Chapter IV

Research Methodology
In order to align the objectives set for the research study in a systematic and scientific manner, an attempt has been made in this chapter to define the sampling and population characteristics. This chapter also highlights the sample group of industries, including the methodology, population and sample, questionnaire design and classification, validity and reliability data collection hypotheses, and statistical analysis. Pre test was used to ensure reliability and validity to include the questionnaire scales for Importance & Performance.

In this section, the five hypotheses formulated for this study are discussed. The hypotheses explored the relationship between factors that impact Strategic Human Resources Planning. Several tests were performed, and many tests were done from each hypothesis. The application of Systems Thinking was derived from the degree to which a holistic approach to various parameters of SHRP was utilized.

4.1.1 Population and sample:

The population for this research consisted of Economic Times (ET) 500 corporations and who were listed on BSE/NSE (Bombay Stock Exchange/ National Stock Exchange). The criteria for inclusion in the population are:

1) That the organization be large enough to have a functional human resources management department or a unit headed by a senior management member and have full-time human resources officers with anyone of the following titles: Director of Human Resources, Vice President of Personnel, or other similar titles. Small organizations may not have an active function under the direction of a human resources management professional. 2) The organizations are large enough to have major functional heads like CFO (Chief Financial Officer) and CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) or a unit headed by a senior management member with any one of the following titles: Director of Human Resources, Vice President of Personnel, or other similar titles. 3) Employee strength was in excess of 3000. Small organizations below the workforce of 3000 employees were not included due to the possibility of not having functional Heads and a very well defined Organizations Structure and reporting mechanism. 4) That the organization be in India and be faced with a competitive environment, where, typically, strategic planning would be practiced. 5) The organizations included only private sector companies.
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The questionnaire was sent to 150 professionals of which 130 of them responded, thus 4550 responses (35 questions x 130 respondents) were received for statistical analysis. The population for this research consisted of 27 Corporates having a workforce of more than 3000 employees.

In order to permit identification of the responding corporations, each questionnaire was numbered and coded. The coding system was numerical which helped the researcher to identify to which firms questionnaires were sent. There was a space at the right top corner of each questionnaire where the code was recorded. To obtain a sufficient number of responses for statistical analyses, a follow up letter was sent to those who had not responded within 3 weeks of the initial mailing.

4.1.2 Brief description of sample groups of Industries.

The sample consisted of large Indian conglomerates, large Indian companies, MNC’s in India. All the companies in the sample had minimum employee strength of 3000 and the maximum of 62,300.

4.2.1 Procedure of Data Collection:

Pre - test:

Certain cognitive processes operate when respondents answer a survey question. A respondent must comprehend (encode) the question, retrieve information from memory, weigh the information and form a response. If a respondent experiences cognitive difficulties, the response to the question may contain some element of error. A pretest is a small, pilot study to determine how a questionnaire can be improved to minimize response errors (Converse and Presser 1986) such as a respondent misrepresenting a question. Questionnaire pretests can be very important because response and other non sampling errors are major contributors to total survey error (Assael and Keon 1982).

Before the survey was sent out in its entirety it was produced and circulated as both, a pre test and pilot version. The survey was first subjected to pre-test with 15 peers (all of whom responded). The process highlighted a number of small but
nevertheless important areas of reduced clarity. A second pre-test was conducted among a group of 7 (from the original 15) to assess selected improvements. Individual questions were pretested for an acceptable level of response variation, meaning, task difficulty and respondents attention. The completion of pre test was invaluable; it resulted in a number of key learning points having implication on the final survey.

1.) Use of the words ‘survey’ or ‘questionnaire’ with questionnaire –it has negative connotations and can result in instant rejection. Alternatively, on emphasizing that it is a research study, the researcher was able to get across to the relevant respondents. 2.) The survey needed to be as simple and easy to complete as possible, while still providing the required data. Based on learning’s from the pilot test it was concluded that certain aspects were adapted to the Indian context. 3) The survey needed to guarantee respondents complete confidentiality: without full confidentiality the researcher could not be sure that respondents were comfortable of sharing their ratings on Current Performance. Finally the responses obtained were coded and analyzed. The analysis of pretest responses served as a check on the adequacy of problem definition and the data and analysis required towards obtaining the necessary information.

The questionnaire was pre - tested with 25 potential respondents drawn from the population, as the final samples to assess whether or not there were misunderstandings or ambiguities, of expression in the questionnaire. The data gained through pretest were analyzed using the same statistical methods as in the final analysis, especially regarding the reliability and validity of the scale. Based on the feedback from the pretest some revisions of wordings were made in the questionnaire.

The data for this study were collected from the 27 corporations, based on them being listed in the Economic Times (ET) 500 and being listed on Bombay Stock Exchange/ National Stock Exchange (BSE/NSE). Additionally, each Corporations listed was assigned an alphanumeric symbol for ease in indexing and updating the information. Questionnaires in sealed envelopes were sent to the Head of Human Resources of each organization. The key requirement being that 2 - 4 other functional heads besides the Head of HR would fill in the requisite forms, based on the size of the Company. It was important for the concerned person filling in the form to answer all questions and also to attach their visiting cards to the completed form. The same was delivered to the Heads of HR and they returned the completed forms to the researcher in sealed envelopes.
4.2.2 Secondary Data:

The literature review which includes what authors and researchers have said about the different topics related to SHRP and Systems Thinking has oriented the methodology of this research. This methodology provides an understanding of how the research was conducted and organized in order to obtain information that would be helpful for understanding the variables of SHRP and Systems Thinking and their significance in the Indian context. The analysis of secondary data was a prerequisite for the collection of primary data studied in this research. For the purpose of this, the research survey method was used to test the research questions posited in the conceptualization chapter. In this chapter, the rationale behind choosing the research methodology is discussed, as is the process that was undertaken in the thesis.

Extensive Secondary data search, for over 15 companies, aided the identification of SHRP for competitive advantage. For inclusion in this research, a wide range of SHR practices across business types, industries and corporate functional areas – such as operations, manufacturing, marketing, IT and supply chain management were considered and the types of benefits generated were looked at. Over 10 companies were scanned through extensive literature search covering business and sustainability press, published action and academic research. Practitioners and consultants were also consulted for information. This data collection was succeeded by a two-stage screening and evaluation process.

Stage 1: More than 20 Best practices from 10 companies gathered through the data collection process were reviewed for functional excellence, business benefits. Stage 2: More information was collected on the Best practices selected. They were closely reviewed for their replication and applicability to other companies and industries. The researcher gained valuable insights from the HR practices shared in the pre-testing and which enabled the researcher, to get a very balanced and fair estimate of the Strategic HR approach undertaken in these companies.

4.2.3 Brief description of Final Questionnaire:

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire to identify factors that impact SHRPP in corporations was previously used by Bandt (1983). In addition, the strong results of the research, as well as
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The reliability and validity of the instrument were all strong factors in deciding to use the questionnaire. Bandt's permission to use the survey is reproduced. Appendix C contains the copies of the cover letters and the questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the survey directed to the director of human resources, the generic heading used to encompass the various titles given to people who oversee the HR functions.

The questionnaire consists of 35 questions under the seven areas to be assessed under two major dimensions “Importance and Current Performance”. They were categorized as Area 1: Acquiring the Desired Workforce with 4 sub questions, Area 2: Engaging the Workforce, Area 3: Organizing High Performance Teams, Area 4: Creating a Learning Organization and Area 5: Facilitating Cultural Change with 5 sub-questions respectively; Area 6: Collaborating with Stakeholders with 7 sub-questions and Area 7: HR – A Business Partner with 4 sub-questions. There were some questions asked to the respondents to evaluate the factors that impact SHRP. There were questions like Question 4.2. Institutionalizing Systems Thinking as a new approach to better thinking, understanding and acting and Question 7.1. Integrating Human Resources processes with the Strategic plan; Question 7.3 Developing a Strategic People/ HR plan to position the organization’s People practices to add value to employees, customers, shareholders and the community; Question 7.4. Alignment with the Corporate Strategic Plan – need for the entire organization to have people-related values and vision. These questions provided data necessary to assess the areas of SHRP and Systems Thinking.

Classification: The questionnaire is designed to collect data on the level or degree of SHRP within organizations so that they can be classified into one of the three categories: 1) The corporations targeted have formal Strategic Human Resources Planning Process. 2) Organizations having above the workforce of 3000 employees were included for this research. 3) The research mainly focused in the area of Manufacturing, services like Banking and Insurances, Information Technology and organized retail sector. 4) The corporations targeted engaged in fully integrated strategic human resource planning. 5) All the respondents were top or senior management professionals as only the top brass of an organization impact strategy and influence strategic decisions.

4.2.4 Description of the variables:

There were three kinds of variables- General Variables, Organizational Variables and SHRP variables.
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General Variables

1. Management levels: Top Management & Senior Management  
2. Educational Qualification and Experience.

Organizational Variables

1. Sector: Private sector based on domain and ownership.  
2. Size: Large and Medium size organization for the purpose of this study.

SHRP Variables

As detailed by the original researcher Bandt Gatter & Associates (1995, Australia) and members of the Haines Centre for Strategic Management (California, USA). Area 1: Acquiring the Desired Workforce, Area 2: Engaging the Workforce, Area 3: Organizing High Performance Teams, Area 4: Creating a Learning Organization, Area 5: Facilitating Cultural Change, Area 6: Collaborating With Stakeholders, Area 7: HR - A Business Partner

4.3.1 Statistical Analysis of Data:

The data collected for this research was compiled and analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 16. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and Mean scores were used to describe the sample. The research hypothesis presented in this section and the operational method for testing each of the hypothesis was done using varied statistical tests.

Univariate techniques for metric data were used. For metric data with two or more samples that are independent, t-test & one way ANOVA was used. Paired t-test was used when the data for the two samples relate to the value group of respondents. The most popular parametric test is the t-test, conducted for examining hypothesis about means.

The data was edited, and coded, and converted into SPSS format, which has proven reference of analyzing data. The kind of tests used and are ANOVA, Paired T-Tests, Split Half Reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha, Spearman-Brown Coefficient, Guttmann Spilt-Half Coefficient, 2 Tailed test, Factor Analysis, Principal Component Analysis. Rotation
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4.4.1 Organization of the Dissertation:

Chapter I:  Introduction: Need for study, Significance of Study, and Operational Definition.

Chapter II:  Literature review: list of Articles on Strategy, Human Resource Management (HRM), Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Strategic Human Resource Planning (SHRP), and Systems Thinking.


Chapter IV:  Research Methodology: Population and Sample, Brief description of sample group of industries, Description of the variables, Development of Tools, Brief description of final questionnaire, Organization of Dissertation, and Ethical Consideration.

Chapter V:  Results: Paired T-tests, Descriptive statistics, Reliability, Factor Analysis, and Hypothesis.

Chapter VI:  Conclusion, Discussion, Implication and Recommendation: Implications of the Research, Limitations, Future Research, Contribution to this Research, Conclusion, and recommendations.

Chapter VII:  Annexure: List of Publications, Bibliography, Questionnaires, Covering Letters, Synopsis, and SPSS attachments.

4.5.1 Ethical Consideration:

Ethical considerations involving issues of harm, consent, deceptions, privacy and confidentiality of data were recognized. In conducting the study a covering letter informing the participants the purpose of the study and promising privacy and confidentiality...
was assured. When a contact person declined to participate at the initial contact the researcher did not try to coerce or persuade him/her to participate. To keep the anonymity of the respondents and sometimes of the organizations they represented, the names have not been used.