in the database. We included articles which met one of the following characteristics: (1) the keywords were mentioned in the abstracts and were discussed in sufficient detail to contribute to the focus of the analysis; (2) the focus of HRM was on business (e.g., some articles that focused on HIV patients, war, vaccination, or natural resources were excluded); (3) articles offered some insight into the environment of the economy and business underlying HRM; (4) articles offered some insight into the movement of industrial relations (IR) and the investment in human capital in business management and macroeconomic management; and (5) articles offered some discussion on the development of research on HRM in Vietnam. In accordance with these criteria, we selected 100 relevant journal articles on HRM and industrial relations in Vietnam (see Appendix 1) for the analysis. We categorized these articles by title, abstract, and the full-text excluding references, into subsets of 10-year periods (1984–1993, 1994–2003, and 2004–2013), following others who used semantic analytical reviews (see Budhwar et al., 2016; Cretchley et al., 2010).

Semantic analysis using Leximancer technique

A semantic analysis provides a network map of the concepts and their relative co-occurrence frequencies. Specifically, a semantic network of concepts is scaled “using an asymmetric scaling algorithm, and made into a lattice by ranking concepts by their connectedness, or centrality” (Smith, 2003: 23). To examine the content of HRM research in Vietnam, this analysis approach was adopted to investigate themes and concepts in the collection of 100 articles. The present study used Leximancer (version 4, www.leximancer.com) for the semantic analysis as it provides the benefit of “transforming lexical-co-occurrence information from natural language into semantic patterns in an unsupervised manner” (Smith & Humphreys, 2006: 262). That is, words are identified and combined to form concepts (thematic analysis) and connectedness between concepts can be identified (semantic analysis) (Cretchley et al., 2010;

Verreynne, Parker, & Wilson, 2011). Leximancer allows the researcher to count, provide statistical information, and text queries that are associated with the themes and concepts from the full-text (Smith & Humphreys, 2006) see (Appendix 2).

The validity and reliability of the analysis of themes and concepts in Leximancer are evaluated in two ways: by their stability and reproducibility. Stability is equivalent to intercede reliability (Cretchley et al., 2010; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Leximancer is highly consistent in the way it classifies text and identifies the relationship between concepts; the same result is produced no matter how many times a dataset is coded and recoded (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The concept maps are developed over several iterations to check for a stable concept configuration (Cretchley et al., 2010; Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

In this study, data cleaning was undertaken at each analytical step of the analyses in terms of merging plural and singular words (e.g., organization and organizations), and removing common function words and general terms (e.g., research, study, paper, etc.) from the concept seeds (Cretchley et al., 2010). We used Leximancer to analyze both the entire dataset and each decade individually. For the overall dataset, Leximancer identified where each decade was situated in relation to the overall landscape of the dataset. This approach allowed the researcher to examine the semantic focus of each decade and the changes over time (Smith & Humphreys, 2006; Verreynne et al., 2011).

The use of Leximancer in business research has increased due to its advantages that include researcher independence in the analysis and less time consumption. For instance, Martin and Rice (2007) applied Leximancer to assess enterprise risks in the computer industry. Cretchley et al. (2010) conducted a similar analysis to map themes and concepts that emerged in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* over 40 years. Cummings and Daellenbach (2009) undertook a study using Leximancer to identify themes and trends in the field of strategic management. Similarly, Leximancer produced distinctive concept maps that helped Verreynne et al. (2011) explore and compare perceptions of employees and managers on the interactions of human resources, employee capabilities, and firm performance.

Results

Analysis 1: An exploration of themes and concepts

Figure 1 presents five themes that emerged from the grounded analysis by decade. In order to distinguish themes and concepts, we identified concepts in italics and themes by capitalizing their first letter. Themes were arranged in descending rank order, with the most prominent theme, HRM, ranked as “1” followed by Economy, and the least prominent theme, Trade Unions, ranked as “5.”

Figure 1 shows the most important theme emerging from the studies was HRM (comprised of *HRM*, *HR practices*, *MNCs*, *POEs*, *SMEs*, *JVs*, *institutional environment*, *PM*, *SHRM*, *HR policies*, *business strategy*, and *traditional PM*). The darkest color of this theme shows that most studies between 1984 and 2013 focused on the topic of HRM. In terms of lines between concepts in this theme, HRM showed a close link to business strategy (*HRM* and *strategy*). In addition, a group of concepts in this theme showed that the selected studies examined different people management

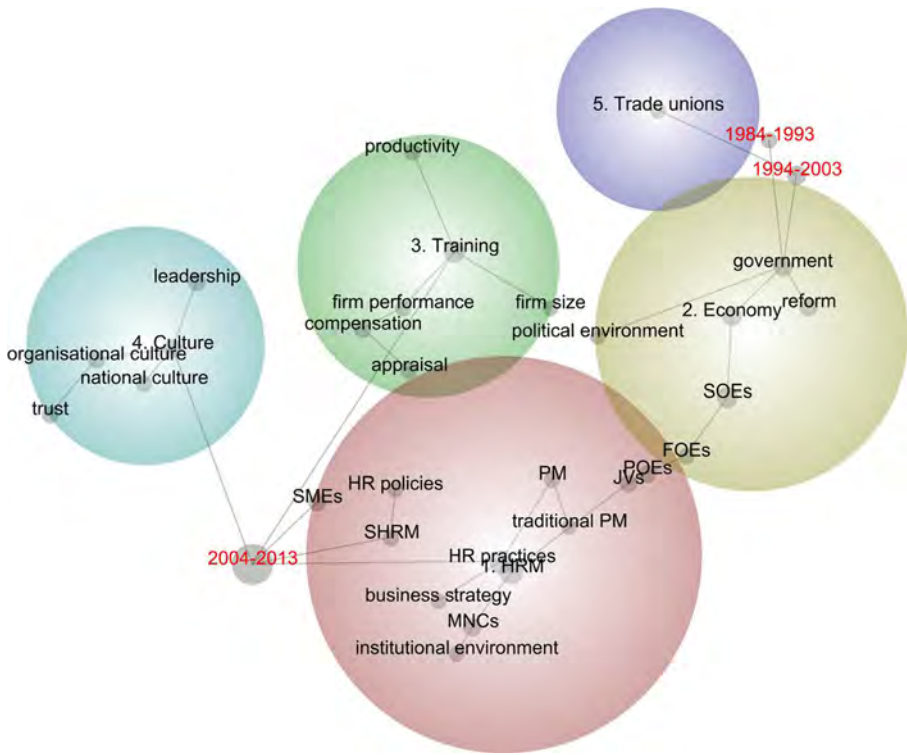


Fig. 1 Concept map of HRM research in Vietnam (1984–2013)

models existing in a variety of ownership types (*MNCs*, *POEs*, *SMEs*, and *JVs*). This theme illustrated the relationship between the institutional environment and *MNCs* (*MNCs* and *institutional environment*). Moreover, this theme contained different types of HRM: strategic HRM (*SHRM*), personnel management (*PM*), and traditional personnel management.

The second prominent theme was Economy (consisting of *SOEs*, *economy*, *government*, *reform*, *FOEs*, and *political environment*). Research on HRM in Vietnam blossomed following economic reform and resulted in significant changes in social life and the political environment. This theme illustrated that during the period under investigation, the government was linked to the economy and associated with the process of economic reform (*economy*, *government* and *reform*). In addition, the studies on HRM were interested in the presence of *FOEs* even though *SOEs* still dominated in the economy. Furthermore, a link between the political environment and the government was reflected in this theme (*political environment*).

Training (consisting of *firm size*, *firm performance*, *compensation*, *appraisal* and *productivity*) was ranked third in the concept map. Training is perceived as a way to change the behavior, knowledge and motivation of employees. The theme illustrated that between 1984 and 2013, training was linked to productivity. In addition, research on HRM in Vietnamese organizations found a relationship between training and firm performance, which was related to compensation. Moreover, prior HRM studies in Vietnam revealed a connection between appraisal and compensation.

The fourth important theme in this study was Culture (made up of *leadership*, *organizational culture*, *national culture* and *trust*). In the studies under review, culture included organizational culture and national culture. In addition, organizational culture was related to trust within organizations. Culture was also associated with leadership in this theme.

The last theme identified was Trade Unions (consisting of a single concept, *trade unions*). Trade unions received attention due to the influence of economic reform on the management of employment relations. After the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, trade unions evolved to represent the voice of employees in organizations.

Within a theme circle, the prominence of a concept is reflected visually by the “size” of its dot (Cretchley et al., 2010). Based on the size of the concept dots, Leximancer calculated the statistical importance of the concepts. The top three concepts were: *training* (10% relevance), *HRM* (8% relevance) and *HR practices* (8% relevance). Concepts such as *economy*, *SOEs* and *government* ranged between 4 and 6% of relevance.

The position of individual concepts and decades made it possible to determine the closeness of their semantic relationship to other concepts and decades. As shown in Fig. 2, *HRM* had a strong association with the period 2004–2013 and with most other concepts on the map. Specifically, *HRM* was most strongly connected with *HR practices* (100%), *traditional personnel management* (69%), and *personnel management (PM)* (48%). *HRM* was also connected to *institutional environment* and *business strategy*. This finding resulted in a starting point for further analyses.

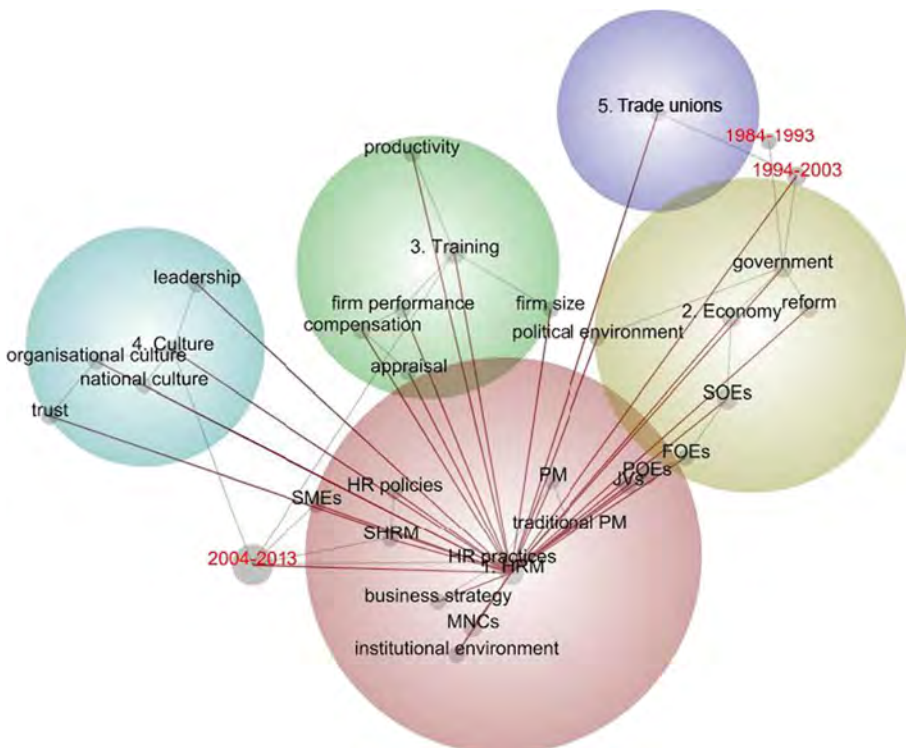


Fig. 2 The connection between the most prominent concept, *HRM*, and others identified by Leximancer

Analysis 2: A comparison of the development of HRM research in Vietnam by decades

Our second analysis used Insight Dashboard in the Leximancer software to analyze and compare the relative frequency and the strength between prominent concepts and decades. The relative frequency represents a conditional probability. The strength score is the reciprocal conditional probability. Strong concepts distinguish the given time period from others, and whether or not the concepts are mentioned frequently. The prominence scores that combine the strength and frequency are measures of the correlation between a specific period of time and given concepts.

The Quadrant Report (see Fig. 3) is comprised of four quadrants. The distribution of concepts in Quadrant 1 indicates that those concepts were seldom discussed but unique in the specific period. Concepts in Quadrant 2 were often mentioned and unique in the specific period. By contrast, the presence of concepts in Quadrant 3 shows that those concepts were often discussed but not unique in the specific period. Given concepts in Quadrant 4 were seldom discussed and not unique in the period.

Table 1 shows the ranking order of the concepts generated. *SOEs*, *government*, *reform* and *economy* were four common concepts in HRM articles published between 1986 and 2013. Furthermore, the first decade was strongly correlated with *government*

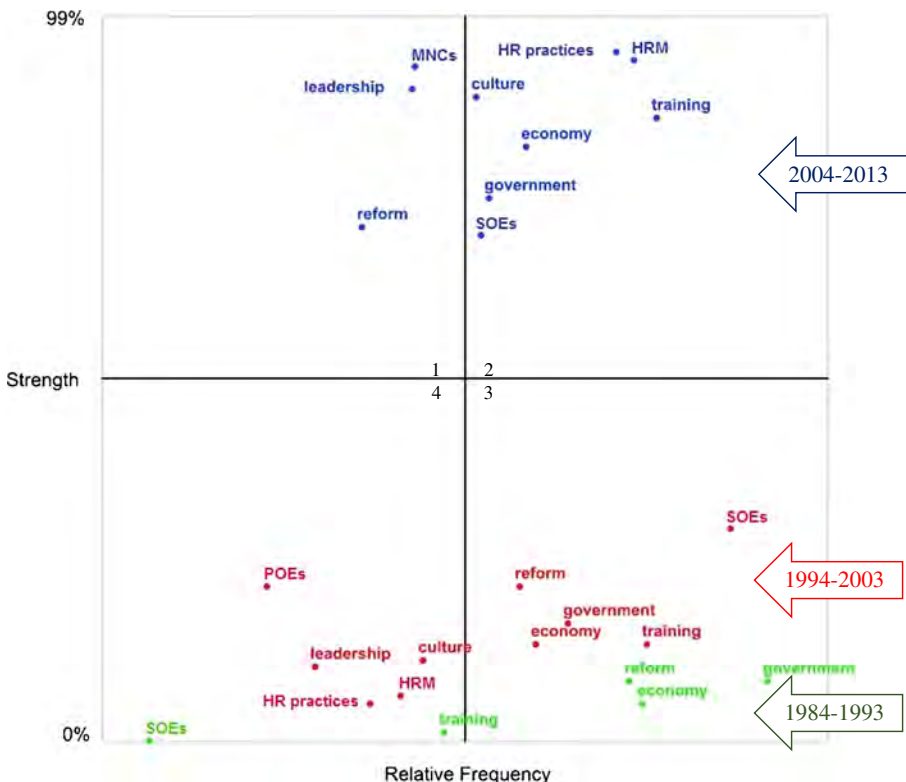








Fig. 3 Quadrant report by decades (1984–2013)

Table 1 Ranked concepts for categories (1984–2013)

Category:1984-1993				Category:1994-2003			
Concept	Rel Freq (%)	Strength (%)	Prominence	Concept	Rel Freq (%)	Strength (%)	Prominence
government	13	8	 2.7	SOEs	12	29	 2.2
reform	8	8	 2.4	POEs	2	21	 1.6
economy	8	5	 1.5	reform	5	21	 1.6
PM	1	4	 1.3	government	6	16	 1.2
compensation	1	1	 0.5	economy	5	13	 1.0
training	4	1	 0.4	training	8	13	 1.0
appraisal	< 1	1	 0.4	culture	3	11	 0.9
POEs	< 1	1	 0.3	leadership	2	10	 0.7
SOEs	1	< 1	 0.2	HRM	3	6	 0.5
MNCs	< 1	< 1	 0.1	HR practices	3	5	 0.4

Category:2004-2013			
Concept	Rel Freq (%)	Strength (%)	Prominence
HR practices	7	94	 1.1
HRM	8	93	 1.1
MNCs	3	92	 1.1
leadership	3	89	 1.1
culture	4	88	 1.1
training	9	85	 1.0
economy	5	81	 1.0
government	5	74	 0.9
reform	3	70	 0.9
SOEs	4	69	 0.8

(prominence score = 2.4) and *reform* (prominence score = 2.4). While *SOEs* was less likely to appear in the first and the last decades, this concept was most likely to appear in the decade 1994–2003 (prominence score = 2.2). The association between *economy* and three decades did not vary much. In addition, concepts such as *HR practices* and *HRM* were strongly important in the period 2004–2013 (94% strength; 93% strength).

Analysis 3: Relationship between contextual attributes and HRM development in Vietnam

The present study continuously analyzed the texts' embedded profiled concepts with regard to contextual attributes. Our anchoring of contextual attributes in this study was consistent with previous studies (Jackson & Schuler, 1995; Gooderham et al., 1999, Gooderham et al., 2006; Kostova & Roth, 2002), suggesting that such attributes could be identified into two groups: external and internal environment dimensions. Attributes of the external environment dimension were comprised of government, legal regulations, labor unions, political culture, political structure of a country, and ownership types. Attributes of the internal environment dimension consisted of firm size, perceptions of management, unionization, and economic interests of organizations. Table 2 provides examples of aggregated contextual attributes underlying the evolution of HRM in Vietnam. The contextual environment embedding the development of HRM in Vietnam is summarized in Fig. 4.

Analysis 4: Methodologies and theories applied in previous studies

Table 3 provides a summary of the methodologies applied in the published studies.

The analysis showed that studies published between 1986 and 2013 focused on different ownership types in Vietnam, such as state-owned organizations, privately owned enterprises, or foreign investment companies. Of the collected articles, 30% were conceptual studies that focused on reviewing the literature, 28% were qualitative studies that used case studies and interviews, and 42% were studies using a quantitative approach; however, only 24% of studies were quantitative research on HRM. In addition, of the sampled studies, 90% lacked clear indication that theories were used as a lens to solve research issues. In terms of quantitative research on HRM, 29.17% indicated theories had been used as a lens to develop the proposed models.

Discussion and implications

Budhwar et al. (2016) and Cooke (2017) suggested more systematic research on contextual conditions is necessary for HRM development in developing economies. In response to Budhwar et al. (2016) and Cooke (2017), our study had two main aims. The first aim of the present study was to take up this challenge by providing an updated and systematic understanding of the development of HRM in Vietnam over a 30-year period. The second aim of this study was to provide directions for future studies on HRM in Vietnam. This study uses Leximancer to semantically analyze 100 journal articles published between 1984 and 2013 to identify the state of HRM research, and found that it was associated with the changes in Vietnam's economic and institutional environments. The following sections discuss the theoretical implications and directions for future HRM research in this economy.

Table 2 Example of contextual underpinnings of the data

Leximancer-profiled concepts	Sample quotes	Themes	Contextual aggregated attributes	
			External environment	Internal environment
Government	<p>“The government continued its commitment to re-enforcing social stability and formalising the labour relations system by issuing a series of new policies.” (Collins et al., 2011: 366)</p> <p>“The government sees economic reform as a means to improve economic growth and living standards;... the government hopes that if people benefit from the reform, they will support the reform policy and, in return, the party-state will gain ‘legitimacy’ to rule society.” (Zhu et al., 2008: 173)</p> <p>“The government has sought to protect the traditional (or socialist) ideology, because they have no coherent organizational base.” (Collins et al., 2011: 366)</p>	<p>Labor policy and regulations</p> <p>Political environment</p> <p>Political environment</p>	<p>Legal regulations</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Political structure</p>	
Reform	<p>“A central aim of economic reform is to curtail centralised economic decision making.” (Zhu & Fahey, 1999: 176)</p> <p>“With the reform of the employment system, individual firms have gained the power to recruit their employees.” (Zhu & Fahey, 1999: 181)</p> <p>“Although the need for economic renewal is widely accepted, at this stage of reform, individual commitment to the traditional model of management still has strong political and social justification at the ideological level.” (Thang, 2003: 423)</p> <p>“Certainly, the central aim of economic reform is increasing the autonomy of enterprise management. The results are varied, but it seems that managers have enjoyed an increase in power.” (Zhu et al., 2007: 757)</p>	<p>Economic policy</p> <p>Labor policy and regulations</p> <p>Political and social influences</p> <p>Autonomy in organizational management</p>	<p>Economic interests of a country</p> <p>Legal regulations</p> <p>Political structure</p>	<p>Economic interests of organizations</p>
Economy	<p>“However, the process of reform, known as Doi Moi, has complex influences on enterprise management systems. Different ownership forms may lead to diverse organizational structures, policies, and relationships with internal and external stakeholders.” (Zhu et al., 2008: 158)</p> <p>“The second is to improve the understanding by actors in the economy, such as managers in state enterprises and in private businesses, of the appropriate behaviour and political stances which are most likely to elicit desired responses from the actors in the economy.” (Arkadie, 1993: 444)</p>	<p>Impact of ownership types on management practices</p> <p>Responsiveness to institutional environment</p>	<p>Ownership types</p> <p>Political structure</p>	

Table 2 (continued)

Leximancer-profiled concepts	Sample quotes	Themes	Contextual aggregated attributes	
			External environment	Internal environment
	<p>“The responsibilities of the trade unions were expanded from wages, bonuses, housing, medical care and treatment, public welfare in factories and localities, labour safety, social security, and the household economy.” (Zhu & Fahey, 2000: 289)</p> <p>“The case of Vietnam shows that there is a gradualist trend of transition with a pragmatic approach towards changes domestically (e.g. labour market) and challenges internationally (e.g. the Asia crisis). Under the process of globalization, a small economy like Vietnam cannot afford to lose its control of key strategic matters that determine the survival of the economy, institutions and national sovereignty.” (Zhu, 2005: 1274)</p> <p>“In emerging economies like Vietnam, traditional cultural and value systems and the political and legal environments such as the ‘socialist market economy’ could have a profound influence on the adoption and use of a unique people management system.” (Zhu & Verstraeten, 2013: 3)</p>	<p>Responsibilities of trade unions</p> <p>State economic control</p> <p>Political and cultural influences on the adoption of HRM</p> <p>Institutional constraints to the adoption of HRM</p>	<p>Labor unions</p> <p>Government, labor market</p> <p>Political culture</p> <p>Political structure</p>	
Personnel management (PM)	<p>“However, historical and ideological barriers sometimes discourage the adaptation of new systems, such as the lack of strategic role for HR manager and the absence of active employee participation in traditional Vietnamese firms. Traditional personnel management still plays a crucial role among the majority of enterprises in which control is more important than empowerment of human resources.” (Zhu, 2002: 133)</p> <p>“Broadly, SOEs still largely practice traditional personnel management, IIVs practice cost-focused HRM and private firms experiment with a range of innovations in HRM.” (Bartram et al., 2009: 891)</p>	<p>Ownership types on the adoption of HRM</p> <p>Perceptions of management</p>	<p>Ownership types</p>	<p>Perceptions of management</p>
Training	<p>“The strategic role of the HR department should be recognized by the management in providing appropriate resources and responsibility to the department.” (Quang & Dung, 1998: 96)</p> <p>“Unionized and export companies showed a lower degree on this dimension [training and development] than their respective counterparts.” (Thang & Quang, 2005b: 1840).</p>	<p>Unionization influences on the adoption of HRM</p>		<p>Unionization</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Leximancer-profiled concepts	Sample quotes	Themes	Contextual aggregated attributes	
			External environment	Internal environment
	<p>“The results revealed that the larger the companies, the higher degree of application of performance management and training and development.” (Thang & Quang, 2005b: 1840).</p> <p>“They [FIEs] adopt a more cooperative strategy to cope with the requirements of the host country and pay more attention to providing appropriate working conditions and training for their employees.” (Nguyen et al., 2011: 113)</p> <p>“The paper also presents significant challenges for the related governments that need to provide and manage formal training, as well as to enhance the capabilities of local enterprises in providing training for their employees on an ongoing basis.” (Nguyen et al., 2011: 116)</p>	<p>Firm size on the adoption of HRM</p> <p>Ownership types on the adoption of HRM</p> <p>Government’s involvement</p>	<p>Ownership types</p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Firm size</p>
HRM	<p>“The influences of cultural tradition and the political environment (as a socialist state and its legislation) are crucial determining factors for organizations to adopt certain HRM dimensions.” (Zhu, 2005: 1274)</p> <p>“Globalization generates the environment for organizations to adopt some international standardized HRM dimensions, though such development is uneven among the different companies and modification is inevitable.” (Zhu, 2005: 1274)</p> <p>“The HR department’s learning orientation seemed stifled as managers relied heavily on government regulation and guidance, and used either a universal common-sense approach to management, or ‘trial and error’, copying and testing ideas from other organizations and industries in a haphazard and eclectic way.” (Vo & Bartram, 2012: 3771)</p>	<p>Political and cultural influences on the adoption of HRM</p> <p>Globalization influences</p> <p>Government’s regulations</p>	<p>Political culture</p> <p>Economic interests of a country</p> <p>Legal regulations</p>	

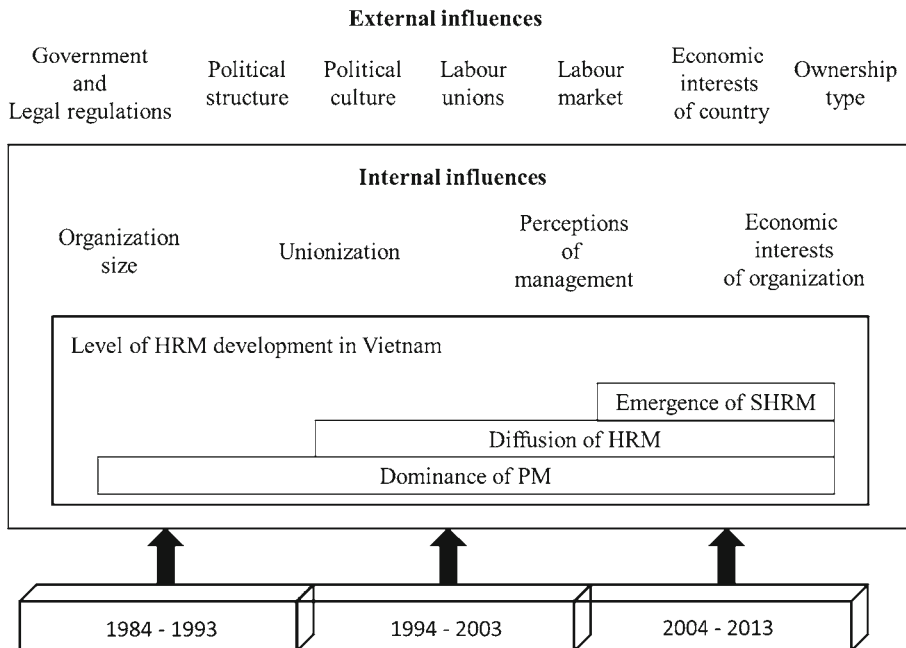


Fig. 4 Embeddedness of contextual environment of HRM evolution in Vietnam

The state of HRM development in Vietnam

At the macro or national level, a number of studies adopted an institutional lens to explain the convergence and divergence of organizational structures, behaviors, and HR practices among countries (Aycan, 2005; Gooderham et al., 2006; Sparrow, Schuler, & Jackson, 1994). At the micro or organizational level, other studies applied institutional theory to investigate the adoption of HR practices in the foreign-owned subsidiaries of multinational companies in host economies (Bjorkman et al., 2007; Fey, Morgulis-Yakushev, Park, & Bjorkman, 2009). The utilization of institutional theory as a theoretical lens in our study helped in the systematic analysis of how HRM develops in a specific context. Despite a prior review on the development of HRM in Vietnam, the current study contributes to the extant literature by providing a logical, consistent, and coherent understanding of the current state of HRM in Vietnam by identifying and summarizing changes in prior studies conducted in the last 30 years.

In particular, our study affirms that the development of HRM in Vietnam has been in response to the country's economic development and institutional changes as identified in our analysis. In the period 1984–1993, the government focused on building management capacity for government officials. This concentration led to the need to improve the compensation system and training activities as well as the efficient performance of the reformed public administration (Arkadie, 1993). Changes in terms of the laws for foreign investments and privately owned companies encouraged an awareness of the value of human resources. However, this period was also a transitional period between a centrally planned system and a market-oriented economy. Thus, there was little evidence in the academic research or empirical studies within this period of

Table 3 Methods and theories applied in previous studies

Period	Study	Review	Qualitative	Quantitative	Theory applied in previous studies	Ownership types of studied organizations
1984–1993	Arkadie (1993)	✓				
	Riedel (1993)		✓			
1994–2003	Dollar (1994)	✓				
	Curry (1996)	✓				
	Quang, Swierczek, and Chi (1998)			✓	Not specific	JVs
	Thant and Than (1998)	✓				
	Quang and Dung (1998)			✓	Not specific	SOEs
	Zhu and Fahey (1999)	✓				
2004–2013	Berrel, Wright, and Hoa (1999)		✓			
	McDaniel, Schermerhorn, and Cuoc (1999)	✓				
	Zhu and Fahey (2000)	✓				
	Kamoche (2001)		✓			
	Zhu (2002)	✓				
	Thang (2003)	✓				
	Laverack and Dap (2003)	✓				
	Thang and Bryant (2004)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Hsieh et al. (2004)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Glewwe and Jacoby (2004)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
2004–2013	Deshpande, Farley, and Bowman (2004)			✓	Not specific	SOEs and JVs
	Neupert, Baughn, and Dao (2005)		✓			
	Napier (2005)		✓			
	Thang and Quang (2005a)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, FOEs, EQCs, POEs

Table 3 (continued)

Period	Study	Review	Qualitative	Quantitative	Theory applied in previous studies	Ownership types of studied organizations
	Thang and Quang (2005b)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, FOEs, EQCs, POEs
	Zhu (2005)		✓			
	Hoang, Igel, and Laosirihongthong (2005)			✓	Not specific	FOEs, JVs, SOEs, POEs
	Omishi and Bliss (2006)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	King-Kaunui, Ngoc, and Ashley-Coteleur (2006)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Thuy and Swierczek (2006)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, POEs, FOEs, JVs
	Clarke (2006)	✓				
	Tran (2007)		✓			
	Clarke, Lee, and Chi (2007)	✓				
	Zhu, Warner, and Rowley (2007)	✓				
	Bodolica and Waxin (2007)		✓			
	Thang, Rowley, Quang, and Warner (2007)	✓				
	Truong and Quang (2007)				Psychological contract	Not specific
	Thang and Quang (2007)	✓				
	Zhu, Collins, Webber, and Benson (2008)		✓			
	Moc (2008)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Ngoc (2008a)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Tuang and Stringer (2008)		✓			
	Ngoc (2008b)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Thang, Buyens, and Leuven (2008)			✓	Contingency theory	Not specific
	Vo (2009)		✓			
	Clarke and Pringle (2009)	✓				
	Cheng and Lin (2009)			✓	Not specific	FOEs

Table 3 (continued)

Period	Study	Review	Qualitative	Quantitative	Theory applied in previous studies	Ownership types of studied organizations
	Bartram, Stanton, and Thomas (2009)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, JVs, POEs
	Anh and Swierczek (2009)			✓	Not specific	POEs
	Thu, Wiboonchutikulala, and Tubtimtong (2010)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Leung (2010)	✓				
	Quang, van der Heijden, and Rowley (2010)	✓				
	Nam, Sonobe, and Otsuka (2010)		✓			
	Manning (2010)	✓				
	Vo and Rowley (2010)		✓			
	Froese, Vo, and Garrett (2010)			✓	Country of origin image theory	FOEs
	Dong, Liem, and Grossman (2010)			✓	Theory of reasoned action	Not specific
	Oh, Nga, and Bruce (2011)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Anh and Cuong (2011)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Thang, Quang, and Buyens (2011)	✓				
	Caldwell, Truong, Link, and Tuan (2011)	✓				
	Vo and Stanton (2011)		✓			
	Larsen, Rand, and Torm (2011)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Pham (2011)	✓				
	Collins (2011)	✓				
	Thang and Quang (2011)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Tuan (2011)	✓				
	Baughn, Neupert, Anh, and Hang (2011)			✓	Social capital theory	JVs
	Collins, Nankervis, Sitalaksmi, and Warner (2011)	✓				
	Fincher (2011)		✓			

Table 3 (continued)

Period	Study	Review	Qualitative	Quantitative	Theory applied in previous studies	Ownership types of studied organizations
	Tho and Trang (2011)			✓	Human capital theory	SOEs, JVs, POEs, JSs
	Napier and Hoang (2011)	✓				
	Vo and Hammif (2011)		✓			
	Boh, Nguyen, and Xu (2012)			✓	Not specific	FOEs
	Tuan (2012a)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, POEs, FOEs, JVs
	Wang and Tran (2012)			✓	Not specific	
	Cooke and Lin (2012)		✓			
	Shultz (2012)	✓				
	Paswan and Trang (2012)	✓				
	Vo and Bartram (2012)		✓			
	Tuan (2012b)			✓	Not specific	JVs
	Vo and Hammif (2012)		✓			
	Tuan (2012c)		✓			
	Kim, Fross, and Cox (2012)			✓	Person-organization fit theory	FOEs
	Tuan and Ngoc (2012)			✓	Not specific	Not specific
	Tuan (2012d)		✓			
	Tri (2012)		✓			
	Prota and Beresford (2012)			✓	Social network theory	Not specific
	Santarelli and Tran (2012)			✓	Knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship	Not specific
	Zhu and Verstraetan (2013)			✓	Not specific	FOEs, JVs, SOEs, POEs
	Nguyen, Felfé, and Fookien (2013)			✓	Not specific	FOEs
	Vo and Warner (2013)		✓		Not specific	

Table 3 (continued)

Period	Study	Review	Qualitative	Quantitative	Theory applied in previous studies	Ownership types of studied organizations
	Warner (2013)	✓		✓	Not specific	SOEs, POEs, FOEs, JVs
	Tuan (2013a)		✓			
	Chi (2013)		✓			
	Van Gramberg, Teicher, and Nguyen (2013)		✓			
	MacIntosh (2013)		✓			
	Tuan (2013b)			✓	Not specific	SOEs, POEs, FOEs, JVs
	Nguyen, Teo, and Mylett (2013)		✓			
	Santarelli and Tran (2013)			✓	Human capital theory, social capital theory	Not specific
	Collins, Sitalaksmi, and Lansbury (2013)		✓			
	Montague (2013)	✓				

the emergence of HRM and SHRM, research in this period tended to concentrate on training and compensation (Truong & van der Heijden, 2009; Zhu et al., 2008).

In the following decade (1994–2003), economic developments, changes in legislations, and lessons learned from the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 put pressure on local organizations to utilize human resources in order to survive in local and international markets (Zhu & Fahey, 1999, 2000; Zhu et al., 2007). These demands and changes made Vietnamese organizations realize there was a need to transform traditional personnel management into an effective function. The increasing presence of foreign investment enterprises and the membership of regional business associations such as ASEAN and AFTA resulted in knowledge transferability and the introduction of the Western concepts and philosophies of HRM to local organizations (Zhu, 2002, 2005). Findings show that together with the existence of traditional personnel management, knowledge of HRM began to emerge through the increasing number of HRM studies in Vietnam. Research on HRM in Vietnam started to pay attention to investigating the adoption of HR practices that could add value in their strategic implementation. For instance, training and development were found to motivate working spirit and employee behaviors that supported strategic achievement (Kamoche, 2001; Zhu, 2002; Zhu et al., 2007).

In the most recent decade (2004–2013), the most prominent concept, *HRM*, reflects how important HRM has become for both the country's and organizations' competitiveness, and the increasing scrutiny of this concept in Vietnam (Bartram et al., 2009; Quang, van der Heijden, & Rowley, 2010). This finding is partially consistent with arguments concerning SHRM in Western economies in the 1990s that HRM needed to shift from an administrative focus to an integration with an organization's business strategy (Storey, 2007; Walker, 1992). Research findings can be explained by the institutional and economic situations in this period. For instance, the implementation of new business-related laws, becoming a member of the WTO, and the strategy of the government promoted the rise of foreign investments, international education collaborations, and international competition between local and foreign investment organizations for a pool of highly qualified workers (The World Bank, 2012; Zhu, 2002, 2005). The current economic situation has resulted in the transferability of HRM and SHRM scholarships from Western economies. Local organizations have had a chance to learn and gradually adopt more advanced and professional people management practices when international competition requires a full integration of HRM into organizations' business strategies (Bartram et al., 2009; Thang & Quang, 2005b; Zhu et al., 2008).

Directions for future research

Our findings reiterate that the utilization of institutional theory is critical to reflect the contextual underpinnings of research in a certain context. Specifically, the findings in this study show that the development of HRM in Vietnam has been influenced by the country's economic development and institutional conditions. Some changes, for instance, new technologies, globalization, and the growth of knowledge work, have occurred in Western economies. These changes have meant Western organizations acknowledge the importance of human capital in the success of organizations (Hayton, Piperopoulos, & Welbourne, 2011; Lawler, 2011; Welbourne, 2012). These global changes have also influenced the Vietnamese economy such as when Vietnam joined the international market and the government urged Vietnamese organizations to

invest in intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, skills and the abilities of human resources) to be more competitive (The World Bank, 2012). The present study lends support to the argument that institutional forces are key indicators leading to changes in managing people in organizations (Budhwar et al., 2016; Gooderham et al., 1999). Based on the findings, we propose several research directions for future studies on HRM in Vietnam.

Theme 1: Human resource management

Budhwar et al. (2016) pointed out the influences of global forces, and institutional, political, and economic contextual conditions on the development of HRM in Asian countries. As most existing theories of management and organizational studies are based on the conditions and empirical data of Western economies, researchers have argued that Asian economies' contextual conditions may make Western concepts or theories irrelevant and therefore not able to be adopted (Meyer, 2007; Tsui, 2007). For instance, the deep cultural and institutional differences between Asia and the West make it difficult for the implementation of HRM systems in multinational companies' subsidiaries in China (e.g., Paik, Chow, & Vance, 2011). The current combination of personnel management, HRM, and the introduction of SHRM in Vietnam creates a dilemma for HR managers in choosing an approach for the development of HRM systems in their organizations. Thus, we suggest that future studies need to examine the factors leading to the effectiveness of the implementation of Western approaches to HRM systems in Vietnam. In addition, there is a need for the development of indigenous research in the Asian context in order to revise, modify, or enrich the extant literature (Budhwar et al., 2016; March, 2005). As a connection between contextual conditions and HRM development in Vietnam has been found in prior and current studies, we suggest an examination of country-specific HRM approaches and localized HRM constructs and practices reflecting Vietnam's distinctive contextual values.

Because HRM is seen as a key factor in creating the sustained competitive advantage of an organization (Bartram et al., 2009; Truong & van der Heijden, 2009), it is critical for future HRM studies in Vietnam to answer the questions of "what" and "how" HRM can add value in the organization. Our review showed that previous studies on HRM in Vietnam can be described as at the "practice-focused" stage (Truong & van der Heijden, 2009). Thus, traditional HRM topics related to the application of HRM practices, such as recruitment, selection, compensation, and training in a variety of organizational types, are common (e.g., Thang & Quang, 2005b; Zhu et al., 2008). However, previous studies examining such HR practices in Vietnamese organizations have not identified if these practices were intended or implemented in the HRM-performance relationship (see the discussion in Guest, 2011; Khilji & Wang, 2006). The literature demonstrates that high performing organizations are characterized by the effectiveness of implemented HR practices (Guest & Conway, 2011; Posthuma et al., 2013). Therefore, an investigation of "actual" implemented HR practices could lead to a better understanding of sustainable performance in Vietnamese organizations (Huselid, 1995; Khilji & Wang, 2006). Also, as prior studies have conceptually addressed the contextual conditions underlying the adoption of HR practices (see Thang et al., 2005b; Zhu & Verstraetan, 2013), future studies can quantify the influences of institutional and economic conditions and challenges on the effectiveness of HRM implementation and their effect on organizational performance in Vietnamese organizations (see Budhwar et al., 2016).

Ownership type has an influence on the adoption of HR practices in a certain environment (Gooderham et al., 1999; Zhu et al., 2008). The findings of this study show that different ownership types have been recognized in HRM studies in Vietnam. However, we argue that prior studies have mainly treated ownership types as a criterion for the comparison of HRM adoption. We suggest that future studies measure the moderating effect of ownership types when they “not only encompass the influences of external and internal factors to the firm, but they also represent interacting systems of factors that are relevant to the way management practices operate” (Ngo, Lau, & Foley, 2008: 76). Budhwar et al. (2016) discussed the influence of institutional and economic contexts on the adoption of HRM, and we suggest future studies on HRM in Vietnam should examine the main factors contributing to the effectiveness of the implementation of Western HRM approaches in subsidiaries of multinational companies in Vietnam. Moreover, Vietnam’s private sector is an important area for the improvement of living standards and the job landscape (The World Bank, 2015). Future studies should focus on HRM adoption in the private sector area, including small and medium-sized enterprises, as this area has not received much attention with the exception of the study of Thang and Bryant (2004).

As previously argued, context conditions play an important role in the success or failure of organizations in a specific environment (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Scott, 2008). This notion has led to a proliferation of studies applying institutional perspective to examine the diffusion of HRM in MNC subsidiaries located in a foreign country (Bjorkman et al., 2007; Lawler et al., 2011). Although institutional theory highlights the perspective of isomorphism of management practices across organizations, the adoption of HRM is not likely to be identical across MNC subsidiaries in the same host country or the same region (Bjorkman et al., 2007; Budhwar et al., 2016). MNC subsidiaries have found it difficult and challenging in implementing their HRM systems in host countries due to the constraints of cognitive and normative processes of the host institutional environments (Bjorkman et al., 2007; Kostova & Roth, 2002). As MNCs play an important role in Vietnam’s economic system, there remain few studies focusing on MNCs in Vietnam (e.g., Vo & Hannif, 2012; Vo & Stanton, 2011). We suggest that research be undertaken to explore the thesis of convergence-divergence of HRM by MNCs by understanding the influence of institutional context (Budhwar et al., 2016; Cooke, 2017).

Our study shows that there is a dominance of personnel management in line with the diffusion of HRM and the emergence of SHRM in Vietnam; therefore, future studies should look beyond the transferability of personnel management to HRM and SHRM. The study also shows that like other Western economies, there is a connection between HRM and business strategy. Future research can focus on issues facing the HRM function in Vietnam such as how HRM performs as a business partner in Vietnamese organizations including their strategic orientation, roles, competencies, and contribution to strategic planning and organizational effectiveness. Our study found that most prior studies have not clearly specified the theoretical lens to examine the research problems and that the majority of studies have used a qualitative approach. Therefore, a well-developed theoretical framework of HRM and the use of a quantitative approach in future studies will be useful and important for researchers, HR practitioners, and HR departments in measuring the strategic contribution of HRM in the overall performance of Vietnamese organizations. These findings and suggestions in our study are consistent with Budhwar et al.’s (2016) recommendations for future HRM research in the Asian Pacific region.

Theme 2: Training and development

With regard to the macro level, institutional theory addresses the important role of the government in structuring mechanisms to link economic development and skill formation/development (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2008). Finegold and Soskice (1988) argued that training and development play a critical role for a country in terms of international competitiveness. A country requires a competent workforce capable of rapid adjustments and the development of technology and innovative products. A failure in training and development results in a poor quality of products that is associated with poor economic development (Finegold & Soskice, 1988).

A competent workforce will help the country be more competitive with other overseas economies and sustain the economic development of Vietnam. Currently, the education and training system in Vietnam has brought about a lot of changes and innovations in order to increase the number of skilled employees. However, Trung and Swierczek (2009) stated that skill development in higher education still focuses on explicit knowledge without concern for the needs of employers. This circumstance has led to low-level commitment to skill development in Vietnamese universities (Trung & Swierczek, 2009). The slow process of change management and discipline development in universities and colleges has resulted in dissatisfaction with the requirements of economic and social growth in terms of industrialization and modernization. Thus, Vietnam's education system has not contributed to improving the quality of human resources that is considered as the country's strength in global competition (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2014).

Based on prominent arguments, we suggest directions for future studies with a focus on training and skill formation at the macro level, which is important for policy makers, educational institutions, and labor-use organizations to bridge the gap between skill demand and supply. Specifically, future studies should make an effort to examine the integration of the strategy of creating a competent workforce and the development of skill-delivered curriculums in education and tertiary institutions. Moreover, scholars could examine the role of political systems in crafting the policies necessary for skill development and formation in universities and colleges. Future studies also could investigate the roles and interrelations of all agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and Training, educational institutions, and enterprises in Vietnam involved in training and skill formation within the country's workforce. As Vietnam has a large number of international education collaborations and international education institutions, future studies could examine the effectiveness of the current international collaborations and foreign tertiary programs in relation to the field of skill formation/development. Such empirical evidence at the macro level would guide the government and all agencies involved in skill formation to develop effective policies and practices that would create the workforce needed for Vietnam to compete successfully with overseas countries and sustain its economic performance in an era of global competition.

Economic development and global competition have focused interest in finding ways to maximize the productivity and performance of an organization via a qualified workforce (Bae & Rowley, 2004; Barney, 2001; Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, & Allen, 2005). Training and development plays a key role in creating, maintaining, and sustaining an organization's competitive advantage (Becker, Huselid, & Ulrich, 2001;

Zhu et al., 2008). Thus, it is not surprising to find that training is one of the main themes found in this study. Yet, prior studies on HRM in Vietnam have primarily focused on types of training or the link between training and firm performance (e.g., Thang & Quang, 2005b; Thang & Quang, 2011). We suggest that future research can examine the determinants of effective training activities in organizations. In addition, as human capital is a critical strategic resource for sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 2001; Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011), future research could consider the integration of institutional theory and human capital theory to examine the role of institutional factors, such as changes in the labor legislation and the labor market, or the presence of foreign investment companies, in developing core competence and workplace skills needed in Vietnam's economic development. Moreover, future studies should explore strategies that focus on the demands for training, the provision of training, the retention of talent, and the impact of training on firm performance that HR managers could use to attract and retain talent (Budhwar et al., 2016). Finally, an organization is likely to deal with the roles and influence of professional associations on organizational practices as organizations have to conform to expectations of these associations to gain legitimacy (Boon et al., 2009; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Professional associations in the institutional perspective are related to universities and professional training institutes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). These associations have played an important role in the development of organizational ethics, standards, and norms among qualified managers and staff specialists, and exterior consultants who have formal education and training (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). Future studies should explore the roles and impact of professional associations and the challenges they face in the transfer of management knowledge and practices towards human capital development in organizations.

Theme 3: Important influences on HRM: Trade unions, culture, and economy

Collins et al. (2011) argued that the role of the government is important in terms of changes to the industrial relations system. With regard to economic development and changes in political and social environments, trade unions in Vietnam are expected to increase in influence as their role in employee representation increases (Collins, Sitalaksmi, & Lansbury, 2013). However, although a trade union is perceived to be an influential actor in organizational management, the remaining low level of competencies of trade union representatives has created constraints for the involvement of trade unions in managing human resources (National Congress of Vietnam, 2011). In addition, trade unions in enterprises work closely with the management and top union positions are held by senior executives and managers (Van Gramberg, Teicher, & Nguyen, 2013). This situation makes it difficult to fulfil the role of a worker's representative. In addition, the number of strikes has increased rapidly over the 2000s, reaching a peak of over 900 in 2011. This circumstance indicates the underdevelopment of other mechanisms to resolve work disputes (The World Bank, 2015). The lack of worker confidence in unions, un-developed dispute-resolution processes, and the ignorance of trade union's involvement have resulted in the current challenges faced by trade unions (The World Bank, 2015). Thus, it is important to clarify the roles and responsibilities of trade unions in order to develop formal procedures and the competencies of union representatives in labor dispute resolutions (The World Bank,

2015). Future studies should continue to focus on prominent problems with Vietnam's industrial relations system in order to assist the trade unions in effectively performing their roles in organizations. In addition, unionization has been found to be associated with HRM and the status of the HR department (De Winnie, Delmotte, Gilbert, & Sels, 2013; Galang & Ferris, 1997); future studies can examine whether unionization in Vietnamese organizations has an impact on the performance of the HR department and the implementation of HR practices in relation to organizational effectiveness.

The current study found that culture and economy are other important themes. Vietnam's cultural values are a mixture of Chinese, Western, and socialist values. That is, Vietnamese organizations reflect the country's cultural values in management practices, such as grassroots democracy, delegation (American), egalitarianism, and collective decisions and responsibility (socialism). These values make Vietnamese culture different from that of other countries and require foreign organizations operating in Vietnam to localize their managerial philosophies and practices (Quang & Thang, 2004; Zhu et al., 2008). Although previous studies have discussed the relationship between HRM and culture or economy (Quang & Thang, 2004; Thang, Rowley, Quang, & Warner, 2007), there has been no study which empirically examines how multinational companies' HR departments in Vietnam can effectively institutionalize or localize Western HR policies and practices under the impact of Vietnam's traditional cultural values, norms, and beliefs held by Vietnamese employees.

Vietnam has high power distance that is reflected in management structures and interrelationships within organizations (Quang & Thang, 2004). People in high power distance contexts are likely to accept overqualified tasks or those that fall outside their job descriptions and perceive superiors' abuse of power and unfair treatment as legitimately within their authority and reflective of their managerial levels (Loh, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2010; Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003). The culture of respect for seniority together with high power distance leads to centralized decision making and practices that focus on control and a lack of authority delegation (Debroux et al., 2012). Such practices may fertilize negative behaviors and undesirable outcomes in terms of psychological health and safety because employees have deference for power and authority distribution and acceptance of unfair treatment (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Moreover, globalization has created rapid changes, turbulence, and uncertainties in the internal labor markets in relation to social connections, political contacts, religion, and economic power (Smith et al., 2012). These circumstances create challenges for the HR department to develop HR practices that ensure work-life balance and an increasingly positive emotional-cognitive experience of work and organizational citizenship behaviors. Thus, future studies can examine how the HR department can design new strategies for the development of effective HRM systems under these prominent challenges.

Limitations

This study showed the evolution of HRM research in Vietnam over the past 30 years by using a semantic analytical approach. The database of published academic articles could possibly be a limitation because other sources (such as books or unpublished monographs) could provide more information related to the business context and the practice of HRM in Vietnam. Thus, future studies should expand the collection of these

sources to provide an understanding of the practice of HRM in Vietnam. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the use of Leximancer, which generates themes and concepts from the text, was unable to show the causal relationships between concepts based on a specific theoretical framework. However, the use of Leximancer in this study was still useful in providing semantic results from this limitation. This particular technique has been used in a number of published studies (e.g., Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009; Verreynne et al., 2011), especially when the aim of the study has been to identify the evolution of a concept over time.

Conclusion

Our aim has been to contribute to the current literature a systematic and semantic review of the HRM department and the current state of HRM research in Vietnam. We have also provided a number of directions for future HRM studies in relation to changes in Vietnam's economic developments and institutional changes. In this study, we have shown that institutional theory as a theoretical lens is important for understanding the development of HRM in a specific context. We argued that an assessment of the historical and economical context and developments of HRM are essential to identify challenges for the HRM function and to understand the extent to which HRM has been adopted in organizations in Vietnam. Our study has responded to the need to provide context into HRM research by examining the development of HRM in Vietnam over the last 30 years. This study has provided an updated and semantic review of HRM development and HRM research in line with economic development stages and institutional changes in the last 30 years. Based on the findings, we have suggested some directions for future research that will make significant contributions to the knowledge of HRM in developing economies.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

In Leximancer, similar concepts tend to settle together in close proximity by coding concepts that co-occur often within the same two-sentence block. In this study, concepts were created for each decade without a relational force imposed in the overall analysis (Cretchley et al., 2010). This allowed the addition of details regarding the conceptual nature of each period for comparative purposes. Clusters of concepts are then grouped by theme circles and a concept map is generated. Each theme is identified by the most prominent concept in that group which is indicated by the largest dot in the theme cluster (Cretchley et al., 2010). The shading of the theme reflects the frequency with which concepts within the theme appear in the texts. The darker a circle, the more frequently that concept occurs overall. Closeness in the map refers to the extent to which two or more concepts appear frequently in similar contexts (adjacent sentences in abstracts). The centrality of a concept within a map refers to how often it co-occurs with many of the other prominent concepts (Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009). The concept map, ranked concept list, Insight Dashboard and text query options help the researcher to understand their relationships (Cretchley et al., 2010).

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Diep Thi Ngoc Nguyen (PhD, Auckland University of Technology) is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University, Australia. Diep completed her Master's of Commerce Honours from the Western Sydney University. She is currently undertaking research into strategic HRM (specifically, the roles and influence of HR departments) and workplace bullying in Vietnam. Her research has been published in the *Journal of General Management*, *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, *Public Management Review*, and the Best Paper Proceedings of the 2017 Academy of Management Conference.

Stephen T. T. Teo (PhD, Queensland University of Technology) is a Professor of work and performance at Edith Cowan University, Australia. Stephen has held various leadership roles in universities in Australia and New Zealand. He is currently examining stress and productivity in the healthcare sectors in Australia and New Zealand. He has published in journals such as the *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, and *Public Management Review*.

Marcus Ho (PhD, University of Auckland) is a Senior Lecturer at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Marcus is the co-leader of Wellbeing and Performance Research Group in the New Zealand Work Research Institute. He is currently examining strategic human resource management, entrepreneurship, and organizational resilience in New Zealand. He has published in journals such as the *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, *Project Management Journal*, and *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.